The Swedish Market

Tea and herbal infusions

Open Trade Gate Sweden
National Board of Trade

The purpose of the market study

The purpose of this market study is to offer a comprehensive guide for companies that are interested in entering the Swedish market for tea and herbal infusions. It aims to offer valuable insights and support actionable strategies for exporters of pre-packed teas and herbal infusions to establish a foothold in Sweden. The study provides an overview of the Swedish market in this sector, outlines important trends, details regulatory requirements and offers guidance on how to identify and secure business partners.

This market study is intended for companies in low- and middle-income countries interested in entering the Swedish market for tea and herbal infusions.

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Get to know the Swedish market for tea and herbal infusions

Sweden's consumption of tea and herbal infusions

This study focuses on finished teas and herbal infusions (loose leaves and bagged) packaged for retail or catering use, excluding fresh herbs and medicinal extracts.

Reliable and up-to-date data on the Swedish tea and herbal-infusion market are scarce. National statistics often group tea together with coffee or report only aggregated "hot drinks" figures, while industry data are either paywalled or limited to regional European estimates.

The Tea & Herbal Infusions Europe (THIE)[1] association publishes Europe-wide figures but does not disaggregate Sweden in its public summaries. According to estimates from ReportLinker (2023)[2], average tea consumption in Sweden stands at around 0.23 kilograms per person per year[3], confirming tea as the second most consumed hot drink after coffee. In comparison, Sweden's coffee consumption exceeds 9.9 kilograms per capita annually, one of the highest rates in the world.[4]

Although total volumes remain modest, market dynamics are shifting. According to Te-Centralen (2024), sales of Lipton (largest mainstream tea brand sold in Sweden) fell by approximately 36 per cent, from around SEK 326 million to SEK 208 million between 2023 and 2024.[5] This decline reflects a wider trend away from conventional mass-market black teas and toward organic, private-label and premium loose-leaf teas. Swedish consumers are increasingly experimenting with green tea, matcha, rooibos and caffeine-free herbal infusions, and are drawn to brands emphasising authenticity, origin and ethical sourcing.

The growing popularity of wellness-oriented blends (for example: "sleep", "detox" or "immune support") also mirrors broader Nordic preferences for natural and functional products. This diversification reflects broader Nordic trends in food and drink: a preference for quality, sustainability and storytelling over quantity.

Sweden's imports of tea and herbal infusions

Tea and herbal infusions category crosses different HS chapters depending on whether the product is:

- A "true" tea made from *Camellia sinensis* (black, green, oolong, etc.). All teas (whether bulk or packaged) fall under HS chapter 09 ("Coffee, tea, maté and spices"), heading 0902. Packaging (bulk vs retail) is reflected at the 8-digit or 10-digit national level, but not in the first six digits of the international HS system.

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1 Tea & herbal infusions Europe, Home
2 ReportLinker, Tea and Coffee processing market size volume per capital in Sweden
3 Statista, Tea- Sweden
4 CBI, The Scandinavian market potential for Coffee
5 Te-Centralen, Tea market: Lipton loses a third of business in Sweden, but interest in tea grows

- An herbal or fruit infusion, made from other plants (chamomile, rooibos, peppermint, hibiscus, etc.). Herbal infusions are not considered “tea” under the HS system, since they do not contain *Camellia sinensis*. They generally fall under Chapter 12 (“Oil seeds, oleaginous fruits; miscellaneous grains, seeds and fruit; industrial or medicinal plants; straw and fodder”), heading 1211. According to the association Tea & Herbal Infusions Europe, up to 300 different plants and 400 plant parts are used for making herbal and fruit infusions. A list of possible ingredients for use in herbal and fruit infusions is provided here.[6]

The size of the Swedish import market for pre-packed tea and herbal infusions is estimated at about 4,293 tonnes (SEK 483 million/EUR 44 million) in 2024. Imports had a slight annual decrease of 0.1 per cent by volume between 2020 and 2024, but increased at an annual average rate of 4.3 per cent by value during this period. Around 67 per cent of imports, in terms of value, were accounted for by “true” tea (*Camellia sinensis*): green and black tea. The remaining share by volume (33 per cent) was accounted for by herbal infusions in 2024.

Table 1. Swedish imports of tea and herbal infusions, 2020–2024, in tonnes and in EUR 1,000

Product	2020	2022	2024	Per cent Total tea and herbal infusion imports	Growth 2020-2024
TEA (Camellia sinensis)					
HS code 0902.10 – Green tea (not fermented), in immediate packings ≤ 3 kg					
in tonnes	355	437	484	11%	7.9%
in EUR 1,000	5,551	5,944	6,460	15%	3.9%
HS code 0902.30 – Black tea (fermented), in immediate packings ≤ 3 kg					
in tonnes	2,239	2,694	2,383	56%	1.6%
in EUR 1,000	19,885	25,078	23,422	53%	4.2%
HERBAL INFUSIONS					
HS code 1211.90.86 – Mixtures for herbal or fruit infusions, pre-packaged for retail					
in tonnes	1,710	1,559	1,426	33%	-4.5%
in EUR 1,000	11,771	12,843	14,107	32%	4.6%
TOTAL TEA AND HERBAL INFUSIONS					
in tonnes	**4,304**	**4,690**	**4,293**	**100%**	**-0.1%**
in EUR 1,000	**37,207**	**43,865**	**43,989**	**100%**	**4.3%**

Source: ITC Trademap and European Comission: Access2Markets, 2025

[6] Tea & Herbal infusions Europe, Thie inventory list of herbals considered as food

Black tea

Black tea was the largest category of pre-packed tea imported into Sweden in 2024, accounting for more than half of total volume (56 per cent), and increasing at an annual rate of 1.6 per cent by volume and 4.2 per cent by value since 2020. Around 70 per cent of supplies were sourced from within the EU, while the remaining 30 per cent from outside of the EU – largely from tea-producing countries.

The largest supplier to Sweden in 2024 was Poland, accounting for nearly half of total imports (49 per cent) in terms of value and more than half (55 per cent) in terms of volume. Other important EU suppliers were Germany (10 per cent of total imports, by value) and Denmark (8 per cent). Note that Sweden does not have tea blending and packaging facilities; as such, Swedish brands use custom-manufacturing facilities in the mentioned countries.

Outside of the EU, and second largest overall supplier to Sweden in 2024 was Sri Lanka at 15 per cent by value and 14 per cent by volume of total imports. Sri Lanka was followed by another tea-producing country, India. Imports from India accounted for 7 per cent of total pre-packed black tea supplies both by value and volume in 2024. The United Arab Emirates is also an important supplier, registering 5 per cent of total Swedish imports in 2024 (value and volume). The United Kingdom and Kenya accounted for around 1 per cent of total imports in 2024.

Green tea

Pre-packed green tea accounted for around 11 per cent of the total volume of tea and herbal infusions imported into Sweden in 2024, and 15 per cent by value. Green tea imports increased at a sharp annual rate of 7.9 per cent by volume and 3.9 per cent by value between 2020 and 2024. Around 81 per cent of supplies were sourced from within the EU, while the remaining 19 per cent from outside of the EU, largely from tea-producing countries.

Poland, Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark dominate intra-EU suppliers and general supplies of green tea to Sweden, accounting for around 80 per cent of total imports in 2024 in both value and volume. Poland was the largest supplier in 2024 in terms of value (32 per cent of total imports), but the Netherlands led in terms of import volume (29 per cent). Germany was the second-largest supplier in both value and volume, at around 20 per cent of total imports. Denmark accounted for 11 per cent of total imports by value and 12 per cent by volume.

Outside of the EU, India was the leading supplier in 2024, accounting for around 6 per cent of Sweden's total pre-packed green tea imports by value and 5 per cent by volume, followed closely by Sri Lanka at 5 per cent by value and 3 per cent by volume. Japan also plays an important role in green tea supplies, accounting for 3 per cent of Sweden's imports by value and 1 per cent by volume. Other important suppliers outside of the EU are the United Arab Emirates (2 per cent by value and 3 per cent by volume) and Viet Nam (1 per cent by value and 3 per cent by volume).

