

VENEZUELA

SUPPLY & CONSUMPTION

Venezuelan lobster sector is managed by a group of small independent fishermen who catch product at sea. However, intermediate traders with transport and refrigeration facilities skim off the greater share of profits by taking lobsters to the market, thus making local supply precarious with high and unstable prices. Because of this, fresh or frozen lobsters are considered a luxury product for most Venezuelan consumers. The local lobster source is Caribbean rock lobster with a long tail, small claws, and very rich in flavour. Domestic production and consumption is approximately 2000 tons per year. There are currently no imports or exports of lobster, and there is a closed catch season of six months which runs from May 1 to October 30. The primary markets for lobster are in the metropolitan cities which possess higher purchasing power.

DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS

The distribution system for lobster in Venezuela proceeds from fishermen to transporters, then to distributors, retailers and on to the consumer. Consumer prices at retail stores are approximately 150-180% above the prices paid to fishermen.

PHYTOSANITARY REGULATIONS

Imported lobster products require health certificates from the Health Ministry and from the Agriculture Ministry, issued by the country of origin and similar to those issued in Canada.

TARIFFS/NTB'S

Legal classification of lobster imports to Venezuela is based on the NANDINA system, with tariff code number 16.05. There is an ad valorem duty of 20%, plus an additional 1% customs service tax.

MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities are abundant in Venezuela for Canadian lobster exporters (fresh, frozen or canned), due to the significant increase in tourism and the expanding hotel and restaurant trade in the area. Moreover, Venezuela is emerging as an important trading partner with Canada and a growing tourist destination. Canada could be a significant supplier of lobsters to Venezuela during the closed catch season.

POST COMMENTS

There are some existing problems that could limit the export of lobster products from Canada including: 1) lack of Canadian lobsters available from Florida brokers; 2) lack of local knowledge regarding Canadian lobsters (prices, payment facilities, packaging, quality, distributors, brokers, etc.); and 3) lack of transportation facilities between Canada and the Venezuelan ports. Possible solutions are: 1) to establish contact with importers or agents since they are the most promising channels for imports; 2) enclose a certificate of analysis for the product with a letter of introduction to the importers; 3) use Spanish for correspondence whenever possible; 4) when samples are requested for registration, they should be promptly dispatched in a secure manner and with a certificate of analysis; and 5) shipments should conform with samples and delivery schedule on the basis the order was placed.