

Moreover, because of its long shelf life, the cooked frozen lobster can be distributed on a nation-wide basis reaching remotely located areas far away from major shopping centres and/or fresh fish stores. Frozen cooked lobster really captured the market, and in the boom year of 1990, Swedish imports totalled 508 tons of which Canada supplied 95%, or 482 tons. There was some carry over from 1990, and total imports in 1991 dropped to 304 tons, but rose again in 1992 to 381 tonnes. There is thus no real competition from other national suppliers for the cooked frozen lobster, nor is there any local production.

Swedish consumers in general (private and restaurants), except those on or close to the Swedish west coast, are not likely to become accustomed to buying and/or handling live lobster. With this pattern follows a general disinterest among local restaurants in installing holding tanks for receiving live lobster. Instead the importers and wholesalers are the targets for live lobster sales. These firms have hitherto shown a moderately growing interest in sourcing live lobster in North America. These lobsters, when boiled, are sold fresh at prices around SEK\$280, while locally caught boiled command a far higher price from SEK\$420 and up per kilo for gourmet reasons, coupled with scarcity.

Of Sweden's imports in 1991 totalling 106 tons, Canada supplied 39 tons, whereas the U.S. secured a larger market share of 59 tons. Processed canned or frozen lobster meat consumption shows a downward trend, because the products have become very expensive. Canada is by far the predominant supplier with 45 tons of Sweden's total imports of 48 tons. There is no local production.

Nation-wide wholesale distribution of whole lobster frozen in brine is to retail chains, independent grocery stores, restaurants, and the catering sector. Lobster meat, frozen has national wholesale distribution primarily to restaurants and the catering trade, with a minimal amount absorbed by retail stores. As for live lobster, importing seafood wholesalers bring in lobster, and boil them for distribution to restaurants and fresh fish retail stores. Also, importers deliver lobster to fish wholesalers for processing (cooking) and distribution as described above. Insignificant volumes of live lobster is sold direct into restaurants, and only on an ad hoc basis for special shellfish menu weeks.

All lobster products enter Sweden duty free from Canada, however, as of January 1, 1993, there is a V.A.T. of 24% (applied on all food products), down from the previous V.A.T. of 25%.

With cooked whole frozen lobster in brine, Canada's strong sectoral capacity has no doubt contributed to success in the local market. Competition only exists amongst Canadian suppliers to this market. This also applies to cooked lobster meat, whether frozen cryovacs or canned. Popsicles (now referred to locally as the Canadian lobster) often appear as "week-end" bargains in the large nation-wide food retail chains. At these occasions retail prices have been very low, often just somewhat over the actual landed price. These bargain occurrences have a negative effect on the consumers perception of lobster as a gourmet or luxury item, particularly when the product is sold at gas stations. Popsicles not only occupy large cold storage space, they are also tricky to handle and thaw. Local buyers (particularly in the restaurant trade) would welcome a "lighter" product (ie. a whole cooked lobster, frozen with less or no brine/water, in say, cryovacs or alike). Live lobster from North America have entered the market as substitutes and complements to the limited supply of local or Norwegian lobster.