Herbal infusions

Pre-packed herbal infusions accounted for around 33 per cent of the total volume of tea and herbal infusions imported into Sweden in 2024, and 32 per cent by value. Herbal infusion imports fell significantly at an annual rate of 4.5 per cent by volume, but registered a healthy annual increase of 4.6 per cent by value between 2020 and 2024. Around 67 per cent of supplies were sourced from within the EU by value, while the remaining 33 per cent from outside of the EU. Considering the volume of imports, EU suppliers accounted for 55 per cent of total imports, and non-EU suppliers accounted for a much larger share at 45 per cent of Sweden's total imports.

Germany dominates supplies of pre-packed herbal infusions, at 30 per cent of Sweden's total imports by value and 21 per cent by volume. Other important EU suppliers are Denmark (12 per cent by value and 7 per cent by volume), the Netherlands (7 per cent by value and 8 per cent by volume) and Spain (6 per cent by value and 9 per cent by volume). Poland, a major supplier of pre-packed black and green tea, plays a smaller role in herbal infusion supplies, accounting for 5 per cent of Sweden's total import value and 2 per cent by volume.

India is a dominant supplier outside of the EU, accounting for 8 per cent of Sweden's total imports in 2024 by value and 20 per cent by volume. The USA also plays an important role in supplies of herbal infusions, at 7 per cent of imports by value, but a small share of 1 per cent by volume. Turkey, on the other hand, accounted for 5 per cent of total import value in 2024, but had a higher share of import volume at 8 per cent.

Other important non-EU suppliers are Sri Lanka (2 per cent by value and volume), Chile (2 per cent by value and 4 per cent by volume), Thailand (2 per cent by value and volume), Indonesia (also 2 per cent), Lebanon and South Africa (each accounting for around 1 per cent by value and volume).

Understand the market structure

The market structure for tea and herbal infusions in Sweden is shaped by a relatively small but specialised network of importers, distributors and retailers.

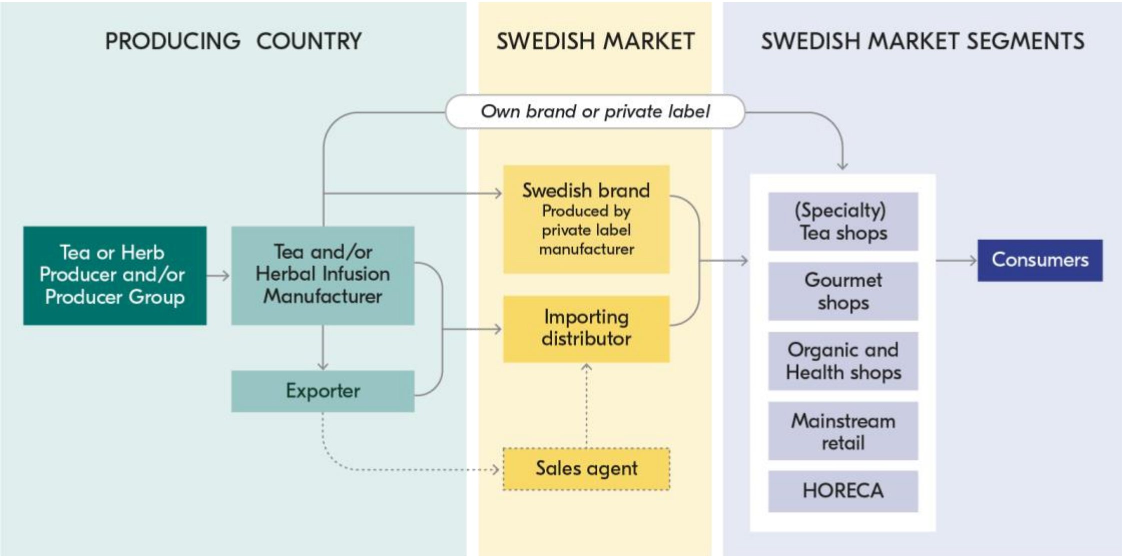
Exporters in producing countries can sometimes supply directly to large end-users, such as retailers and the catering sector, although this is more uncommon in Sweden. Most major supermarket chains such as ICA, Coop and Axfood do not import tea directly; instead, they source through specialised tea importers, private-label producers or regional purchasing alliances.

Alongside these large-scale retail suppliers, there are niche tea importers and brands that import, blend, pack or distribute teas and herbal infusions to specialty shops, e-commerce platforms and the HORECA sector. The market also includes distributors of organic and health products supplying chains such as Life and Hälsokraft, as well as gourmet food wholesalers serving delicatessens and premium stores.

This structure means that new exporters must carefully choose their entry routes depending on their capabilities, certifications, volumes and level of value addition.

Figure 1 shows the Market Channels of tea and herbal infusions into the Swedish market.

Figure 1. Market channels for pre-packed tea and herbal infusions in Sweden



Source: Own elaboration, 2025

Market channels

Specialised importers/distributors

Sweden has a set of **importers/brand owners whose core business is tea, often combined with coffee and equipment**. These actors are often the first contact for exporters of finished, pre-packed teas/herbals looking for national coverage in supermarkets, e-commerce and specialty retail. Examples are Nordic Coffee (offering tea from Ronnefeldt 1823, Germany) and Tea and Coffee Boost AB.

Market players like Tehuset Java source international tea brands via importing distributors. Tehuset Java is a family-owned tea specialist retail and wholesale business. The company has physical and online stores specialising in premium teas and related products. Among the foreign brands it distributes are: Nordqvist's Moomin Tea (Finland), Ahmad Tea (UK), Kusmi Tea (France), Pukka Herbs (UK) and others.

Another route into the Swedish market is via **gourmet distributors that curate premium assortments across categories (coffee, chocolate, fine foods, and giftable teas/herbal infusions)**. These companies prioritise brand story, design, gifting formats and sustainable packaging, and place products into delis, concept stores, premium grocers, hotel boutiques and corporate gifting channels. An example is Beriksson: a family business that distributes a wide range of carefully packaged award-winning products; examples: Kusmi Tea and Joe's Tea.

For exporters with high-end blends, seasonal collections, pyramid bags and strong visual identity, this channel can deliver attractive visibility and margins, even at lower volumes.

Another key distribution channel for tea and herbal infusions in Sweden consists of **importers and wholesalers specialised in organic, natural and health products**, supplying retailers such as Life and Hälsokraft, as well as independent eco-shops and pharmacies. An example of a distributor of organic and natural products in Sweden is Biofood, which has the brands Pukka Herbs, Sonnentor, Numi and Sekem.

For exporters of herbal and functional teas, this channel is particularly suitable when products are positioned around organic, natural health and holistic wellness, rather than as mainstream grocery beverages.

Some distributors are **specialised in the food service and catering segment**; examples are:

- Martin & Servera (Axel Johnson), the leading supplier to the CFS sector in Sweden. Other important foodservice operators include Menigo (Sysco Corporation) and Svensk Cater.
- Werners Gourmet Service, a leading supplier of food products to restaurants, confectioners and professional chefs. It is owned by the Norwegian corporation Orkla/KåKå.

Tea and herbal infusion brands

For tea and herbal infusion exporters in low and middle-income countries, private-label manufacturing is an increasingly strategic way to enter the Swedish market, especially when partnering with brands that do not own their own production or packaging facilities. This is particularly attractive to Swedish tea brands that function as marketing and distribution companies rather than producers, but still want exclusive blends and Scandinavian-designed packaging. Also note that Sweden does not have tea-blending and packaging facilities, so most brands use plants in Poland, Germany and outside of Europe.

A unique example is Tekompaniet, owner of brands such as Follis/Life by Follis. Their teas are produced and packed in India and Sri Lanka, using organic-certified and ethically sourced tea bases, before entering Sweden under Swedish branding. The company also imports and distributes the tea brand Dilmah from Sri Lanka.

Retailers

Private label

A Swedish retail chain may contract a private-label manufacturer specialised in tea and/or herbal infusions to supply a product line that the Swedish supermarket sells under its own label or under an exclusive brand.

Unlike bulk tea or branded premium products, private label contracts require exporters to not only supply the tea or herbal infusion, but also manage packaging, Swedish labelling, certification and logistics in line with the retailer's standards. This model is less common for new or small suppliers, but it is used strategically when a retailer wants to offer affordable organic, Fairtrade or functional teas under its own store brand, without investing in production facilities or direct sourcing relationships.

