EU TRADE EXPLORER

Market evolution: Palm oil (CN 1511) — 2015–2025

Introduction

This report examines the European Union's extra-EU trade in **Palm oil and its fractions, whether or not refined (excl. chemically modified)** (CN 1511) from 2015 to 2025. The analysis draws on annual harmonised trade data, covering imports, exports, partner concentration, internal market structure, production, and vulnerability indicators. All figures are from the Trade Dashboard and the associated datasets.

1. Volume Decline Meets Price Surge: The Twin Forces Reshaping EU Palm Oil Trade

Import volumes have nearly halved while soaring unit values limited the value contraction

Extra-EU import **quantity** plummeted by **-52.5 %**, from 6.6 million tonnes (2015) to 3.1 million tonnes (2025). The average import **price** however jumped **80.6 %** (€629 → €1 137 per tonne), so the import **value** fell by only **-14.2 %** (€4.16 bn → €3.57 bn).

Indicator	2015	2025	Change (%)
Import quantity (t)	6 611 322	3 140 249	-52.5
Import price (€/t)	629.3	1 136.5	+80.6
Import value (€)	4 160 583 632	3 569 047 171	-14.2
Export quantity (t)	193 483	102 160	-47.2
Export price (€/t)	781.0	1 525.8	+95.4
Export value (€)	151 115 297	155 871 808	+3.1
Trade balance (€)	-4 009 468 336	-3 413 175 364	+14.9

Exports also contracted in volume but rose slightly in value, thanks to an even stronger price rally

The EU's extra-EU **exports** of palm oil shrank by **-47.2 %** in quantity, from 193 k t to 102 k t. Nevertheless, the average export price almost doubled (**+95.4 %**), pushing export value modestly higher (+3.1 %).

The **trade deficit** narrowed by **14.9 %**, from €-4.01 bn to €-3.41 bn, as the price-driven improvement in import value outpaced the export side. For a comprehensive view, see General Overview trade.

2. Geographic Diversification and a Shifting Partner Landscape

The EU's import base has become significantly more diversified, with traditional heavyweights losing ground

The **Herfindahl-Hirschman Index** for import partner concentration fell from **3 715 to 2 130** (-42.7 %), signalling a clear broadening of supply sources.

Indonesia, the largest supplier, saw its deliveries to the EU drop **-53.2 %** in value (€2.15 bn → €1.01 bn). *Malaysia* experienced a milder decline (-11.6 %). In contrast, emerging Latin American and African origins grew rapidly:

Partner	Value 2015 (€)	Value 2025 (€)	Change (%)
Indonesia	2 152 466 623	1 007 596 476	-53.2
Malaysia	1 300 672 415	1 150 157 485	-11.6
Guatemala	121 844 223	381 029 519	+212.7
Honduras	103 424 059	156 036 649	+50.9
Colombia	132 920 670	176 356 891	+32.7
Costa Rica	1 942 275	138 488 802	+7 030.2

Costa Rica and *Guatemala* stand out, with the former moving from negligible levels to a substantial supplier role. The full partner list is available at Top partners by value.

Export destinations were reshaped by the UK's post-Brexit role, the collapse of the Russian market, and new opportunities in Ukraine

The **United Kingdom** became the dominant extra-EU export market, with shipments rising **70.5 %** to €96.8 million. Shipments to the *Russian Federation* collapsed by **-86.8 %** (€51.9 m → €6.8 m), reflecting sanctions and trade disruption. *Ukraine* jumped from €0.65 m to €7.9 m (+1 107 %), partly due to humanitarian and reconstruction-related demand.

The export partner concentration **increased** (HHI +46.7 %), underlining the growing weight of the UK. The Concentration HHI page illustrates this trend.

Intra-EU trade patterns show the Netherlands remaining the undisputed gateway, while Italy, Spain and Germany lost import shares

Within the EU, the *Netherlands* retained its position as the leading importer (€1.52 bn in both 2015 and 2025, essentially stable), acting as a logistics hub. *Italy*, *Spain* and *Germany* all registered significant declines (-32.5 %, -38.0 % and -34.0 % respectively). This suggests that re-exports and processing are concentrating in the Netherlands, while industrial usage in southern and central Europe is shrinking. Detailed member-state data can be found at Top reporters by value.

3. Rising Import Dependency Amidst Volatile Production and Refined Shift

The EU's net import reliance more than doubled, despite a recovery in domestic production

The **net import reliance** ratio rose from **35.7 %** (2015) to **66.3 %** (2024, the last available year for this indicator), an **+85.4 %** increase. This means the EU now covers two-thirds of its apparent demand through extra-EU imports.

EU **production** of palm oil (crude and refined) grew by **39.7 %** over the period (1.24 → 1.73 million tonnes), but with extreme volatility. After peaking at **3.30 million tonnes in 2017**, output collapsed and only partially recovered. The latest figures show production at 1.73 million tonnes (2024), still well above the 2015 level.

Indicator	2015	2024	Change (%)
Net import reliance (%)	35.7	66.3	+85.4
EU production quantity (t)	1 235 069 438	1 725 386 123	+39.7
Trade intensity (%)	41.9	70.8*	+69.0*

* *Trade intensity 2024 value from 2024 (latest available).*
Sources: Net import reliance, Production volumes.

The combination of falling import quantities, rising domestic output, and an ever-larger import reliance ratio suggests that domestic consumption has shifted away from the "non-food" uses that previously absorbed own production and towards a higher reliance on imported speciality fractions.

Refined products (CN 151190) gradually overtook crude palm oil as the leading import segment

At the detailed CN-8 level, **crude palm oil (151110)** imports shrank from 4.8 million tonnes to 1.7 million tonnes, while **refined palm oil (151190)** held up better (1.8 → 1.5 million tonnes). In value terms, refined imports almost equalled crude by 2015 and surpassed them in the 2021-2022 price spike. The price premium of refined oils widened, reflecting both higher processing costs and supply-chain shifts. The product split can be explored at Product segment breakdown.

Conclusion

EU palm oil trade between 2015 and 2025 has been defined by a profound decoupling of volumes and prices. Import and export quantities fell by around half, yet a strong price rally kept value flows relatively resilient. Supply sources diversified rapidly away from Indonesia, with Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia and Costa Rica emerging as significant suppliers. The UK solidified its position as the top export destination, while Russia vanished as a major buyer. Inside the EU, the Netherlands consolidated its gateway role at the expense of large industrial users. Most crucially, the EU's dependence on extra-EU palm oil intensified, reaching a net import reliance of over 66 %, even as domestic production recovered from its post-2017 trough. These structural shifts — diversification, refined-product dominance, and heightened vulnerability — will shape the bloc's policy and trade negotiations in the years ahead.

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If you need advice on European trade policy, or representation for your interests in Brussels, feel free to contact me at support@tradedashboard.eu. You can find my CV at this address.