

DOMESTIC MARKET

Italians harvest several species of fish, but mainly sardines, anchovies, hake, mussels, and Norway lobster, i.e. over 15,000 tonnes of each. They exports anchovies, sardines, cod, hake, squid, shrimps and little squid. The fish caught by the Italians accounts for 40% of their total fish consumption.

Italians have been eating and importing more fish during the 80's, as figures show an increase in imports of about 130% between 1983 (257,000 tonnes) and 1990 (548,130 tonnes). Indeed, "A strong upward trend in consumption could only be satisfied by an increase in imports." (Review on Fisheries in OECD Countries, Paris 1991)

The biggest fish supplier to Italy is Denmark. It exports frozen fillets; salted, dried, and smoked fish; shellfish; fish oil and fish meal.

The other main exporters are France for eel and cuttlefish, the Netherlands for sole and plaice and Spain for shellfish, tuna, and fresh, chilled and frozen whole fish.

Italians generally prefer Mediterranean species vs. Atlantic species, and fresh as opposed to frozen products. Market growth has been based on both convenience and quality considerations, the latter being facilitated by strict regulations governing production, handling and sale of quick-frozen products ("prodotti surgelati"), i.e. retail pack frozen food products. These regulations require, among other things, that foreign companies wishing to export such products to Italy must obtain special Italian government authorization for their plants. It is generally acknowledged that the official and unofficial quality standards thus required by the Italian market are among the most stringent of any European country.

Italian firms usually prefer C.I.F. quotations. When dealing with Italian importers for the first time, operations should be conducted on a letter of credit basis. Thereafter, other arrangements can be worked out as the circumstances require.