

With respect to egg size the Canadian side noted the practice of pre-testing by DFO to determine maturity of roe before deciding if the fishery should be declared open. This process, while widespread in B.C., creates some problems in Atlantic Canada where products other than roe are produced from the the same fishery.

On the question of egg maturity the Canadian side suggested that with a 5% roe content (the current standard) the fish was fully mature and that a move towards a minimum 7% roe content would probably bring a termination of the fishery since the roes would likely become over mature. A 7% roe content at sea after catching and handling could be reduced to about 5.5-6%. It was noted that Canadian fishermen are becoming increasingly skilled in assessing roe content.

The Canadian side summarized JPIA proposals as follows: (1) Attempts should be made to pre-sort fish to ensure best sized and freshest fish are used for roe production; (2) Minimum 10 grams roe size - in a good year only 5% of product is less than 10 grams, but the proportion can reach as high as 20%. Both sides should examine what such a cutoff point, with cost implications, would mean; alternatively such a size factor could be built into proposed grade standards. (3) Processors will try for more testing at sea - there is a need to discuss modalities with fishermen's groups. (4) Freshness (this item was discussed in detail earlier) - need for everyone to understand the importance of freshness, spongy roes, etc. Improvements in this area represent a minimum cost.

In responding, the Japanese side endorsed the Canadian side's conclusions and recognized that processors could have problems in meeting JMPIA proposals. The particular problem of sorting purse seine caught fish was recognized. The importance of roe size was reiterated as well as the need to minimize the proportions of pencil roe. The Japanese side also encouraged increased testing before the start of the fishery to ensure a higher degree of maturity. The Canadian side returned to the question of sorting noting space limitations in plants and cost implications. Mechanical sorting could result in delays in processing and affect freshness in a negative way.

It was felt that the best method of sorting was to control roe size through the pre-testing process. The Canadian government would be asked to increase tests on stock maturity to better time the opening of the season