

Poor management of the fish stock has resulted in depleted resources in several parts of the country and there are serious concerns about the long-term future of the industry. Environmentally-inappropriate fishing practices have led to an embargo on tuna imports into the United States and a consumer boycott of Mexican shrimp.

The government has recognized that this situation cannot continue, for that reason it has acted to develop the industry and to bring in modern fishery management techniques. The *Programa de Pesca y Acuicultura 1995-2000*, Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Program, is focused on improved infrastructure, better resource management techniques, the restoration of endangered fish stocks and the expansion of aquaculture. This plan has received mixed reactions from the fishing industry. While it will impose many new standards and regulations on fishing operators, it is generally recognized that higher productivity and improved marketing efforts are essential in today's liberalized trade environment.

As the industry develops and modernizes, there will be many opportunities for Canadian producers of seafood products. In spite of Mexico's relative self-sufficiency in these products, there are a number of important niches, including sardine, lobster, salt cod, and smoked salmon, where Canadian products can be competitive. There are also many openings for joint ventures between Canadian fish producers and their less well-developed counterparts in Mexico.

THE MEXICAN FISHING INDUSTRY

The Mexican fishing fleet consists of more than 74,000 craft, but more than 95 percent of them are small craft of less than 10 tonnes, many of them lacking even the most basic electronics.

Mexico has more than 11,000 kilometres of coastline, and claims an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of almost 3 million square kilometres. Its territory includes 1.5 million hectares of lagoons and estuaries. There are officially 371 islands, reefs and cays, as well as 336,000 square kilometres of continental shelf.

PRODUCTION

Mexico's fishery resource includes more than 800 species of fish and other seafood. Fish of commercial significance include tuna, sardine, anchovy, red snapper, mullet and king mackerel. Crustaceans and mollusks include shrimp, lobster, abalone, oyster, clams and octopus. Total production in 1995 was about 1.4 million tonnes live. Of this, 1,034 thousand tonnes ended up as processed fish for human consumption, while 321 thousand tonnes and 42 thousand tonnes went