

MARKET ACCESS

Austria is a member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the other members being Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. In July 1989, Austria applied to become a full EC member, and is attempting to harmonise legislation with EC countries as part of the single market process. At the EC's summit of the Dutch presidency of the European Council held in Maastricht in December 1991, it was announced that formal negotiations on Austria's application to join the EC would begin early in 1993, and full membership should be possible by 1995. The negotiations on Austria's entry to the EC officially got under way on February 1, 1993. However, Austria will be seeking to ensure that its membership of the EC will not undermine its trade and commercial links with Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, on which many Austrian industries depend.

DISTRIBUTION

A majority of the market for fisheries products entering Austria is handled by Unilever Austria (Eskimo-Iglu) who possess the necessary distribution system to most retailers, including large markets supplying mainly frozen fish. Because Austria is such a small country, most of the seafood distributors are concentrated in Vienna and surrounding communities. On occasion, some of the large international hotels will by-pass the normal distribution network and import seafood directly, but this only occurs when the hotels are running weekly specials and promotions. Warehousing and cold storage facilities are modern and readily available throughout the Austrian market.

LICENSING

Austrian trade policy has evolved toward increased liberalization, and except for a few agricultural items, import restrictions have been removed. Austrian imports are divided into three groups for licensing purposes: 1) free merchandise for which no licence is required; 2) controlled merchandise for which individual licences are required; and, 3) liberalized merchandise for which licences are granted automatically by Austrian Customs officials at the time of entry. Fish and fish products are considered free merchandise under the Austrian licensing system.

COMMERCIAL INVOICE

Although no special form of contents are prescribed for the commercial invoice, it is advisable to include the following: 1) date and place of shipment; 2) markings of the packages and their numerical order; 3) exact description of the goods (e.g. customary commercial description according to kind, quantity, grade, weight [gross and net] in metric units, with special emphasis on factors that may affect value; 4) agreed upon price of the goods, including unit cost and total cost F.O.B factory, plus shipping, insurance and other charges; 5) delivery and payment terms; and, 6) the signature of a responsible official from the shippers' firm.

HEALTH CERTIFICATES

Health certificates from the appropriate agencies in Canada are required for fisheries exports to Austria. Owing to the complexity of sanitary and health regulations, Canadian seafood exporters should also obtain information from the importer prior to the shipment, or directly from the Canadian Embassy in Vienna. A health certificate issued by the authorities of the country of origin is required for all consignments of foreign seafood products imported into Austria. The required certificate must clearly state verification that the products have undergone the necessary health inspection and are fit for