Market evolution: Bakery products (CN 1905) — 2015–2025

Introduction

This report examines the evolution of European Union trade in bakery products (CN 1905) with non-EU countries over the full available window from 2015 to 2025. The product group covers bread, pastry, cakes, biscuits, waffles, rusks, crispbread, gingerbread and similar bakers' wares. Over the decade, the EU has reinforced its position as a global bakery powerhouse, with exports more than doubling in value and the trade surplus expanding substantially. The following analysis identifies the main dynamics behind this performance: an export-driven widening of the surplus, a marked premiumisation of traded products, and a reconfiguration of both import sources and export destinations.

1. Export-led expansion turns the EU into an even larger net supplier

The value of extra-EU bakery exports more than doubled while imports grew at a slower pace

Between 2015 and 2025, EU exports of bakery products jumped from €4.93 billion to €10.64 billion, an increase of 115.8 %. Over the same period, imports rose from €1.29 billion to €2.35 billion (+82.1 %). Both flows grew steadily, but the export dynamism was much stronger, leading to a widening gap. The detailed headline figures are available on the trade overview dashboard.

Volume growth and price trends reinforce the surplus

Export volumes expanded from 1.65 million tonnes to 2.46 million tonnes (+48.7 %), while import volumes rose from 0.51 million tonnes to 0.85 million tonnes (+65.4 %). The average export price climbed from €2 984/tonne to €4 331/tonne (+45.1 %), indicating both inflationary pressure and a shift towards higher-value items. In contrast, import prices saw a much more modest increase of only 10.1 % (from €2 519 to €2 773/tonne). As a result, the trade surplus soared from €3.64 billion to €8.29 billion (+127.8 %).

Net-import reliance becomes deeply negative, confirming an overwhelmingly export-oriented sector

The EU's net-import reliance ratio evolved from –1.9 % in 2015 to –7.1 % in 2024 (latest available), meaning the bloc is a large net exporter relative to its own production. Export propensity gained 189.7 % over the period, reaching 8.24 % by 2024, while total trade intensity (exports + imports relative to production) rose to 9.74 %. These structural indicators, reported under the autonomy & vulnerability section, underline the growing internationalisation of the EU bakery industry.

2. Premiumisation and a changing product mix drive value creation

Export unit values surged far ahead of import prices, signalling a quality and brand premium

While overall EU export prices rose by 45.1 % against only 10.1 % for imports, the gap reflects both general cost inflation and the EU's ability to sell higher-quality, branded products abroad. Inside the EU, production value grew from €45.8 billion to €83.4 billion (+81.9 %) while production volume rose by only 28.6 %, confirming a strong premiumisation trend within the domestic market as well (see production volumes).

Sweet biscuits and waffles/wafers are the fastest-growing export sub-segments

The table below, derived from the product breakdown, summarises the value evolution of the main export sub-categories.

Sub-category (CN)	Export value 2015 (€ bn)	Export value 2025 (€ bn)	Change (%)
1905 90 – Other bakery wares	2.82	6.34	+124.9
1905 31 – Sweet biscuits	1.11	2.19	+96.8
1905 32 – Waffles and wafers	0.70	1.78	+154.5
1905 40 – Rusks, toasted bread	0.09	0.17	+77.2
1905 10 – Crispbread	0.13	0.09	–34.5
1905 20 – Gingerbread	0.07	0.07	+1.3

The "other bakery wares" category remains dominant, but the standout in relative terms is waffles and wafers (+154.5 %). Sweet biscuits also posted robust growth, nearly doubling. Crispbread exports declined markedly, reflecting perhaps changed consumer preferences or production shifts. On the import side, the same premium sub-segments (sweet biscuits, waffles) also grew sharply, but from lower bases, indicating a complementary trade pattern.

Rising production value per unit mirrors the export premiumisation

EU production value per tonne rose from approximately €1 973/tonne in the earliest available production year (2003) to €2 792/tonne by 2024. This structural upgrade in the domestic industry underpins the increasingly high-value nature of EU bakery exports.

3. Partner diversification and resilience against geopolitical shocks

Import sources become markedly more diversified, reducing dependence on the United Kingdom

The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) for EU imports fell from 3 740 in 2015 to 2 209 in 2025 (–40.9 %), reflecting a broader supplier base. While the United Kingdom remained the largest import origin with €1.04 billion in 2025 (+33.6 % vs. 2015), its weight in total imports diminished. The most dynamic new suppliers are Ukraine (+964.8 % to €191 million), Serbia (+375.0 % to €102 million) and Türkiye (+210.1 % to €255 million), as shown in the top partners data.

Export markets remain concentrated but the United States overtakes Switzerland as the number-two destination

Despite a slight reduction in export HHI (–7.9 %), the top buyers still absorb a large share of EU bakery exports. The United Kingdom is the primary market, with sales rising from €1.93 billion to €3.86 billion (+100.2 %). The United States recorded extraordinary growth of +231.5 %, reaching €1.45 billion and displacing Switzerland as the second most important destination. The table below lists the top export partners and their development.

Partner	Export value 2015 (€ bn)	Export value 2025 (€ bn)	Change (%)
United Kingdom	1.93	3.86	+100.2
United States	0.44	1.45	+231.5
Switzerland	0.37	0.71	+90.3
Norway	0.28	0.47	+65.3
Russian Federation	0.16	0.22	+36.7
Australia	0.13	0.28	+118.5
Canada	0.10	0.28	+195.4

Geopolitical shocks caused significant but mostly temporary disruptions

The Russia-Ukraine war triggered notable trade shocks. EU exports to Russia suffered a sharp quantity collapse (–44.1 % between 2021 and 2022) and a simultaneous price jump (+48.9 %), reflecting both sanctions and logistical hurdles. By 2025, export values partially recovered, but volumes remain far below pre-2022 levels. Imports from Ukraine, conversely, surged despite the war, confirming the resilience of that supply chain. Other price shocks hit large markets such as the United States (+24.6 % export price shock in 2022) and several Asian suppliers. The volatility analysis shows that the most volatile import flows originate from Serbia (coefficient of variation 0.625) and Ukraine (0.451), while exports to Russia (0.356) and the US (0.255) exhibit elevated variability, mainly linked to geopolitical and logistical upheavals. Overall, the EU bakery trade demonstrated strong adaptive capacity, redirecting flows and absorbing price adjustments without reversing the long-term expansion trend.

Conclusion

The 2015–2025 period confirmed the EU's commanding position in global bakery trade. Exports more than doubled in value, outpacing imports and driving the trade surplus to over €8 billion. Behind this performance lies a clear premiumisation strategy: unit values rose strongly, and high-value sub-segments such as waffles and sweet biscuits gained prominence. The partner structure evolved as import sources diversified, reducing concentration risks, while the United States joined the United Kingdom as a pivotal export market. Although geopolitical shocks – most notably the war in Ukraine – temporarily disrupted key trade lanes, the overall trajectory remained one of robust growth and increasing global integration. The EU bakery industry thus enters the next decade with a solid platform of competitive production, diverse market reach, and a product mix well tailored to international demand.

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