

# The European market potential for picnic baskets

Last updated:  
29 August 2024

The European market for picnic baskets offers opportunities. The long-standing picnicking tradition was revived during the COVID-19 pandemic. Picnic baskets must be lightweight and easy to carry with handles or straps. They should also be sturdy to protect their contents during transportation. Sustainability is becoming more important. Using traditional weaving techniques, patterns and materials could also offer opportunities. Although picnic baskets are a fairly small product category, producers of general basketry can add them to their range relatively easily. You can market your picnic baskets as multifunctional items that consumers can also use for storage beyond the picnicking season.

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## 1. Product description

In the Home Decoration and Home Textiles (HDHT) segment, there are several [categories made up of various product groups](#). Picnic baskets are designed to carry food and tableware for eating outdoors. As such, they are generally categorised under 'seasonal/party', 'garden', 'dining' and even 'storage'.

Picnic baskets can be sold individually or including tableware, usually for two or four people. Traditional trunk-style baskets with tableware sets are also known as picnic 'hampers'. Basic tableware items include plates, cutlery and glasses or cups. This can be expanded with items like corkscrews, cooler bags, cutting boards, thermoses picnic blankets and napkins.

This study uses the following codes to indicate trade in picnic baskets:

Table 1: Product codes

Harmonised System (HS)	Description
4602 11	Basketwork, wickerwork and other articles, made directly to shape from bamboo plaiting materials
4602 12	Basketwork, wickerwork and other articles, made directly to shape from rattan plaiting materials

4602 19	Basketwork, wickerwork and other articles, made directly to shape from other vegetable plaiting materials
4602 90	Basketwork, wickerwork and other articles, made directly to shape from non-vegetable plaiting materials

These HS codes cover basketry in general because no specific trade data are available for picnic baskets.

## Functionality

First and foremost, picnic baskets must be functional, durable and convenient. They should be easy to carry in terms of weight and size, and they should protect their contents during transportation. The baskets may have compartments for food and tableware. Plates and cutlery can often be attached to the inside or lid of the basket with straps. If the picnic basket includes tableware, this must be a complete set of good quality.

## Design

Picnic baskets must be lightweight but sturdy, with handles or straps for easy transport. Styles can vary from box-shaped to organic and curved. Nostalgic styles reflect the tradition of glamorous countryside picnics in the early twentieth century, especially in the United Kingdom.

Figure 1: Handwoven willow picnic basket with tableware and cooling bag

## Material

Picnic baskets are woven, traditionally from willow. Nowadays, they are also made of materials like bamboo, rattan, cane and synthetic wickerwork. They can be lined with textile fabric, plastic and even insulating materials. Straps can be leather, synthetic or textile. If tableware is included, the plates and cups are often made of synthetics like melamine (low-end) or ceramics (high-end). The cutlery is generally made of metal.

### Tips:

Diversify your offer because the seasonality of picnics makes picnic baskets a relatively small product category. You can expand to products ranging from food and gift baskets to storage and bicycle baskets. This can also lead to opportunities in the corporate gift market, in which companies give food baskets to employees (e.g. for Christmas) or business contacts.

If you already produce general basketry, consider extending your offer to include picnic baskets. This often only requires a slight modification to an existing basket design.

If you would like to assemble picnic hampers with contents, cooperate with specialised tableware suppliers to ensure you meet European (legal) requirements.

For more information about the individual components of picnic hampers, see our studies on [basketry](#), [dinnerware](#) and [cutlery](#).

## 2. What makes Europe an interesting market for picnic baskets?

The European basketry market has grown in recent years. More than three-quarters of the import value is sourced from developing countries, and most of this basketry is made from natural materials. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a picnic revival, which may stimulate imports of picnic baskets.

Picnicking is popular throughout Europe. Many countries have traditional picnicking occasions, generally in spring and summer. The United Kingdom and France are particularly famous for their longstanding picnicking traditions. [The average British person picnics three times per year](#), and the country celebrates National Picnic Week in June. The most popular day for picnics in France is Bastille Day (14 July), while picnicking is an Easter tradition in Italy. Scandinavian countries are also fond of outdoor eating; for example, picnics are a key part of May Day celebrations in Finland.

The following statistics cover basketry in general because no specific trade data are available for picnic baskets.

Source: UN Comtrade

European imports of basketry – including picnic baskets – grew from €571 million in 2019 to €714 million in 2023, at an average annual rate (CAGR) of 5.7%. This included a peak of €1 billion in 2022. About three-quarters of Europe's import value came directly from developing countries. These imports grew from €470 million in 2019 to €536 million in 2023, at a CAGR of 3.4%. This makes Europe an interesting market for exporters from developing countries. Imports from the rest of the world come to just €2–4 million per year. The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have disrupted international trade, affecting the costs and

availability of raw materials, energy and transport. At the same time, lockdowns have boosted the popularity of picnics as a way for family and friends to spend time together and celebrate special occasions. Companies like [The Luxury Picnic Company](#) started offering filled picnic hampers and have evolved into luxury picnic event organisers.

