

The representative of the Kato Marine Trading Co. Ltd. noted that the quality of Atlantic roe had been quite uniform up to about five years ago when there was a limited number of packers and buyers. The situation started to change three years ago with a large increase in the number of packers. The problem from the Japanese perspective was the limited number of technicians to deal with the increased production.

The representative of Mitsubishi Corporation stressed that the quality of raw fish before production was the most important consideration for quality. He also noted the problem of broken and bent roe which was attributed to the system of production, particularly the piecework system which favours volume productions rather than selectivity. Another problem cited was the tendency to put too much product into one box resulting in deformed roes and slower freezing with the resulting loss of freshness. It was recognized that these problems are relatively easy to correct and should be addressed first before any attempt to establish quality standards.

The Canadian side agreed in principal with the above comments adding that with the rapid growth in production over the past few years not enough attention has been given to grading the herring to separate raw material for roe from that for other herring products. Also large swings in landings and fluctuations in average fish size from year to year make it difficult to achieve uniform standards. Producers and buyers have to come to an understanding of quality standards based on what nature provides. In addition the Canadian side suggested that pricing mechanisms should be a determinant of quality with better quality production receiving higher prices. It was also suggested that the quality of fish landed, method of holding and method of transport were major factors in determining ultimate quality of herring roe. The best method of transport is by tanker truck with refrigerated seawater.

The Japanese side suggested that the time difference between landing and freezing should be minimized since delays in processing result in a loss of freshness and therefore more broken roe which can account for up to 20% of production. This problem is associated more with feeder plants than with integrated processing operations.

The representative of Taiyo Fisheries noted that there are variations in quality from region to region and from year to year. In 1988 Bay Trinity herring were