

on Canadian Atlantic roe and the need for long term stable supply. Recurring comments were heard, predominantly with respect to freshness, sponge roe and insufficient sorting.

The very large turn-out at the meeting with Japan Marine Products Importers Association as well as the unusually frank exchange helped reinforce the pre-eminence of Canadian roe on the Japanese market. While no clear consensus on how to improve quality standards emerged, the Japanese left the clear message that Canadian producers must work towards improving quality vis-à-vis other suppliers in order to ensure stable market share and continued dominance of the Japanese market for flavoured roe.

Japanese importers related specific concerns including freshness, piecework, packaging techniques and transportation methods. The Canadian side recognized the need for improved handling, sorting and processing practices and agreed that some changes could be brought about with minimum cost. Additional changes would have to be weighed in light of their costs and potential benefits.

The subject of minimum quality standards was met with some hesitation by both importers and processors. Though a more uniform product would be preferable, the Japanese are equally concerned about maintaining a stable price for Atlantic roe.

The herring roe mission opened the dialogue which was the necessary first step for the longer term development of the Atlantic roe fishery. Workshops are scheduled for February to disseminate the results of the mission to roe processors. The Atlantic herring roe industry will also need to focus on promotional activities in Japan to ensure longer term market growth for flavoured roe products.