A notable example comes from Sri Lanka, one of the world's leading tea exporters, where several packaging companies supply private-label teas to Scandinavian retailers, including Coop in Sweden. Coop Trading's "Good Night Herbal Tea" lists Bogawantalawa Tea Ceylon as the manufacturer.[7] Coop Trading is the Nordic private label buyer for Coop Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland.

The country of manufacture of Coop's Fairtrade collection (example: Coop's chamomile tea) is also Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has many exporters that specialise in private-label services (string-and-tag, sachet and biodegradable pyramid bags, etc.), offering end-to-end products for retailers (examples: Venture Tea and Eswaran).

For exporters of herbal and blended teas, private label can be an attractive entry route, but only when they have industrial packaging capacity, food safety certification (e.g. ISO/FSSC 22000), sustainability certification (e.g. organic, Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance) and flexible production formats such as tea bags, pyramid bags or ready-to-shelf retail boxes.

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[7] European Private Label awards, Tea, Coffee & hot drinks

Own brand

Besides private-label production, exporters may also attempt to supply their own brand directly to Swedish retail chains. This is possible but considerably more difficult. Large retailers only list external tea brands if they demonstrate

- Strong brand identity and market demand in Sweden or internationally.
- Compliance with Swedish/EU food safety, labelling and packaging regulations.
- Stable supply capacity and competitive pricing.
- Marketing support, product storytelling and proof of sustainability (organic, Fairtrade, climate footprint, recyclable packaging, etc.).
- A local distributor or import partner who manages stocking, promotions and retailer relations.

Market segments

The Swedish market for tea and herbal infusions is diverse and segmented by price, product positioning, quality level, sustainability claims and consumer expectations. Unlike other related products like coffee, tea consumption in Sweden is smaller by volume but highly differentiated by lifestyle, functionality and premium value.

As applicable to other products, the Swedish food market is divided primarily between retail (65 per cent) and food-service/catering (35 per cent). Understanding these segments and the main players in each one of them is essential for exporters to position their product correctly, set realistic price levels and adjust their branding and packaging to Swedish consumer preferences.

Retail segment

Tea and herbal infusion companies supply supermarket chains with pre-packed products under their own labels or branded lines. Many of the large tea and herbal infusion companies service both retail and industry.

The Swedish food retail market is one of the most consolidated in Europe and is dominated by three groups: ICA Gruppen, Axfood and Coop (Kooperativa Förbundet), which together control around 85 to 90 per cent of total grocery sales[8].

Beyond the three main groups, tea and herbal infusions also reach Swedish consumers through health-food, specialty and online retail channels, which cater to niche and premium segments.

- **Specialised tea shops:** These shops cater to consumers who value origin-specific teas, single-estate leaves, artisanal herbal infusions, ceremonial matcha, traditional brewing methods and ethically sourced ingredients. Examples: In the Mood for Tea, Tehuset Java and The Tea Centre of Stockholm.
- **Gourmet and delicatessen shops:** These shops also distribute premium teas, especially organic, artisanal or gift-oriented products, carrying Scandinavian-designed brands like Johan & Nyström (Dear Tea Society), Teministeriet, Fjällte or imported high-end teas such as Kusmi Tea. They focus on quality, aesthetics, gift packaging and storytelling, making them ideal for luxury and speciality tea products. Examples: Tehörnan and Östermalms Saluhall.

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[8] Svensk dagligvaruhandel, The Food retail index 2024

- **Specialist food/health-food stores**: Retailers focused on organic, functional and niche teas/herbal infusions; they cater to consumers seeking premium, wellness-oriented or sustainable packaging teas. Examples: Life and Hälsokraft.
- **Online e-commerce and subscription platforms:** Tea brands and importers sell via Swedish online stores reaching consumers. Example: Te-Centralen.
- **Ethnic and international food stores:** Stores specialising in imported foods and specialist goods-for-foreign communities; distribute flavour-rich, ethnic or niche herbal infusions. Example: Matvärlden.
- **HORECA/café/specialty tea shops:** Restaurants, cafés and tea bars that serve loose-leaf teas, premium blends, and herbal infusions catering to lifestyle occasions. These can serve as influential channels for premium or branded teas.

Table 2 shows the prices of various tea and herbal infusion products on the Swedish market, in different market segments: high-end, mid-range and low-end:

- **Low-end:** Tea and herbal infusions that are mainly found in supermarkets, at standard quality levels. These are usually mass-market products by big brands and standard-quality private label products from retailers themselves.
- **Mid-range:** Tea and herbal infusions that are mainly sold through supermarkets and are usually the high-quality category of retailers. Supermarkets increasingly offer their own premium private label tea and infusions. They are often organic and/or fair-trade certified.
- **High-end:** More specialised and higher quality tea and herbal infusions that are offered at specialty shops and online specialty shops. Teas and herbal ingredients from specific origins are increasingly common, and products are offered in more sophisticated packaging such as compostable materials, metal tins, etc.

The Swedish market for herbal infusions, such as chamomile and sleep blends shown in Table 2, shows a clear segmentation based on price, product complexity, ingredient sourcing and packaging quality.

Table 2. Herbal infusions in different market segments in Sweden

Segment	Product	Picture	Retail price SEK/100 grams
Low-end	**FRIGGS Örtte Kamomill** 25 sachets, 37 grams total Ingredients: chamomile flowers SEK 26.00		SEK 70.27 per 100 grams
Mid-range	**Pukka Tea** Three Chamomile 20 sachets, 30 grams total Ingredients: three types of organic chamomile from Egypt, Croatia and Hungary SEK 69.00		SEK 230.00 per 100 grams
High-end	**Tehuset Java** Sleepy Time 16 compostable pyramid bags, 2 grams each Ingredients: Liquorice root, Rosehip, Marigold, Peppermint, Strawberry leaves, Verbena, Chamomile, Rose, Spearmint, Silver Linden SEK 89.00		SEK 278.13 per 100 grams

Food-service and catering

Tea and herbal infusions are also distributed to restaurants, cafés and tea bars that serve loose-leaf teas, premium blends and herbal infusions catering to lifestyle occasions. These can serve as influential channels for premium or branded teas. The main distributors operating in the food service and catering sector in Sweden are highlighted in the previous section.

Keep up with the trends

Food safety: Essential for market entry in Sweden

Ensuring food safety remains a non-negotiable prerequisite for accessing the Swedish and wider EU market. Sweden maintains a high level of control and monitoring over imported food products, including teas and herbal infusions, and actively reports incidents through the EU's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF)[9].

In the last 5 years (2020–2025), Sweden has issued around 10 notifications to the European Commission via the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) under the search term "tea", which includes herbal infusions. This includes both bulk and packaged teas and herbal infusions.

Among the most notable notifications, there are cases of: Pesticide residues (5 notifications); use of non-authorised novel ingredients such as marshmallow flower (*Althaea officinalis*) and butterfly pea flower (*Clitoria ternatea*) (2 notifications); Salmonella in ingredients used for teas (1 notification); toxic tea ingredients: *Mentha Pulegium* (1 notification); rat droppings in tea blend ingredients (1 notification).

This pattern underlines that compliance with EU food safety standards, covering pesticide residues, allowed ingredients, contaminant levels and microbiological criteria, is a core expectation for any exporter aiming to supply the Swedish market.

"Premiumisation" of teas and herbal infusions

The premiumisation and specialty tea and herbal infusion demand is a clear trend in Europe[10] (including Sweden), with consumers willing to pay more for better quality and experience. Premiumisation refers to moving beyond standard commodity offerings (basic black tea bags or generic herbal infusions) toward products with higher perceived value, focusing on: higher quality, authenticity, sustainability and sensory experience.

