

7. SOME ADVICE FOR PROSPECTIVE CANADIAN EXPORTERS TO FRANCE

7.1 Marketing channels

Canadian firms have a choice of three approaches to marketing: they can sell to a wholesaler, who is sometimes called an importer, they can sell through an agent, or they can sell directly to processors or central purchasing agencies.

Wholesalers are trading firms that buy goods for resale to users, central purchasing agencies or independent supermarkets. Merchandise is often left in warehouses in Le Havre until it can be sold off in smaller quantities.

Agents do the same sort of business as wholesalers, but they work on commission or for a fee set in advance. Some of them advertise and otherwise represent individual firms on an exclusive basis.

Processors obtain their supplies primarily on the French and European markets. They may buy direct or from wholesalers and agents.

Central purchasing agencies have grown up with the rise of large-scale distributing and specialized stores (such as freezer centres and dietetic products shops). It is much more unusual to find them associated with restaurant chains, although such chains are themselves relatively rare phenomena in the fish-and-seafood field.

Not all central purchasing agencies import directly. The eight largest such agencies are Scagel/Scamer/Intermarché, Galec/Leclerc, Carrefour, Auchan, Euromarché, Promodes/CAP/Continent, SCA/Monoprix and Casino.

Ready-to-sell products such as packaged frozen salmon and frozen lobster in brine ("popsicles"), and, at the end of the year, live lobsters as well are often sold to these agencies, either directly or through a single middleman who is in charge of importing for them. Dealing with these central purchasing agencies, which are very powerful and reputed by traders not to be overly scrupulous in some instances, is always difficult, and prudence is advisable.

7.2 Identification of buyers

Lists of potential importers for most Canadian fish products have been prepared. We try to keep them up to date. They are available on request from the Embassy.