Korean seaweed leads global market with record growth

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South Korea's dried seaweed exports have experienced remarkable growth, driven by the popularity of Korean kimchi and ramyeon noodles. Dried seaweed, or â??gimâ?? in Korean, has become a significant contributor to the countryâ??s seafood export industry.

According to the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, the export value of Korean gim surged by 25.8 per cent year-on-year, reaching a record high of $997 million in 2024. Major importers include the United States, Japan, and China, with South Korea commanding over 70 per cent of the global seaweed market.

In 2023, seaweed exports accounted for nearly one-third of South Koreaâ??s total seafood export revenue, which amounted to $3.03 billion. This represented an overall seafood export growth of 1.2 per cent compared to the previous yearâ??s $2.99 billion total.

As noted by the International Trade Council, South Korea is a global leader in seaweed production, supplying 70 per cent of the world market for this nutritious and versatile product. Key trading partners include the United States, Japan, and Thailand, which imported $177 million, $175 million, and $84.5 million worth of seaweed, respectively, during the first ten months of

2024. The global reach of Korean seaweed exports has expanded from 64 countries in 2010 to 122 countries today, reflecting growing international demand.

To enhance its position in global trade, South Korea is seeking recognition for its seaweed products under the Codex Alimentarius Commission, an international body that sets food safety standards. This recognition is expected to reduce trade barriers and further boost global demand for this uniquely Korean product.

The outstanding performance of South Korea's seaweed industry underscores the countryâ??s ability to capitalise on the rising global demand for sustainable and health-focused food products, solidifying its status as a trusted player in international trade.