

cooked frozen lobster in brine more than doubled between 1988 and 1989 to 116 tonnes valued at \$1.5 Million. This is a positive development since overall exports to Europe actually declined in 1989 due to lower prices, as a result of unfavourable rates of exchange.

Frozen lobster in brine represents good value since it is produced when lobster is at its least expensive and best quality, has an exceedingly long shelf life and benefits from lower freight rates than the live product. However, this product suffers from an image problem. It is sometimes perceived as a lower quality substitute for live lobster and has been treated more as a trading commodity than a specialized product with a well established market niche.

The brine pack represents three parts water to one part lobster. Because of its bulky nature importers often cite high storage and shipping costs while consumers may be uncertain about how to prepare and serve the product. Clearly more needs to be done by the industry to make this product more user friendly. This will require market research with greater attention to consumer education, including the development of promotional literature with instructions on preparation and handling, recipes and serving suggestions.

You may remember the success of the promotional program for Scottish salmon which saw the distribution of 1 million recipe leaflets at checkouts in UK supermarkets and fish stores. As a result, salmon consumption is projected to increase by 40% alone in the UK in 1989. This type of promotion exposes the product to more middle income consumers who come to recognize that salmon is not only for the most affluent. A similar kind of approach is needed for the mass marketing of frozen whole lobster although on a much smaller scale.

Market development must go hand in hand with improved quality standards for the brine pack. A quality seal similar to that employed by the aquaculture industry could also be developed. This might include, for example, only lobster with full shells and no broken appendages. The salmon farmers have shown that a distinguishable quality mark is a superior marketing tool which allows for price differentiation.

Greater attention should also be given to the development of alternative products to the brine pack. Whole lobster in a vacuum pouch represents such an alternative. This product is blanched rather than cooked and combines the best features of live lobster in frozen form. Preliminary taste tests on chefs in France suggest that it could be an acceptable alternative to live lobster. However, in order to sustain the investment in new packaging and