In Sweden, the growing premiumisation of tea and herbal infusions is reflected in the emergence and success of specialised tea shops. They position tea as a premium lifestyle product, comparable to fine wine or specialty coffee, focusing on high-quality loose-leaf teas, single-origin varieties, seasonal harvests, organic and ethically-sourced products and artisanal herbal blends. Some examples are:

- In the Mood for Tea: specialises in premium organic teas from respected growing regions: black, green, white, oolong.
- The Tea Centre of Stockholm: tea specialist shop online and physical shop in Stockholm. Their offerings include Japanese sencha, first flush Darjeeling, organic teas, etc.
- Tehuset Java: offers a large variety of premium teas (loose-leaf, singles, rare blends) and accessories (tea ware, gifts) alongside cafés/shops.
- Paloma Tea Company: premium herbal/tea blends targeted at design-/ gift-oriented Swedish segment.
- Te-Centralen: one of Sweden's most traditional online tea shops.

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9 European Commission, Rapid Alert System for food and feed
10 Mordor Intelligence, Europe Tea market size & share analysis

There is a broader tier of premium and gourmet lifestyle shops in Sweden that are not exclusively tea retailers, but where teas and herbal infusions are part of the offer. These shops typically offer premium food, beverages, delicatessen items, gift sets and gourmet ingredients. An example is Tehörnan, a hybrid shop combining premium spices, premium teas/herbal infusions and other gourmet food items.

Although not specific to Sweden, the Agence pour la Valorisation des Produits Agricoles (AVPA)[11], based in Paris, is part of the premiumisation trend for tea and herbal infusions. The association is influential at the European specialty and gourmet market level, and its awards are increasingly recognised by consumers, importers and retailers as a marker of authenticity, origin and craftsmanship. AVPA organises the annual "Teas of the World"[12] International Contest, where tea producers and herbal infusion creators (particularly from low- and middle-income countries) submit products to be evaluated in a blind tasting by panels of European tea sommeliers, chefs and sensory experts.

Flavour exploration with an increasingly diverse population

Sweden's growing multicultural society and evolving food culture have also reshaped consumer preferences in tea and herbal infusions. With 20.8 per cent of the population being foreign-born and 7.9 per cent foreign citizens in 2024[13], exposure to diverse flavours and traditions is much greater than before.

This is fuelling a shift from traditional black tea towards global tea traditions and herbal beverages with distinctive cultural identities. As a result, consumers actively seek chai blends with cardamom and ginger, Japanese-style sencha and matcha, herbal teas inspired by Ayurveda, hibiscus blends from North Africa, among others. These drinks are no longer niche imports but now feature in supermarkets, cafés, concept tea shops, health food stores and online subscription boxes across Sweden.

Major retailers such as ICA and Coop, as well as specialty brands like Teministeriet, Johan & Nyström (Dear Tea Society), the premium retailer Tehuset Java, and health shops have expanded their tea assortments, often blending global flavours with Nordic ingredients (e.g. rooibos with sea buckthorn).

Increasing demand for functional tea and herbal infusions

The popularity of herbal infusions is steadily growing across Europe[14], including in Sweden, driven by the demand for a healthy lifestyle. In addition to benefiting from a broader shift toward health-oriented, low-sugar beverages, tea and herbal infusions are a growing category when it comes to product launches highlighting well-being and functionality. The functional segment clusters around four areas:

- Sleep/relaxation: including ingredients such as chamomile, valerian and lemon balm. Examples: Teministeriet Ayurveda "Relax" and Dear Tea Society "Mellow Mr Bloom".

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11 AVPA, Home
12 AVPA, Teas of the world
13 SCB, Sweden's population in summary 1960–2024
14 Tea & Coffee, EU and UK experience botanical and herbal tea boom

- Digestion: including ingredients such as peppermint, fennel and ginger. Example: Teministeriet “Ginger & Lemon Organic”.
- Immunity: including ingredients such as elderflower/berry, echinacea, ginger and turmeric. Example: Nordic Superfood “Berry Tea: Elderberry, Black Currant & Cranberry”.
- Detox/balance: including ingredients such as dandelion and nettle. Example: Clipper (UK) “Organic Detox”.

Note that other categories such as Women’s Health (including ingredients like raspberry leaf, nettle, chasteberry, fennel or rose petals; example: Yogi Tea (Germany) Women’s Balance) and Energy/Cognition (including ingredients like yerba mate, matcha, green tea and ginseng; examples: Teministeriet “Boost”; Hälsote Yerba Mate Chai) are also common. Other growing niches include metabolism and weight management, as well as mood or stress support (containing adaptogens like ashwagandha).

As highlighted by the association Tea & Herbal Infusions Europe, it is important to note that claims for botanical ingredients used in tea and herbal infusions have yet to be evaluated by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)[15].

It is also important to note that certain ingredients used in herbal infusions are under regulatory scrutiny. For example, a EU working group of 26 national food-safety agencies identified ashwagandha among a list of critical botanicals to be restricted or banned[16] under the Article 8 procedure of the Regulation (EC) No 1925/2006 concerning vitamins, minerals and other substances added to foods.

Growing demand for organic products spills over to the tea and herbal infusion market in Sweden

Organic certification plays an increasingly important role in Sweden’s tea and herbal infusion market, especially within the broader premiumisation and health trends. Organic-certified teas and herbal infusions are perceived not only as healthier, but also as more carefully produced, traceable and better controlled in terms of pesticide residues and cross-contamination. This aligns with the expectations of Swedish buyers for transparency, sustainability and quality assurance throughout the supply chain.

In spite of the importance of organic certification in the Swedish market, total organic food sales in Sweden in 2024 were SEK 30.9 billion, down from SEK 34.2 billion in 2023 (Ecological Annual Report 2024[17]). However, industry experts attribute this contraction to a combination of economic, behavioural and retail-channel factors, rather than a reversal in consumer interest in sustainability or organic foods. Sweden still represents one of the main markets for organic food and beverages in the European Union. Organic food and beverages correspond to a share of roughly 6.7 per cent of total food sales in Sweden.

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15 Tea & Herbal infusions Europe, Food Safety
16 Nutraingredients, European Food Safety report ´taking pot shots` at popular botanicals
17 Organic Sweden, Ekologiska årsrapporten 2024

Organic teas and herbal infusions remain a resilient and value-driven subcategory, especially within premium retailers like Tehuset Java and Tehörnan, organic-only supermarkets like Good Store, and health food stores like Life and Hälsokraft.

Several Swedish brands and brands from other (European) origins sold in Sweden focus exclusively on organic teas and herbal infusions, for example:

- Kung Markatta: established Swedish organic brand offering certified herbal teas, rooibos blends and green teas.
- Pukka Herbs: a UK brand with a strong presence in Sweden, known for 100 per cent organic herbal blends focused on wellness.
- Yogi Tea: a German brand, fully organic, and widely distributed in health-focused and other retail chains in Sweden.
- Nordqvist: a Finnish brand with organic (and fair trade) certified lines.

Growing importance of traceability, transparency and origin in tea and botanical supply chains

Swedish consumers are becoming increasingly discerning about the food products they buy. They are no longer satisfied with basic quality or certification labels; they now question product origins, production methods, and the social and environmental footprint behind what they consume.

This trend is reshaping how Swedish retailers and importers manage their supply chains, especially for tea, infusions and the ingredients that compose these products; for example, tea leaves and certain spices are perceived as high-risk categories for fraud, adulteration and unsustainable sourcing.

The concern for traceability and transparency translates directly to sourcing. Major Swedish food retailers like ICA Gruppen (For a Good Tomorrow)[18], Coop Sverige (Rules for Coop's Sustainability Declaration)[19] and Axfood (Sustainability Report 2024)[20] have embedded traceability and responsible sourcing into their sustainability strategies.

Specifically for teas and herbal infusions, Swedish consumers increasingly expect full-chain transparency and sustainable sourcing: the origin, social conditions, environmental footprint and packaging. Some examples of sustainable practices implemented by Swedish brands are:

- Tea Masters offers a transparent supply chain from plantation to cup, sourcing source premium loose-leaf teas directly from regions like the Nilgiri Hills and Darjeeling Tea Leaves in India.
- Teministeriet "Tea Travels" and "Ayurveda" collections often specify origins such as Darjeeling, Fujian, Nilgiri and communicate ethical small-farm sourcing.
- Life by Follis places sustainability and supplier relationships at the core of its identity. It uses 100 per cent organic-certified ingredients, fully compostable tea bags made from plant fibres, FSC-certified paper boxes and avoids plastic in packaging.