The pandemic also boosted trends like wellness. Picnic baskets fit in with this by allowing consumers to connect with nature and spend quality time together. This may partially compensate for the pressure that the [cost of living crisis](#) has put on consumer spending. In fact, this pressure may also lead to consumers opting for picnics as an affordable alternative to restaurant meals. See the chapter on [trends](#) for more information on the drivers of demand.

### 3. Which European countries offer the most opportunities for picnic baskets?

The larger Western European economies are the main importers of picnic baskets. However, importers in these countries generally sell their products across Europe. Your best strategy, therefore, is to focus on a particular segment rather than a specific country.

Source: UN Comtrade

In 2023, Germany was Europe's leading importer of basketry, with 16% of imports, followed by France (14%), the United Kingdom (11%) and Spain (10%). Together, they accounted for more than half of the European total. Smaller markets with a share of less than 10% but still in the top six leading importing countries include the Netherlands (9%) and Italy (8%).

#### Focus on segments

European countries have different roles in the HDHT market. Some are mainly importers and others are mainly manufacturers. Western European countries are mainly importers, and most Western European importers are re-exporters. They sell their products in their own countries but also distribute them across the continent. This is why, in the HDHT segment, small countries like the Netherlands often import much more than they consume.

In terms of marketing, you should be aware that countries are not markets. The HDHT market is made up of different segments, ranging from low to high-end (see our [study on market entry](#) for picnic baskets ). Every European country has these segments, although their size may vary. As such, it makes much more sense for you to focus on a segment in your product group and connect with importers in that segment. These importers will then sell your products in that segment in Europe.

#### Consumer spending is under pressure

Picnic basket sales are sensitive to economic cycles. When economic circumstances and prospects are down, consumers postpone buying items that they do not 'need' urgently. When economic conditions are good, purchases of non-essential products tend to rise.

[European consumer confidence fell sharply in March 2022](#) due to the situation in Ukraine and the resulting

energy crisis. Although it has improved since, consumer confidence is still below the long-term average. This may well lead to lower spending.

Source: OECD

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, consumer spending ('private consumption expenditure') in the leading European markets grew by about 1-3% per year. 2020 broke this trend due to the pandemic. Growth bounced back into positive figures in 2021. Forecasts for 2024/2025 are modest, reflecting consumer confidence.

## Germany is Europe's largest importer

Europe's leading basketry importer is Germany. The country's large domestic market, role as a trade hub and relatively high imports of these product groups from developing countries make it an interesting market. The country's imports grew from €101 million in 2019 to €116 million in 2023, with a CAGR of 3.6%. This included a peak of €186 million in 2022.

In 2023, 87% of Germany's import value came directly from developing countries, one of the largest market shares in Europe. These imports grew from €88 million in 2019 to €101 million in 2023, with a CAGR of 3.5%. China (44%), Vietnam (29%) and Indonesia (5.7%) are Germany's main basketry suppliers. While China's supplies were lower than in 2019, other developing countries' basketry exports to Germany increased.

## France increases imports from European countries

China (25%), Vietnam (16%) and Madagascar (13%) are France's leading suppliers of basketry. Since 2020, however, France has significantly increased its basketry imports from European countries like Spain, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany and Belgium. This may have been an effect of the international trade disruptions after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, their market share is relatively large.

The country's basketry imports grew from €70 million in 2019 to €101 million in 2023, with a CAGR of 9.7%. This included a peak of €139 million in 2022. Imports from developing countries grew from €62 million in 2019 to €69 million in 2023, with a relatively modest CAGR of 2.7%. Their direct import market share dropped to 68% in 2023, which is below the European average. This was mainly due to China and Vietnam letting some of their market share slip. In contrast, Madagascar's share has nearly doubled since 2019.

## Brexit may boost direct trade with the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is a particularly interesting market for picnic baskets. The average British adult has three picnics a year, and 46% believe [picnics are a typically British event that will always be popular](#). Their [most popular picnic foods](#) include sandwiches, crisps, fresh fruit, sausage rolls, cheese and salad.

After a particularly strong performance in 2021 and 2022, British basketry imports returned to €77 million in 2023. 86% of these imports came directly from developing countries, which is among the largest market shares in Europe. [Brexit](#) may stimulate direct imports from developing countries, allowing British buyers to avoid additional fees now that the UK is no longer part of the EU's single market. China (54%) and Vietnam (13%) are the main suppliers of basketry to the United Kingdom. While they let some of their market share slip, countries like Indonesia (6.9%), India and Bangladesh (2.6% each) increased theirs.

