

Not only is live spiny lobster considered superior in taste, but frozen spiny lobster is frozen fresh, not cooked. Many Japanese chefs prefer this freezing method, whereas most frozen North American lobster is exported cooked. Japanese buyers believe the meat from frozen lobsters is less firm and has less taste. Appearance is very important in Japan. Whole lobster should be undamaged, with a good red colour after cooking. Claws should be not be noticeably different in size, and never damaged. Canadian lobster is considered to be superior, and a more consistent colour than U.S. lobsters.

There are a large number of Japanese importers of lobster. While some importers are quite large, a number are small to medium-sized firms specializing in lobster. Virtually all imports are purchased by firms who sell to wholesalers or large chains; and retailers. Insignificant amounts of lobster are sold through fisheries auction markets in Japan, the best known of which is Tsukiji Market in Tokyo. Large holding tanks and other equipment needed to keep live lobsters limits the number of firms which handle the product. Most Japanese restaurants, banquet and wedding halls receive frequent deliveries of lobster due to perishability and risks associated with holding the product. It is important to note the consumption of *Homarus* spp. is largely centred on the major urban areas of Tokyo and Osaka. In fact, one of the largest importers of lobster in Japan is located in Osaka, and the Osaka region is important for shellfish consumption in general.

The Tokyo International Seafood Show is an ideal location for international lobster exporters to promote their products. After several years of rapid sales growth, *Homarus* spp. has developed a niche for itself in the Japanese market, as more Japanese chefs become aware of its advantages. Japanese restaurants do not like to have to change their menus often, and prefer to keep items on the menu for up to two years. Lobster consumption is seasonal in Japan, with large amounts of lobster, both spiny and *Homarus* spp., consumed during the New Year period, reportedly about 2.5 times as often. January and February are generally below average for lobster consumption, while the balance of the year is fairly steady.

JORDAN

Jordan's only outlet to the sea is the Gulf of Aqaba. Harvests from the Gulf of Aqaba have been declining steadily for years, and the volume caught is not sufficient to satisfy Jordanian demand. Fish and seafood products are largely imported fresh from Yemen, because of frequent flight schedules. Lobster products and other delicacies are imported frozen, and generally can be found in large supermarkets and luxury hotels throughout Jordan. Jordanian supermarkets and hotels import fish and seafood {lobster included} direct from international suppliers.

KUWAIT

A resident Canadian Embassy was opened in Kuwait in 1978, and Canada's Ambassador to Kuwait is also accredited to Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. Canada is a relatively new entrant into the Kuwait market. As recently as 1987, Canada did not rank in the top 20 exporting countries to Kuwait. Immediately prior to the Gulf War, Canadian trade with Kuwait was significant and increasing steadily. Annual exports averaged Cdn\$30 million and included lumber, paper products, prepared foods and health products.

Agri-food and consumer goods may offer the best potential for small and medium-sized Canadian firms. Competition is vigorous in the Kuwait market, and a significant commitment of time and money is required to succeed. Canada's supply position and commitment to this market have been further enhanced since the US\$500 million Export Development Corporation {EDC} line of credit to Kuwait was signed in December 1992. Imports of fish and seafood into Kuwait dropped off dramatically in 1992 to US\$8.5 million as a result of the Gulf War, but had totalled US\$27.7 million back in 1989. The majority of imports to Kuwait are comprised of fish, fresh, chilled or frozen, however, significant volumes of canned fish were also brought into the country.

LEBANON

The fishery is a traditional sector in Lebanon, and enjoyed standards for seafood higher than any country in the region. After the commencement of the civil war, the Mediterranean was rumoured to be polluted and its contents not fit for human consumption, thus making fresh seafood a rare commodity. After the cessation of civil strife, Lebanese businesses started to import seafood products. Imported seafood products are generally brought into the country frozen, and restricted to expensive varieties, such as lobster products.