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18 Ica, For a good tomorrow
19 Coop, Rules for Coop's sustainability declaration
20 Axfood, Annual and sustainability report 2024

Other tea brands widely sold in Sweden, which also emphasise origin and sustainable sourcing are Nordqvist Tea (Finland), Pukka Herbs (UK) and Yogi Tea (Germany).

Sustainable packaging a top priority for tea and herbal infusions

Sustainable packaging is becoming a core requirement for consumer-goods supply chains throughout Sweden and the European Union, and this has direct implications for finished products such as teas and herbal infusions.

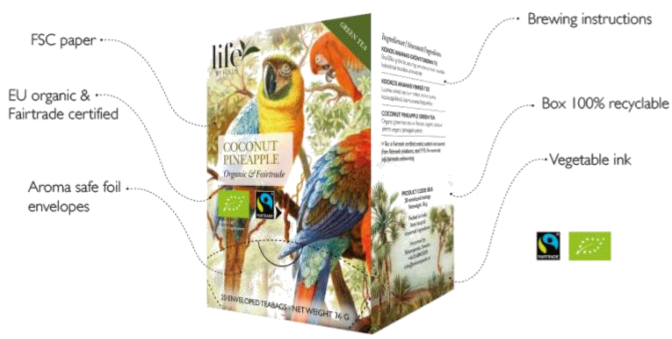
Under the umbrella of the European Green Deal and the related Circular Economy Action Plan, the EU has committed to ensuring that all packaging placed on the market will be reusable or recyclable in an economically viable way by 2030. The Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)[21] which entered into force on 11 February 2025, replaced earlier directives and sets binding criteria on recyclability, recycled content and minimised use of virgin materials.

In Sweden, the national regulatory and market context goes even further in some areas. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket) has an ordinance on extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging (Ordinance 2022:1274)[22], which imposes responsibilities on producers (including those bringing in packaged products) to ensure collection, sorting and recycling of packaging waste.

Some examples of sustainable packaging used by Swedish brands are Dear Tea Society (brand of Johan & Nyström) (biodegradable PLA pyramid bags and retail boxes); Teamasters (loose leaf and pouched teas, biodegradable and recyclable packaging materials, printed with water-based ink); Teministeriet's "SUPERTEA" line, which uses individually wrapped tea bags that are biodegradable and retail boxes with a minimalist style; and Tehuset Java (herbal infusions and teas in compostable pyramid bags).

Figure 2. Sustainable packaging examples for tea and herbal infusions

Source: Teministeriet



Source: Life by Follis

[21] European Commission, Packaging waste
[22] Naturvårdsverket, Extended producer responsibility for packaging

Exporters of packaged teas and herbal infusions must increasingly comply with circular-economy criteria for the different parts of the product: outer carton, foil or film, inner sachets or tea bags. This means that packaging should use mono-material or easily separable layers, minimise the use of non-recyclable laminate and ensure the compostability of tea bags where appropriate. Exporters must also meet Swedish expectations around transparency, renewable materials, recyclability at scale and clear labelling of end-of-life handling.

Live up to the requirements

To export pre-packed tea and herbal infusions to Sweden and the wider EU, suppliers must comply with strict regulatory, quality and sustainability requirements. These include food safety legislation, maximum residue levels (MRLs) for pesticides, limits for contaminants such as heavy metals or pyrrolizidine alkaloids and microbiological standards. Exporters must also follow rules for traceability, hygiene during processing, labelling in Swedish and conformity of packaging materials in contact with food.

For organic products, compliance with EU Organic Regulation and certification by an accredited body is essential. Additionally, herbal ingredients used for functional or wellness claims must comply with EU health claims legislation, and certain botanicals may fall under the Novel Food Regulation.

Swedish buyers also expect additional voluntary standards related to sustainability, ethical sourcing and transparency. Certifications such as Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, EU Organic, Fair for Life or B-Corp, as well as clear information about origin, labour conditions, climate impact and packaging are becoming decisive factors.

Exporters who can demonstrate traceability from farm to final product, safe handling, correct documentation and responsible sourcing practices have a significantly higher chance of establishing long-term partnerships with Swedish buyers.

Mandatory requirements for the market for tea and herbal infusions in Sweden

Safety of tea and herbal infusions

When exporting tea and herbal infusions to Sweden, you must comply with the legally binding requirements regarding food safety, as specified in the European Union’s General Food Law[23]. This law is mainly related to traceability, hygiene and control. Compliance with this legislation ensures that the product is safe to consume. Related to this are the legal limits for food contaminants.

Official border control for tea and herbal infusions imported to the EU
Official food controls include regular inspections that can be carried out at import or at all further stages of marketing. In case of non-compliance with European food legislation, individual cases are reported through the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feeds (RASFF),[24] which is freely and publicly accessible. Repeated non-compliance with European food legislation may lead to special import conditions or even suspension of imports from that country. Stricter conditions include laboratory tests for a certain percentage of shipment from specified countries.

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[23] European Commission, General food law
[24] European Commission, Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed

Contaminant control in tea and herbal infusions

The EU Regulation on Contaminants[25] sets maximum levels for certain contaminants in food products. This regulation is frequently updated, and apart from the limits set for general foodstuffs, there are a number of specific contaminant limits for specific products, including tea and herbal infusions.

The main contaminant concerns for tea and herbal infusions include pesticide residues, pyrrolizidine alkaloids, mycotoxins, heavy metals, microbiological contamination and smoke-derived substances such as PAHs. Exporters of pre-packed teas must ensure raw materials and finished products meet EU and Swedish standards throughout the supply chain. Contaminant levels shall be kept as low as can reasonably be achieved, following recommended good working practices.

- Pesticides: the EU Pesticide Database[26] has an overview of the maximum residue levels (MRLs). The database lists the maximum residue levels for tea (*Camellia sinensis*) and herbal botanicals individually.
- Pyrrolizidine Alkaloids (PAs)[27]: Found naturally in certain weeds mixed with herbal teas (e.g. peppermint, chamomile). EU has set maximum levels under Regulation (EU) 2020/2040[28] (effective since 2022).
- Mycotoxins: limits for mycotoxins are set by EC Regulation 1881/2006[29]. This is less common in tea due to low moisture, but herbs (e.g. chamomile, hibiscus) may be affected.
- Maximum levels of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs)[30]: current European legislation on contaminants sets the maximum level of PAH for several botanicals.
- Heavy metals: Maximum levels for lead in tea and herbal infusions are defined in Regulation (EU) 2021/1317[31]. Cadmium limits apply to certain herbal products.
- Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs): PAH limits are established in Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006[32]. Risk is higher in smoked teas.
- Microbiological contamination: Tea and herbal infusions must be free from *Salmonella*. Dried tea is low-risk, but herbs (e.g. fennel, anis, chamomile) might be affected by *Salmonella* contamination. The association Tea and Herbal Infusions Europe (THIE) has recommended microbiological specifications for tea and herbal (and fruit) infusions in its list of publications (last updated 2024) [33].

Novel Food

Under Regulation (EU) 2015/2283[34], any botanical or food ingredient without a significant history of consumption in the EU before 15 May 1997 requires a formal novel food authorisation, even when used in small quantities as a flavouring or infusion. For example, the botanicals *Althaea officinalis* (marshmallow flower) and *Clitoria ternatea* (butterfly pea flower) remain subject to EU risk-assessment

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25 Official journal of the European Union, Regulation on contaminants
26 European Commission, EU pesticides database
27 EFSA, Pyrrolizidine alkaloids in tea, herbal infusions and food supplements
28 European Union, maximum levels of pyrrolizidine alkaloids in certain foodstuffs
29 European Union, maximum levels for certain contaminants in foodstuffs
30 European Union, Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs)
31 European Union, Regulation - 2021/1317
32 European Union, Regulation - 1881/2006
33 Tea & Herbal Infusions Europe, Publications
34 European Commission, Novel food

procedures; without authorisation, teas containing them can be considered non-compliant. Similarly, *Ilex guayusa* (guayusa) is gaining popularity in energy/cognitive teas and herbal blends, but its regulatory status in the EU must be carefully verified before market entry.

