

TOP SHELLS

Frozen, empty lobster shells are now being exported to France. These top shells are used to produce flavourings and medicinal extracts and are often imported by wholesalers. Tomalley and top shells are also used to make fish soups and the celebrated lobster bisque (lobster soup).

CANNED LOBSTER

These products are presented in quite different forms. Imports from Canada are generally on the rise, if one looks at recent years. Canned lobster is very expensive and quantities can be disappointing.

SANITARY REGULATIONS

Goods must be accompanied by an EU sanitary certificate. The sanitary certificate model is provided by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and must be filled out in French. The date of freezing must be indicated on the documents and packaging. This certificate is completed by the Fisheries and Oceans inspector. Products may also be inspected on arrival by a Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries veterinarian. A number of specific regulations must be followed in the labelling of products for sale to consumers. If the products are considered to be cooked meals, their manufacturing plant must be approved by the French authorities following a proposal by Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The most attractive product to customers is live lobster. Promotional efforts should be centred on this product. In France, Canada is considered to be a clean, pure country. Exporters should present a coherent promotion based not on provinces, which are little-known to the French, but on the country as a whole. Rubber bands bearing the name "Canada" might be placed around the lobster. Efforts should be made to dispel some of the misunderstandings among the French. For example, many of them think that Canadian lobster is a farmed product, and that it is not as good as the European lobster. A number of "new lobster" promotional operations were organized in 1994; they had a positive impact on sales in May and June.

A relatively high-priced product (FF 80/kg wholesale, or about C\$20), lobster has a festive image which should be cultivated. Frozen lobster products will be promoted among restaurants and developed in cooperation with them and with catering companies. The promotion of live lobster requires a multi-year budgetary commitment with a medium-term marketing plan. Short-term operations will not affect its image or consumption. Promoting live lobster using booklets on how to cook it is of little value: the French know how to cook and are not afraid of preparing it at home. When it comes to food, France is a country of connoisseurs. Finally, English-only literature, promotional items, etc. will experience little success in France.

SUGGESTIONS

In order to improve the exporting of live lobsters, air freight links between Nova Scotia and France must be upgraded. Eventual termination of the GATT negotiations might result in a reduction of customs duties on the most elaborate products, thereby making the market more dynamic. New products generally tend to liven up a market. The demand is increasing for frozen lobster in individual servings which can go in the microwave oven, and for uncooked, individually wrapped lobster tails. These new products must be prepared in cooperation with the French companies to suit French tastes exactly, either in supermarkets or restaurants.