

Besides domestic production, Italy will also import 40-50,000 tonnes per year from other sources. Usually the preference is given to *Loligo* species, but depending on prices and availabilities, significant amounts of *Illex* species will also be purchased.

Squid is generally processed into rings for serving in mixed seafood dishes, either fried or grilled, or frequently preserved in brine and served chilled. Given the generally high demand for food quality, also in terms of visual presentation, it is necessary that squid colour and texture be similar to fresh-caught, and hence it is a standard requirement for imported products to be frozen at sea.

Packing must be neat so that the product displays well, and larger sizes are usually preferred (300 gram, or tube length of over 20 cm.). This size requirement depends, however, on the supply situation at any given moment, and there are periods when smaller sizes may be in greater demand. The current EC duty rates are 6 percent for frozen *Loligo* species and 8 percent for frozen *Illex*. There is no particular market for dried squid.

LOBSTER

There is a small but potentially interesting market in Italy for live lobster (known as "astice" in Italian). Total imports in 1992 amounted to 2,215 tonnes, up ten percent from the previous year's total, of which 16 tonnes from EC countries (mostly France), 1,882 tonnes from the U.S.A. and 310 tonnes from Canada. It should be noted that much of the product of both EC and US origin is trans-shipped Canadian product.

From the standpoint of health requirements, the only certification required is a mercury certificate, declaring that the mercury level is less than 0.7 ppm. The customs duty rate in Italy for live lobster from Canada is 8 percent.

Up to now there has been relatively little interest in frozen lobster or lobster meat, but with the steadily growing demand for the live product, consumers should eventually be willing to consider the frozen product as an alternative, particularly if preparation and cooking convenience can be improved, and packaging made more attractive. Again, quality considerations are paramount.

CLAMS

In the early 1980's, with increasing problems of pollution in traditional supplying zones, there was considerable interest in North America as a supplier of veneridae species, similar to the Italian "vongola verace". At that time British Columbia coastal waters were approved by the Italian authorities. Since that time, however, local aquaculture production has progressed to fill the demand, and purchases of clams from Canada have since ceased.

In any case, shipments of molluscs must originate from plants specially authorized by the Italian authorities, be accompanied by a certificate declaring the product is derived from approved waters of origin, and can only be imported by authorized firms equipped with suitable depuration facilities. The customs duty rate for clams is 8 percent.