German supermarkets, Aldi, Metro, Rewe, Tengelmann to name a few, have a central purchasing unit, but their headquarters are spread out across the country, and in many cases they do not import themselves. Nordsee owns over 200 fish shops and is the largest fish retailer in Germany.

Opportunities and constraints

Herring products are by far the most popular fish in Germany. The recent decline in herring landings from the North Sea should allow for more herring imports from Canada. German processors have traditionally sought high fat content, larger sized Canadian herring. The current world tightening of mackerel supplies may augur well for Canadian suppliers. Processing companies in Germany reportedly favour large hand filleted mackerel.

Groundfish are popular. In recent years, Alaska pollock has largely replaced traditional species, such as cod. Groundfish products from Canada such as redfish, sole and hake could be targeted for expanded sales.

Ocean perch is a favourite among German consumers. Smoking establishments buy dogfish bellyflaps ("Schiller-locken"). Frozen fish products and prepacked convenience products are becoming increasingly attractive. Canada is the largest supplier of lobster but a relatively minor supplier of the fresh water fish which accounts for almost 15% of German fish consumption. While the UK takes large amounts of canned salmon Germany buys almost none despite large consumption of canned tuna. This suggests an area for study.

Overall, there is a clear trend towards luxury fish and shellfish including lobster, shrimps, prawns, some freshwater fish and salmon.

The main suppliers are from Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Iceland and Poland. Most of these countries benefit from preferential access to the German market, avoiding high tariffs placed on certain processed fish products from non-EU countries. Their geographic proximity also gives these countries an advantage because products can be delivered within days of ordering.

In most instances, Canadian exporters will use a German agent or importer. This is recommended in order to cope with the complex German distribution system and to ensure compliance with the relevant regulations. The German partner is expected to provide guidance on regulatory matters and, in fact, bears the responsibility for conformity of the imported product with German law.

EU duty rates on seafood are high. A German import turnover tax of 7% is added. For several species of fish (including dogfish, cod, fish roe, fish liver, surimi), the EU has temporarily waived import duties. The conditions to be fulfilled by fish exporters from third countries are laid down in the EU-Council Directive 91/493.

According to this Directive all that is required to export fish from Canada to Germany is:

a) a health certificate
b) the Canadian company must be entered on the list of EU-approved exporters

Canada is in the process of completing a new agreement with the EU which will recognize the equivalency in regards to inspection controls of all animals and animal products including seafood imports. The new equivalency agreement will rpovide for reduced frequencies of inspection, the targeted rate being set at 5%. Once the agreement is in place, it will be important to monitor sampling rates to ensure that import centers are not abusing sampling therefore imposing additional costs on Canadian suppliers.

Objectives for next five years

To support Canadian fish exporters, the Embassy is planning to:

- *promote freshwater fish: whitefish, pickerel, northern pike*
- *plan market initiatives for aquaculture products: salmon, trout, oysters & mussels, Arctic char, black cod, halibut and wolffish*
- *capitalize on shortage of North Sea herring and mackerel*
- *develop a lobster promotion campaign*
- *capitalize on the expansion of frozen and packaged convenience products such as salmon, groundfish and lobster.*
- *identify opportunities in non-food products: fish meal, fish oil, pet food*
- *identify the reasons for resistance to canned salmon and develop promotion strategy if warranted.*
- *monitor issues related to market access and health regulations: tariffs, import quotas and duty free periods*

Activities

ANUGA	October 1997, and October 1999, Cologne: International Food Fair
Fisch International	June 1998, Bremen: International fish and seafood fair