

"Central de Pescados y Mariscos La Nueva Viga" is a modern facility for the wholesale and retail of fisheries products, home to the National Society of Fish and Seafood Distributors. Lobster is distributed from La Viga to other urban centres in the interior, where lesser facilities receive and distribute to consumer outlets. Frozen lobster (whole-boiled and tails) is available wholesale and retail at La Viga, or through a number of supermarket chain stores, and fisheries retail markets. Leading gourmet restaurants and five star tourist hotels list lobster products on their menus.

Harvest from primary sector lobster cooperatives is sold to intermediaries who transfer the lobster to distribution points located in the large urban centres: Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey, Acapulco, León, and Tijuana. Intermediaries and the wholesalers control the volume, price and quality of the product. An estimated 100,000 tonnes of fisheries products move through the La Viga fish market every year, and approximately 5 percent corresponds to crustaceans, including domestic crayfish and lobster.

Sales of imported seafoods to Mexico are generally made through local agents or distributors, who operate on a commission basis. Products entering the country move from the exporter to the local agent or distributor, then the wholesaler, supermarkets, hotels and restaurants. Mexican buyers prefer to deal with a local agent or distributor who takes responsibility for delivery and product quality. Over 35 percent of the Mexican lobster harvest was exported in 1991, amounting to 939,399kg for a value of US\$15,107,327. However, higher export percentages were recorded in the previous years, when they reached 53.2 percent and 55.9 percent in 1989 and 1990, respectively. The principal markets for Mexico's lobster exports are the United States and Japan, with smaller volumes moving to France and Spain.

Recorded imports of frozen rock lobster and other sea crayfish {*Palinurus* spp. and/or *Jasus* spp.} totalled only 1,435kg in 1991, compared to 16,254kg a year earlier. The major supplier to the Mexican market is the United States, however, countries such as Canada are actively marketing lobster in the Mexican consumer markets and at Mexican trade fairs, and imports increased significantly in 1993 to US\$472,210. The recent easing of import controls for fisheries products could result in increasing future sales of lobster products into the Mexican market. It should be recognized, however, that Mexico is one of the world's major lobster producers, therefore, significant increases to the present import levels would seem unlikely. International exporters may have to be content with supplying a niche market, because the Mexican market is highly competitive, and demands good quality product, guaranteed supply and attractive prices.

Mexican Lobster Imports
{US\$}

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Total Imports	236,970	166,809	14,564	87,558	472,210

Source: *Secretaría de Pesca, Secretaría de Comercio y Fomento Industrial*

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Based on United States Department of Commerce statistics, landings of American lobster {*Homarus americanus*} were 56.5 million pounds in 1993, valued at US\$151.7 million, an increase of 672,000 pounds (1 percent), but a decrease of US\$9.2 million (6 percent) compared to 1992. The state of Maine led in landings for the twelfth consecutive year with 31.1 million pounds valued at US\$73.9 million, an increase of 4.3 million pounds (16 percent) compared with 1992. Massachusetts, the second leading lobster producer in 1993, had landings of 14.0 million pounds valued at US\$41.8 million, a decrease of 1.1 million pounds (8 percent) since 1992. Together, Maine and Massachusetts produced 80 percent of the total national landings. The average ex-vessel price per pound was US\$2.69 in 1993, down slightly from the average 1992 price of US\$2.88.

Nineteen-ninety three spiny lobster {*Panulirus* spp.} landings in the United States were 6.1 million pounds valued at US\$21.0 million, an increase of 1.2 million pounds (25 percent), and an increase of US\$833,000 (4 percent) compared with 1992. The state of Florida, with spiny lobster landings of 5.6 million pounds valued at US\$18.1 million, accounted for 92 percent of the total catch and 87 percent of the value. This was an increase of 1.7 million pounds (42 percent) and US\$3.5 million (24 percent) compared with 1992. Overall, the average ex-vessel price per pound was US\$3.45 in 1993, a decrease of 16.5 percent from the 1992 average price of US\$4.13.