

SOUTH KOREA

SUPPLY AND CONSUMPTION

According to the latest edition of the Food Balance Sheet prepared by the Rural Economic Research Institute, Korea consumed a total of 2,526,700 metric tonnes of fish in 1989 (including 301,500 Metric tonnes of seaweed). Per capita consumption of fish is high at 36 kilograms per capita. By species, daily per capita consumption of fish was: pollack at 14.33 grams; mackerel at 6.33 grams; sardine at 5.84 grams; and anchovy 5.37 grams. Per capita consumption figures for salmon are unavailable because salmon is considered a luxury item and is not regularly consumed by Koreans.

The National Fisheries Administration maintains salmon hatchery farms on the east coast and releases approximately 14 million head of salmon fingerlings into the sea per year. Unfortunately, total return rates are limited to a small amount of chum and pink salmon, an estimated total of 27 metric tonnes in 1988 and 57 metric tonnes in 1989. Korea has an efficient salmon processing industry and imports over 2.5 million tonnes of frozen salmon and exports roughly the same amount as canned salmon products. Both import and export volumes of salmon have been declining substantially over the past two years. Many salmon canneries have been closed over the last two years due to non-competitive export prices. Imports of fresh salmon are small, but Canada is the largest supplier with approximately 92 percent of total market share. The United States and Singapore are the major competitors for frozen salmon by holding 64 percent and 26 percent of total market share respectively. Canada's market share has been 0.9 percent of total market share in 1988, 2.9 percent in 1989, and 1.8 percent in 1990. Prior to 1990, there were three large salmon canneries in Korea which imported substantial amounts of frozen salmon for processing, but all three operations have since discontinued production.

Salmon products are eaten in Korea fresh, cooked and smoked. Although the consumption of fresh salmon is extremely limited (approximately 2 percent of total fish consumption) due to higher prices, fresh salmon is mainly used for making raw dishes (*sasimi* or *susi*) in hotels and upper-class Japanese style restaurants. Korean importers prefer 8-10 pound King or Chinook salmon which is generally imported by air in 50 pound styrofoam packs. Smoked salmon is mainly consumed in tourist hotels, buffet restaurants and department stores with approximately 97 percent of frozen salmon imports going for domestic smoking purposes. Korean importers prefer 6-9 pound chum and sockeye, head-less and gutted, and imported in 50 or 100 pound standard wooden box packing. A limited quantity of imported frozen salmon is processed into 2-4 pound or 6-9 pound individually sliced consumer packages for housewives who buy from department stores to cook salmon soups or steak.