

## JAPAN : THE MARKET IN BRIEF

Japan is the world's largest import market for agriculture, fishery and food products. Japan is also the world's fastest growing import market and the world's largest consumer of fisheries products. In 1988 the value of imports was some \$13 billion. Import demand is stimulated by reduced fishing opportunities for Japanese vessels in international waters as well as the high value of the Japanese yen relative to other currencies. Japan is Canada's second largest market for seafood with exports of \$583 million in 1988.

Canadian fish exports have increased by over 50 percent since 1985. Nevertheless exports remain a relatively modest 5 percent of Japanese imports. Major Canadian exports include Pacific and Atlantic herring roe, salmon, female capelin, smelt, crab, clams, lobster and redfish. Good potential also exists for sea urchin roe, farmed salmon and various value added groundfish products.

Japan is a relatively easy market to access with low tariffs and minimal product certification requirements. The demand for imported seafood will remain strong with the increasing affluence of consumers and an avid interest in foreign goods. However, Japanese consumers place a strong emphasis on the quality and visual aspects of food and insist on rigorous standards in latent quality, packaging and presentation.

In recent years Japan has obtained a low population growth, and absolute consumption of fishery products is levelling off. Recent trends include a continuing increase in demand for mid and upmarket varieties of fish, reflected in steady growth of imports of the same. Competition on product quality and pricing is strong and growing between the many suppliers to this affluent market.