

Belgium Lobster Imports

{Tonnes}

H.S.	Description	1990	1991	1992	1993
0306.1210	In brine, frozen	409	398	458	354
0306.1290	Lobster, nes frozen	15	23	18	52
0306.2210	Lobster, live	1,242	1,602	1,664	1,265
0306.2290	Lobster, not frozen	31	28	45	15
1605.0000	Prep/pres, canned	22	16	22	51
	Total Imports	1,719	2,067	2,207	1,737

Source: Belgium Central Economy Council

Marketing Considerations

Lobster is primarily in demand during the peak period during holiday seasons. The Belgian lobster market provides a range of opportunities and international exporters can capitalize through aggressive marketing and advertising. Seafood buyers for the main Belgian food chains and specialized frozen food processing companies, are looking to expand into new varieties of seafood in an attempt to substitute traditional suppliers in the market. While many opportunities are opening up for international exporters due to product awareness, the market can only be tackled efficiently if exporters can adjust to the typical requests of the Belgian customers.

CZECH REPUBLIC/SLOVAKIA

The Czech and Slovak Republics are going through a complete transformation of their economies during the 1990's. As a result, the state-owned chain of fish processing companies, RYBENA, is being privatized and new private import companies are being established. As both the Czech and Slovak Republics are land-locked, all lobster products must be imported. For both countries, the primary foreign suppliers were Germany, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Poland and states in the former Soviet Union. In the Czech Republic for 1993, total imports of all fish and seafood products amounted to 20-23 thousand tons, and imports to the Slovak Republic amounted to 10-12 thousand tons. Imports in last three years have dropped compared to 1990, or previous years. The decline in imports were caused by a major increase of retail prices of fish products on the local market as government subsidies were eliminated. Nevertheless, the situation has been stabilized and imports of seafood have started to grow (especially in Slovakia). The largest Czech importer of frozen seafood is Rybena Fish Trading and the largest Slovak importer is Radoma, both are interested in certain lobster products.

DENMARK

Denmark has been a relatively good market for lobster, both local {Scottish} fresh lobster in season, Canadian live, and Canadian frozen in brine. Lobster is consumed boiled, halved and served cold, almost never as part of a recipe. For gourmet occasions, locally caught fresh Scottish lobster generally commands far higher prices. The Danish consumer market is still suffering both from recession and high domestic unemployment, resulting in lobster sold on price competitive factor. Only fish products which have increasing markets are relatively inexpensive, such as surimi and squid. Due to the above situation, many hotels and restaurants have gone out of business, causing difficult conditions for lobster importers. Danish importers have otherwise been importing live lobsters sourced from Canada, three times weekly out of Boston. Flights originating from Boston generally have better holding facilities and routes, reducing mortality rates. Due to the recession, some Danish importers have large stocks of frozen lobster in brine. The most popular season for lobster is during the month of December. Live lobsters are sold by frozen fish specialty shops and to hotels and restaurants.

Lobster import statistics for 1992 are as follows: fresh or chilled 679 MT valued at US\$6.67 million; and, frozen 738 MT valued at US\$7.6 million. A major portion of these lobster imports originate in Canada, but are shipped to Denmark through U.S. brokers and distributors. International lobster exporters should be aware of pressured financial conditions within the Danish fish industry. Denmark is the world's 10th largest fisheries nation, but the 3rd largest fisheries exporter. In times of falling EU quotas and catches, Danish processors rely heavily on imports, both fresh from neighbouring countries and frozen from international suppliers to keep processing factories running and maintain export status. The principal lobster products sought by Danish importers and buyers are live lobster, frozen lobster products, and value-added ready meals etc..