## Spain's imports perform well after large drop

Spain was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, as its economy experienced the largest decline in Europe. Since then, the country's basketry imports have recovered. They grew from €50 million in 2019 to €68 million in 2023, at a CAGR of 7.9%. This included a considerable peak in 2022, after a drop of 19% in 2020.

In 2023, 87% of Spain's basketry imports came directly from developing countries, which is among the largest market shares in Europe. These imports grew from €46 million in 2019 to €59 million in 2023, with a CAGR of

6.6%. China (25%), Vietnam (16%) and Madagascar (13%) are Spain's leading basketry suppliers. Morocco (7.2%), Bangladesh (4.9%), Indonesia (4.4%) and India (4.0%) follow. Colombia (2.0%) also performs well, likely thanks to its shared language. Like in other European markets, China and Vietnam have let some of their market share slip, while other developing countries have increased theirs.

## The Netherlands is an important European trade hub

The Netherlands is an important European trade hub, which could make the country an interesting market for you. Dutch imports of basketry grew from €58 million in 2019 to €63 million in 2023, with a CAGR of 2.0%. This included a particularly strong performance in 2021 and 2022.

In 2023, 79% of the Netherlands' basketry imports came directly from developing countries, which is above the European average. These imports returned to €49 million in 2023, with a CAGR of 0.3% since 2019. China (37%), Indonesia (18%), Vietnam (13%) and Bangladesh (5.2%) are the leading suppliers. China's supplies were lower than in 2019, while many other developing countries' basketry exports to the Netherlands increased.

## Italy's imports have come back strongly

Italy's economy was particularly affected by the pandemic, which was reflected in a -17% hit to the country's basketry imports in 2020. However, imports have more than recovered since then. They grew from €31 million in 2019 to €57 million in 2023, at an impressive CAGR of 16%. This included a considerable increase in imports from European countries like France, Spain, Germany and Greece.

Direct imports from developing countries grew from €25 million in 2019 to €38 million in 2023, with a CAGR of 11%. Despite this strong growth, this made up a below-average two-thirds of the market. Italy's leading basketry suppliers are China (27%), Madagascar (21%), France (10%) and Vietnam (9.4%). Again, China and Vietnam let some of their market share slip. China's exports have nearly halved, whereas Madagascar's have increased about sevenfold since 2019.

### Tip:

Do not just focus on specific European countries. Instead, identify the appropriate segment and let your buyers distribute your products across Europe within this segment.

## 4. Which trends offer opportunities or pose threats in the European picnic basket market?

The market for picnic baskets is shaped by various trends, which are often related to the [trends for HDHT](#) at the sector level. Key topics are wellness and sustainability.

### Wellness: outdoor living and dining

Wellness is a dominant consumer trend. European consumers are constantly trying to improve themselves, in body and mind. [Two-thirds of consumers are more conscious of looking after their physical and mental health](#) than they were before the pandemic. In fact, [more than 67% of people worldwide say they make wellbeing a top priority](#). At the same time, 44% feel it is impossible to achieve, and only 12% said they thought their level of wellbeing was where it should be.

As part of the wellness trend, European consumers like to spend time outdoors in their gardens and in

communal spaces, such as parks and beaches. They try to create a better balance between work and leisure and to feel closer to nature. Picnics can fit perfectly into this. They provide an opportunity to spend quality time with friends and family, to share meals and to tell stories. Casual picnics boosts mental wellness and are a way to relax and recharge.

## **Decluttering the home and the mind**

Another key aspect of the wellness trend is decluttering, as a tidy home can help people to de-stress. By storing items in baskets, consumers create physical space as well as 'headspace'. Picnic hampers can be used to create a vintage look in the living room, playing into the nostalgic aspect of picnicking. This kind of multifunctionality as general storage items can extend interest in your baskets beyond the main picnicking season.

Figure 5: The story of the Fortnum & Mason hamper

Source: [Fortnum & Mason @ YouTube](#)

### Tips:

Make your baskets easy to carry for optimal convenience, such as by adding shoulder straps or trolley wheels.

Market your picnic baskets as multifunctional items that consumers can also use for storage.

See our article on how [the COVID-19 pandemic boosted the importance of the wellness trend in HDHT](#) for more information.

## Sustainability: people and planet

Both the HDHT industry and consumers are becoming more concerned about the environmental and social effects of production and consumption. Sustainability is quickly becoming a central consumer need, including in the HDHT market. European consumers are increasingly adopting more sustainable lifestyles. The COVID-19 pandemic boosted this trend. At the same time, the current cost of living crisis drives the need for sustainable products to be affordable.

