

When questioned by the Canadian side on the need for industry-wide quality grade standards in Atlantic Canada to eliminate differences between production areas, the company was somewhat cautious in making a recommendation. It was felt that some basic uniform standards would be preferable to the existing system but apart from insisting upon methods to improve freshness - processing fish as soon as possible after catching, reducing the proportion of broken roes and eliminating piecework - no specific methodology was provided.

Hokuei Shokai Co. Ltd.
Nishi 10-chome, Hakken 90-J0
Nishi-Ku, Sapporo City 063

Hokuei Shokai produced some 500 tonnes of flavoured roe in 1987. During the visit samples of Canadian products were used to demonstrate processing techniques. The company noted marked variation in the quality of Canadian roe according to the production season. The best quality was found in roe packed during the first half of September while the poorest quality was found in the August production. The period of production was also impacting upon the mix of roe products produced. Overall some 30% of Canadian roe was said to yield the highest grade and most popular roe product - "Special Large" with the highest proportion from the September pack.

Much of the "Special Large" is sold during the gift giving season in ready to eat form in December-January where it competes, at about half the price level, with salted kazunoko. Outside the gift giving season Special Large must be broken into smaller sizes or the price reduced in order to capture the mass market. The product which results, "Large Broken", tends to maintain its price throughout the year. The lowest grade roe products - immature or "pencil" roe and "spongy" roe are generally not sold in ready to eat form but must be mixed with pickles and other appetizers. These products are more difficult to market since they must compete with other low priced roe products. It was noted that the August production in Canada produces up to 50% immature roe. The mission was informed that processors are unwilling to buy product with high levels of immature roe until after other more saleable products are utilized.

Homma Suisan Co. Ltd.
Hiaoshi 5-chome, Hakken 5-J0
Nishi-Ku, Sapporo City 063
Contact: Mr. K. Mizuzawa, Senior Managing Director