Food contact materials

All packaging and materials used in pre-packed tea and herbal infusions (including tea bags, sachets, filter paper, inner linings, aluminium foils, films, adhesives, inks, cartons and string tags) must comply with the EU legislation on Food Contact Materials (FCMs) (Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004)[35].

Specific rules also apply to certain materials commonly used in tea packaging, such as plastic components (Regulation (EU) No 10/2011)[36], recycled paper and cardboard and printing inks, which must not migrate into the infusion during brewing. For tea bags, growing attention is being placed on avoiding plastics (e.g. nylon or PET heat-sealed bags) and switching to biodegradable or compostable plant-based fibres, provided they comply with food safety and migration limits.

Swedish authorities (Livsmedelsverket) enforce these EU rules and may request Declarations of Compliance (DoC) for packaging materials from importers and packers.

Food additives

Traditional tea and herbal infusions (loose or bagged) made only from dried plants and natural essential oils (without any added additives) are not regulated as "additive-containing food products". However, the Food Additives Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008)[37] applies when additives are intentionally added to tea or herbal blends, such as flavour enhancers, sweeteners, acidity regulators; colours (e.g. added to iced tea powders or instant teas); preservatives or anti-caking agents in powdered instant tea mixes or ready-to-drink (RTD) tea products; flavourings (covered by Regulation (EC) No 1334/2008[38]), which are relevant for fruit-flavoured or aromatised teas; Herbal infusions contain added substances, not just natural plant material (example: vitamin-fortified wellness teas, CBD tea, added caffeine, citric acid, etc.).

Food fraud and adulteration

Exporters of pre-packed tea and herbal infusions must be especially alert to the risk of fraud and adulteration in botanical ingredients, since many herbs and spices are traded globally as bulk materials and may pass through multiple intermediaries before they are packaged into a finished product.

Herbs and botanicals used in teas are vulnerable to practices such as mislabelling of species, replacement by cheaper plants, dilution, adding non-food materials, undisclosed fillers and substitution of high-value botanicals with lower-value ones. For example, research shows that in the herb and spice sector, over 25.6 per cent of 3,112 notifications of adulteration in herbs/spices were related to fraud or misrepresentation[39].

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35 European Commission, Food Contact materials
36 European Union, Food additives
37 European commission, EU Rules - Food additives
38 European Union, Flavouring
39 National Library of Medicine, Spice and herb Frauds

In the context of pre-packed teas and herbal infusions, fraud can undermine the origin claim, authenticity of botanical blend, therapeutic claims and potentially introduce health risks (e.g. allergenic species, non-approved substances, etc). These actions constitute food fraud and will affect a supplier's reputation in the Swedish/European market.

Packaging and labelling

All pre-packed tea and herbal infusions sold in Sweden must comply with EU food labelling legislation and national Swedish requirements. This ensures consumers receive accurate, clear and non-misleading information.

Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011[40] on the Provision of Food Information to Consumers (FIC Regulation) applies to all pre-packed food products, including tea and herbal infusions. It requires mandatory information to be clearly visible in Swedish for the Swedish market and not misleading. The label must include the following information in Swedish:

- Name of the product: "Green tea with mint", "Herbal infusion: chamomile".
- Ingredient list: in descending order by weight; specify percentage of characterising ingredients (e.g. 70 per cent chamomile).
- Allergen labelling emphasised in bold (if the product contains allergens such as liquorice root, nuts, etc.).
- Net quantity (in grams).
- Best before date.
- Name and address of manufacturer, importer or distributor established in Sweden/EU.
- Country of origin.
- Storage conditions (example: "Store in a cool, dry place").
- Lot number/batch code for traceability.

Dual or multilingual labelling is allowed, but Swedish must be included if the product is intended for Swedish retail. Specific points of attention for tea and herbal infusions:

- If flavourings are used (e.g. bergamot oil, vanilla flavour), this must follow Regulation (EC) No 1334/2008[41] on flavourings.
- Health or nutritional claims (e.g. "supports sleep", "boosts immunity") are regulated by Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006[42] and are only allowed if authorised by EFSA/European Commission. A public EU Register of Nutrition and Health Claims lists all allowed nutrition claims and all authorised and non-authorised health claims. Most claims for botanicals used in herbal teas (chamomile, ginger, valerian, nettle, etc.) cannot be presented as medicinal claims.[43]
- Caffeine labelling: If caffeine is added or if the tea naturally contains high caffeine (e.g. yerba maté or matcha) and is not clearly categorised as a "tea", a warning may be required: "High caffeine content. Not recommended for children, pregnant or breastfeeding women". (Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011)[44].

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40 European Commission, Labelling and nutrition
41 European Union, Flavoring
42 European Commission, Nutrition and Health Claims
43 European Commission, EU register of health claims
44 Official journal of the European Union, Caffeine

Documentation

Importers in Sweden normally require exporters to provide a full set of technical, legal and quality documentation before they agree to purchase or place a product on the market. This applies especially to pre-packed teas and herbal infusions, which are considered consumer-ready food products.

Table 3. List of documentation requirements: pre-packaged tea/herbal infusions

Document	Details
Certificate of Registration/Business License	Proof that the exporting company is legally registered and authorised to export food.
Food Safety Management Certificate (HACCP/ISO 22000/FSSC 22000/BRC/IFS), if available	Demonstrates that the company follows internationally recognised food safety systems.
Product Specification Sheet	Detailed description of the tea/herbal blend, including ingredient list, percentages, botanical names, product form (loose, bagged), sensory properties.
Full Ingredient Breakdown and Botanical Names	Tea (Camellia sinensis), herbs (e.g. Mentha piperita), spices, flavourings, essential oils, extracts.
Certificate of Analysis (CoA)	Lab report showing results for contaminants: pesticide residues, heavy metals (Pb, Cd), microbiology, mycotoxins, PAHs, moisture, caffeine (if applicable).
Statement on Irradiation/Fumigation	Whether ethylene oxide, gamma irradiation, steam sterilisation or other treatments were used.
Allergen Declaration (per EU Regulation 1169/2011)	If the tea or herbal infusion contains allergens like liquorice (glycyrrhizin), nuts, soy lecithin, gluten, etc.
The organic certificate (EU Regulation 2018/848), the transaction certificate and the certifier code (example: SE-EKO-04)	If the tea is organic-certified.

The following may also be required specifically for pre-packaged tea and herbal infusions. Make sure to consult with your potential buyer:

- Label Artwork/Mock-up in Swedish, complying with EU & Swedish labelling laws
- Food Contact Material: Declaration of Compliance: Required for tea bags, filter paper, thread, staple, inner film, carton glazing, inks and adhesives. Must comply with EC 1935/2004 & EC 2023/2006.
- Packaging Material Specifications & Migration Test (if applicable): Especially if using plastics, PLA-based biodegradable bags, aluminium foil or compostable materials.

Additional requirements and certifications for tea and herbal infusions

Besides the regulatory requirements set by the European Union, tea and herbal infusion buyers may have additional requirements that exporters must meet to be successful in the Swedish market.

Quality requirements

Tea & Herbal Infusions Europe (THIE) publishes a set of quality criteria for tea and herbal infusions that go beyond legal EU requirements. These are industry best practices or recommended specifications and can serve as a reference to satisfy the extra requirements of Swedish and other European importers. The following is a list of quality requirements for tea and herbal infusions:

- Good Agricultural and Hygiene Practices (GAHP) for Herbal Teas[45]: Harvest timing, field hygiene, drying temperature, storage humidity (<12 per cent), pest control, batch traceability.
- Pyrrolizidine Alkaloids (PA) Prevention Code of Practice[46]: Measures to prevent PA contamination from weeds (e.g. Senecio, Eupatorium) during harvesting of chamomile, peppermint, rooibos, etc.
- Authenticity and Botanical Integrity[47]: Identity verification of botanicals used in infusions: Latin binomial, plant part, origin, absence of foreign matter.
- Mineral Oil Hydrocarbon (MOH – MOSH/MOAH) Control[48]: Monitoring presence of mineral oils from jute bags, machinery or recycled packaging.
- Sensory and Physical Quality Parameters: THIE "Compendium for Tea[49]" and "Compendium for Herbal Infusions[50]: Leaf appearance, infusion clarity, absence of foreign matter, moisture content (<8 per cent for tea, <12 per cent herbs), ash, acid-insoluble ash.
- Microbiological Guidelines for Tea (*Camellia sinensis*[51]) and Microbiological Specifications for Herbal and Fruit Infusions[52]: EU law only requires the absence of pathogens like *Salmonella*. THIE adds voluntary quantitative limits for total microbial load to ensure quality and shelf stability.