The pandemic has made it more important that consumers and companies improve their sustainability, especially for younger generations. An impressive 86% of European consumers consider sustainability (very) important. 29% deliberately buy sustainable products. In addition, most people want significant change to make the world fairer and more sustainable after COVID-19. Millennials and Gen Z will soon be the dominant generation of consumers. They care about sustainability and express this by buying products that contribute to a better world.

For these consumers, picnics should also be sustainable – with reusable tableware and linens instead of disposable paper cups, plates, cutlery and napkins. And of course, the baskets should be sustainable too.

For picnic baskets, key topics regarding social and environmental sustainability include:

- **Materials:** are your materials renewable? Are they traceable and responsibly traded? Are your dyes environmentally friendly?
- **Production process:** does production take place in a safe and healthy way? Are your labour contracts fair? Can you reduce your energy use? Can you prevent water, air and soil pollution? Can you reuse waste, either inside the production system or elsewhere? In general, can you ensure low-impact production?
- **Transport:** do you use clean transport options? Do you pack containers effectively? Are your packing materials recyclable?

The design of your picnic basket and its contents is key for all these topics. You can come up with smart solutions that positively affect production and environmental impact, especially in the design phase.

### Upcoming EU sustainability legislation

The [European Green Deal](#) provides a legal aspect to social and environmental sustainability. The European Commission has started to work on various proposals for new and updated green and social legislation. Particularly relevant topics for the picnic basket industry include the:

- [Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive](#)
- [Forced Labour Regulation](#)
- [Green Claims Directive](#)
- [Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation](#)

Well-known sustainable initiatives (e.g. [BSCI](#), [ETI](#), [Sedex](#), the [WFTO](#) Guaranteed system) and certifications (e.g. [FSC chain of custody certification](#)) can help you prove your sustainability to buyers and consumers.

## Traditional designs, craftsmanship and materials

Basketry can reflect its origins in its materials, techniques and meanings. It has cultural stories to tell, which can add value. Basketry is traditionally a key part of the fair-trade segment – especially items that are handmade using traditional weaving techniques, patterns and materials. This kind of basketry is often made by women in rural areas. It can tell the story of the importance of meaningful work and income in developing countries, especially for women. This has kept many interesting weaving skills alive.



The renewed love for handmade techniques in natural materials may be strengthened by the loss of craft skills in Europe. It also reflects a growing tiredness with standardised, mass-produced, industrial products. This means handmade baskets can be sold at a premium.

#### Tips:

Use sustainably produced natural materials, like rattan, grasses, jute and other natural fibres. Also look into other ways to reduce your impact on the environment, for example in your production or transport.

Use local techniques and designs as an inspiration for your products. Show your craftsmanship by using intricate weaves, patterns and shapes. Showcase the handmade aspect with organic, free shapes rather than rigid forms that resemble industrial production. If your products have a unique origin or story, communicate the special techniques, materials, producers, processes or meanings. This may add value to both your concept and your buyer's.

Clearly communicate your sustainable values and practices through your marketing materials. They do not need to be perfect, but giving your buyers specific information can help greatly.

Consider certification if your importer is interested. For more information on this and the upcoming EU sustainability legislation, see our [studies on market entry](#) for picnic baskets and [buyer requirements for HDHT](#).

For more general information, read our special [study on sustainability in HDHT](#), our [tips for going green](#) and [becoming socially responsible](#), and our [webinars on sustainability in the European HDHT market](#) and [sustainable innovations for your HDHT business](#).

### Example company

[The Basket Room](#) is a female-led ethical home interiors brand, committed to “empowering women in rural Africa while bringing consciously created products to modern living spaces and contemporary homes”. Their products are handwoven by women's cooperatives in Africa. Their timeless designs showcase artisanal and organic patterns. As illustrated in their [Sustainability Impact Report](#), social and environmental responsibility is at the core of The Basket Room's business.

Figure 6: Weaving the Future – Empowering Female Basket Weavers

Source: [The Basket Room @ YouTube](#)

Their [picnic baskets](#) are handwoven in Northern Ghana from undyed veta vera, or elephant grass. The relatively neutral, curved design highlights the skilful weave of the baskets. They come with woven front or side handles and are cleverly marketed as multifunctional home storage solutions. This extends the baskets' use beyond the picnicking season. Although The Basket Room mainly works with women, male weavers mainly produce these picnic baskets. Most of them are farmers earning a flexible second income as drought has made it increasingly difficult for families to make ends meet.

[Globally Cool B.V.](#) carried out this study in partnership with Remco Kemper and GO! GoodOpportunity on behalf of CBI.

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