

Homma Suisan produces no less than 7 flavoured end products and is particularly innovative in the development of new products; the company produced some 1,300 tonnes of finished products in 1987 but due to the Emperor's condition which has resulted in a sharp decline in festive activities including year-end gift giving, production is expected to be below target in 1988. Nevertheless, the company noted steady expansion in the demand for flavoured roe products. Increased sales have occurred in the retail sector, particularly the larger supermarkets, and the company is attempting to encourage increased consumption among school children.

Mr. Mizuzawa noted that while the average size of Canadian herring was very large in 1988, roe size was smaller than expected. Fish from Bay Trinity area which represented 80% of the production were particularly small while herring from the German Bank and herring taken in September tended to be larger. Concern was also expressed about the trend towards smaller size fish from the Bay of Fundy. With respect to quality, regional differences were again highlighted, with the southern production in general said to be more acceptable. It was noted that the further north one goes in search of herring roe, the less crunchy the product.

Quality problems were also said to vary between one plant and another, and it was suggested that the Canadian industry needs to find a way to deal with variable quality. Mr. Mizuzawa also referred to the system of piecework as a major deterrent to consistent quality along with the widespread use of gillnets. However, he was less categorical about the need for industry-wide product standards noting, that the latent quality of fish tends to vary from year to year and that grade standards should be agreed upon on an individual basis between producers and importers. When pressed on the subject of quality he indicated that this was secondary to pure price competitiveness. He expressed the opinion that price was considered a major deterrent to long term Canadian supply potential.

The company markets only the larger Irish roes for the New Year's gift market. The Irish roe is found to have a better shape than the Canadian product and Japanese consumers put great emphasis on shape. The smaller "broken sizes" are preferred for year round consumption. The Japanese housewife is said to prefer many pieces per