Quality management certification

Buyers in Sweden and other European countries may require suppliers to implement an advanced food safety management system and obtain a certificate from an accredited certifier for their tea and herbal infusions.

This is relevant, since this document covers products that are pre-packed at origin. Examples of such advanced food safety management systems are Food Safety System

45 Tea & Herbal Infusions Europe, Good Agricultural and Hygiene Practices (GAHP) for Herbal Teas
46 Tea & Herbal Infusions Europe, Pyrrolizidine Alkaloids (PA) Prevention Code of Practice
47 Tea & Herbal infusions Europe, Authenticity and Botanical Integrity
48 Tea & Herbal infusions Europe, Mineral Oil Hydrocarbon (MOH - MOSH/MOAH) Control
49 Tea & Herbal infusions Europe, Compendium for Tea
50 Tea & Herbal infusions Europe, Compendium for Herbal Infusions
51 Tea & Herbal infusions Europe, Microbiological Guidelines for Tea (*Camellia sinensis*)
52 Tea & Herbal infusions Europe, Microbiological Specifications for Herbal and Fruit Infusions

Certification (FSSC 22000),[53] BRCGS Food Safety,[54] International Featured Standards (IFS Food[55]) and the Safe Quality Food programme (SQF[56]). These standards are all part of the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI[57]).

Implementation and certification of these standards can be costly and is often relevant if the exporter is targeting large Swedish/European retail chains. Smaller buyers in niche markets are likely to have more relaxed food safety requirements, as they prioritise other aspects such as authenticity. It is therefore recommended to consult potential buyers to find out what their specific requirements are, since certificates can also show professionalism and serve as a competitive advantage.

Certification of organic production

To market and trade tea and herbal infusions as organic within the European Union, producers and exporters must comply with Regulation (EU) 2018/848 on organic production and labelling of organic products, which replaced Regulation (EC) No 834/2007. The regulation entered into force in January 2022 and sets uniform rules for organic production, control and labelling across the EU, and includes the following:

- Organic operators in third countries must be certified by a control body recognised by the European Commission. Organic certification must cover all stages of the supply chain, from primary production to processing, storage and export. Exporters should ensure their certification body is listed under EU Regulation (EU) 2021/2307, which sets rules for recognising control bodies and control authorities in third countries.
- Each organic consignment imported into the EU must be accompanied by an electronic Certificate of Inspection (COI) issued through the TRACES NT system (Trade Control and Expert System New Technology).
- Swedish importers and buyers will always request a COI as proof that the shipment meets EU organic import requirements.

In addition to the EU organic logo (the green leaf symbol), Sweden has its own national certification system known as KRAV. The KRAV label is based on EU organic rules but applies stricter environmental and ethical standards. It covers areas that go beyond EU regulation, including animal welfare, social responsibility, energy use, climate impact, aquaculture and restaurants. Products certified to EU organic standards can be marketed as organic in Sweden, but to carry the KRAV logo, they must meet these additional requirements. Many Swedish retailers and food manufacturers prefer the KRAV label because it enhances consumer trust and brand differentiation. However, this is likely not expected from a foreign brand of tea or herbal infusions.

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53 FSSC, Providing trust and impact for global food safety with FSSC 22000
54 BRCS, Food safety
55 IFS, Home
56 SQF, Home
57 GFSI, Home

Environmental and social sustainability

Buyers have different requirements for sustainability, which may include signing their suppliers' code of conduct or following common standards such as the Farm Sustainability Assessment/SAI Platform[58], SMETA/Supplier Ethical Data Exchange (SEDEX)[59], Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)[60] or Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI)[61]. Other important standards covering the Swedish/European market are:

- **Rainforest Alliance.** In 2023, the Rainforest Alliance 2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard became the umbrella standard for certification covered by the former programmes, including the UEBT/UTZ Herbal Tea Programme.
- **Fairtrade International standards,** which require producers and traders to meet a range of economic, environmental and social criteria.
- **Fair for Life standard,** which concerns certification programmes for fair trade, responsible supply chains and Corporate Social Responsibility.
- **FairWild standard,** which focuses on sustainable collection, social responsibility and fairtrade principles for wild-collected plants/ingredients in herbal infusions.
- **B-Corp Certification,** which is global certification for companies that meet high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability. Unlike product-based certifications, B-Corp evaluates the company as a whole (governance, labour policies, environment, community, supply chain ethics). Several tea and herbal infusion brands sold in Sweden, such as Pukka Herbs and Clipper Tea, are B-Corp certified.
- **UNCTAD BioTrade Initiative BioTrade Principles and Criteria,** which provide a framework for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in trade[62].

Useful Swedish information sources

- Livsmedelsverket: food safety, additives, and labelling.
- Jordbruksverket: import of plant products, organic certification.
- Tullverket: customs and tariffs.
- Konsumentverket: consumer protection and marketing claims.
- Organic Sweden/KRAV/Fairtrade Sverige: certification and organic trade.
- Business Sweden/Verksamt.se: trade and business portals.
- Svensk Dagligvaruhandel/Livsmedelsföretagen: retail and buyer associations.

58 SAI Platform, Farm Sustainability Assessment
59 Sedex, Home
60 Ethical Trading Initiative, Home
61 Amfori, Code of conduct
62 UN Trade & development, BioTrade principles and Criteria

Determine your logistics solution

Logistics and delivery terms

Efficient logistics are essential for exporters of pre-packed tea and herbal infusions wishing to access the Swedish market. Although tea and herbal products are considered low-risk, dry food products, they are highly sensitive to moisture, odours, temperature fluctuations and physical damage.

Packaging must arrive in excellent condition, and deliveries must be on time to preserve shelf life and meet retailer planning cycles. The choice of transport mode (sea, air or road) depends largely on the country of origin, shipment volume, product value and urgency.

Transport mode

- **Sea freight:** the most common option for pre-packed tea and herbal infusions shipped from Asia, Africa or Latin America.
  - It becomes cost-effective once volumes reach at least 1–2 pallets (approximately 500–800 kg) and especially at full-container loads.
  - Products are typically shipped to major hubs like Rotterdam or Hamburg and then transported to Sweden by road.
  - The main considerations are long transit times, moisture risks, odour contamination and the need for strong outer packaging, desiccants and traceability.
- **Road transport:** widely used for suppliers within Europe or neighbouring regions, such as Germany, Poland, the Baltics, or Armenia (via Georgia and Bulgaria).
  - It allows direct delivery to Swedish warehouses and suits both small and medium volumes.
  - Transit times are shorter than sea freight (usually 3–7 days)
  - The main requirements are clean, dry and food-safe trucks, proper palletisation, protection against dust or moisture, and full traceability of batches.
  - Customs procedures apply if goods transit from non-EU countries.
- **Air freight:** mainly for high-value, small-volume or urgent consignments, such as ceremonial matcha, first-flush speciality teas or retail samples.
  - It is economically viable only below 500–700 kg, after which sea freight becomes more cost-effective.
  - Air freight ensures fast delivery (2–5 days) but requires strong packaging to prevent crushing, moisture changes or aroma loss.
  - Despite high cost, it is useful for product launches, premium teas or when buyers require rapid restocking.

Quality assurance

Regardless of the transport method, quality assurance during transit is an essential part of logistics. Tea and herbal infusions easily absorb moisture and odours, so containers or trucks must be clean, dry and free from strong-smelling previous cargo such as spices, chemicals or seafood.

Good practices required by Swedish and other EU buyers are:

- Cartons must be strong enough to withstand stacking, and pallets should be shrink-wrapped or protected against dust and humidity.
- Use of clean, dry containers or trucks, free from strong odours or previous cargo residues.
- Protection against moisture: desiccants or “dry bags” in containers for tea.
- For premium/specialty tea and herbal infusions, temperature and humidity logging may be requested.
- Protection from physical damage and contamination during loading/unloading.
- Full traceability documentation: batch numbers, packaging lists, CoA, phytosanitary certificates (if the tea or herbal material is sold in bulk), organic transport certificates (if applicable).

Sustainability and buyer expectations

- Sweden’s importers and retailers are actively working to reduce transport-related emissions as part of their broader sustainability goals.
- Buyers may favour exporters who demonstrate efforts to minimise logistics-related CO_2 emissions, for instance through consolidated loads, shorter routes or participation in green shipping initiatives.
- Highlighting your sustainable logistics choices (e.g. use of sea freight, recyclable packaging, carbon-offset programs) can strengthen your commercial offer.

Incoterms

When negotiating international sales, Swedish buyers and exporters rely on Incoterms (International Commercial Terms) to clearly define the responsibilities, costs and risks between both parties during transport. These terms are established by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and are widely used across the EU trade system, including in Sweden.

Selecting the right Incoterm helps avoid misunderstandings about who pays for freight and insurance, who arranges transport and when ownership and risk transfer from exporter to buyer. Find more information on Incoterms on ITC’s Market Access Map[63].

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[63] ITC, Incoterms

Find a business partner

How to find buyers on the Swedish market for tea and herbal infusions

Exporters of tea and herbal infusions should invest time in researching the Swedish market before contacting potential buyers. A clear understanding of market structure, consumer preferences, sustainability expectations and supply chains helps companies position themselves realistically, avoid missteps and build long-term commercial relationships. The Swedish tea and herbal infusion market is relatively concentrated and increasingly premium-oriented, with a combination of large retail-driven suppliers and specialised importers/distributors.

For exporters of pre-packed tea and herbal infusions, success in Sweden depends not only on product quality, certifications or storytelling, but also on choosing the right market channels. The Swedish distribution landscape is diverse: from large supermarket chains to organic shops, ethnic food retailers, premium tea boutiques, pharmacies and fast-growing e-commerce platforms.

For new exporters, partnering with medium-sized importers, tea blenders or specialty distributors is often a more realistic entry point than approaching retail chains directly, especially when offering organic, single-origin, herbal or functional blends. To identify these potential partners, exporters can use dedicated platforms and trade events that bring together Swedish importers and distributors of tea and herbal infusions.

The next section outlines the main business platforms, trade fairs, and professional networks that exporters can leverage to map and approach qualified buyers in Sweden.

Sector associations

Sector associations are an important entry point for exporters of tea and herbal infusions who want to understand how the Swedish market operates, who the key buyers are and how sustainability and regulatory requirements are evolving. These organisations provide market intelligence, regulatory updates, sustainability guidance and often maintain member lists that include importers, tea packers, specialty brands and distributors active in the tea and herbal infusions/botanicals sector.

In Sweden, there is no association exclusively dedicated to tea, but tea importers and blenders are often represented within broader food and beverage sector organisations, such as Livsmedelsföretagen (The Swedish Food Federation)[64] or DHLF Dagligvaru-leverantörers Förbund (DHLF)[65], representing suppliers in retail and HoReCa.

At the European level, the most relevant organisation for this sector is Tea & Herbal Infusions Europe (THIE)[66], which represents companies involved in the import, packaging and marketing of tea (*Camellia sinensis*) and herbal infusions.

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64 Livsmedelsföretagen, Representing Sweden's third largest industry
65 Dagligvaruleverantörers förbund, About us
66 THIE, About us

THIE provides guidance on EU legislation, pesticide residues, contaminants, sustainability and consumer trends. However, Sweden is not represented through a national association/member country in this association.[67]

For exporters focusing on the organic market, Organic Sweden[68] serves as a national platform promoting organic production and trade. The organisation brings together companies across the organic value chain[69], including importers and brands marketing KRAV- and EU Organic-certified products. An interesting list of distributors focusing on health-oriented and organic retailers is available on the association's website and can be of great value for exporters of tea and herbal infusions to benchmark their assortments, as well as to explore future partnerships.

Sector-specific trade fairs

The main food and beverage trade fairs relevant to Swedish buyers and importers are not held in Sweden itself but across major European trade hubs such as Germany, France and the Netherlands. These international events regularly attract Swedish exhibitors and importers who attend to discover new suppliers, explore sourcing trends and establish connections. Participating in these trade fairs allows exporters from producing countries to meet Swedish buyers directly, showcase their products and gain visibility in the wider European food ingredients market.

This is especially important for pre-packed teas and herbal infusions, which are not commodities or bulk ingredients, but branded consumer goods. These products rely on storytelling, visual identity, packaging design, functionality (such as sleep, detox, immunity), organic or fair-trade certification and origin narratives to convince buyers.

At the European level, key events include:

- Anuga (Cologne, Germany) and SIAL (Paris, France): Two of the world's largest and most influential trade fairs for food and beverages, featuring multiple halls dedicated to fine foods, drinks, hot beverages and other areas relevant to tea and herbal infusions.
- Biofach (Nuremberg, Germany): The world's largest trade fair for organic products and the most important platform for certified organic tea and herbal infusion exporters.
- Natural & Organic Food Show (London, UK) and Natexpo (France): Trade fairs dedicated to natural and organic products, offering opportunities to network with leading brands and importers focused on sustainable sourcing.

Although these large-scale fairs are outside Sweden, the country hosts several regional and sector-specific trade shows that are valuable for understanding local market dynamics and meeting domestic buyers:

- Nordic Organic Expo: Scandinavia's largest event for natural and organic products, attracting both regional and international exhibitors.
- Bite Stockholm: A key show for food, hospitality and catering, showcasing innovations and ingredients used in professional kitchens.

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67 Tea & Herbal infusions Europe, Membership
68 Organic Sweden, Home
69 Organic Sweden, Members

Exporters of tea and herbal infusions are strongly advised to attend and participate in these trade fairs, as they offer multiple advantages: direct exposure to Swedish and Nordic buyers, opportunities for networking and partnership building, and firsthand insights into product trends, packaging, sustainability and flavour innovation.

Conclusions

The Swedish tea and herbal infusion market is relatively small by volume compared to coffee but represents a diverse and highly value-driven sector that is increasingly shaped by health, sustainability and premium lifestyle trends.

While overall tea consumption per capita is stable, demand is diversifying from traditional black tea towards herbal infusions, organic teas, functional blends (sleep, digestion, immunity) and premium loose-leaf products. This creates clear opportunities for exporters who can offer high-quality, certified or story-driven products, rather than purely commodity-grade tea.

However, entering the Swedish market is not straightforward, especially concerning a pre-packed product. The supply structure is concentrated around a limited number of specialised importers, tea brands, organic distributors and retail groups such as ICA, Coop and Axfood.

Retail chains do not typically import directly; they rely on tea importers and distributors and private-label manufacturing agreements. As a result, new exporters will normally build relationships with mid-sized importers or specialty distributors rather than approaching supermarkets directly.

Exporters of pre-packed tea or herbal infusions must also comply with strict EU food safety legislation, pesticide residue limits, traceability rules and Swedish labelling requirements. For herbal ingredients, increased scrutiny from EFSA means exporters must document safety, correct botanical identification and absence of contaminants. Sustainability expectations are also particularly high: recyclable or compostable tea bags, sustainable packaging, social responsibility and clear communication about origin are becoming standard requirements rather than market differentiators.

Two main market entry strategies exist. Exporters with strong branding, design and storytelling may attempt to sell their own brand. This path is competitive, costly and requires local marketing and distribution partnerships. Another route is private-label manufacturing for Swedish brands, organic health stores or retailers. But this also requires advanced production, technical and logistical capacities and flexibility, in addition to extra costs in terms of certificates and product/manufacturing adaptations.

In conclusion, Sweden offers a high-value, niche-oriented opportunity for tea and herbal infusion exporters, but success depends on meeting strict regulatory requirements, adapting to sustainability and packaging expectations, choosing the right distribution channel and providing traceability and consistency.

Building partnerships with specialised importers, organic distributors or private-label buyers is the most realistic strategy for long-term market entry. Exporters that invest in certification, packaging innovation, functional blends and transparent sourcing will be best positioned to take advantage of Sweden's growing demand for premium and wellness-oriented tea and herbal infusion products.