

middlemen (including a frozen fish distributor, a specialty seafoods distributor, and a broker for fresh and frozen fish), disclosed that overall sales of Canadian fish products are hampered mostly by supply, not demand or price. This was confirmed during a meeting with the world's largest wholesaler of fresh fish, The Chicago Fish House, when the Executive Vice President said that his company alone could buy everything that Canada produces. Conflicting viewpoints emerge on fresh versus frozen products. Major brokers and distributors for frozen argue that frozen products generate more volume due to their popularity in supermarkets and institutions. Representatives of the fresh products argue the opposite. Despite this, the consensus remains the same: seafood consumption has increased dramatically in recent years and the industry as a whole is projecting sales increases of 5 percent per year over the next 3-6 years.

Foodservice (hotels, restaurants, schools, hospitals, etc.) demand for high quality seafood is increasing. The Chicago Fish House alone ships 35 million lbs of seafood a year to hotels, supermarkets, clubs, restaurants and other wholesalers in 38 states as well as to several foreign countries. Volume products include cod, shrimp, salmon and even surimi which is fast becoming a product in itself. The age of hypermarkets is in full swing in the midwest and the demand at retail is also increasing.

The midwest is increasingly using aquaculture to raise fish and expand the variety of its fish stock. In the near future, most of the fish and seafood consumed will be just as much a domestic farm product as other primary protein sources (chicken, beef, pork). Aquaculture's popularity stems from several factors: continuity of supply; consumer confidence in "quality" generated from local, pollution-free waters; and controlled production resulting in stabilized prices. With continued improvements in technology and delivery systems, Chicago's wholesalers will not only be able to routinely distribute familiar species such as tuna and trout, but impressive ones such as hoki, high brown snapper, orange roughy, leather jacket, painted sweetlips and dozens of other unusual

varieties. Opportunities exist in this territory for a wide variety of species. About 200 operations exist in a 12-state territory centred on Chicago, and many additions are forecasted.

At present 8 percent of the fish consumed in the United States is the product of aquaculture. Per capita seafood consumption now stands at 15.9 lbs per year, up almost a full pound from 1988. In less than 10 years that figure is expected to rise to a substantial 20 lbs per year if current trends in consumption continue.

According to local sources, the need to capitalize on "who we are and what we stand for" is Canada's greatest challenge. It is well-known in the local trade arena that Canada has stringent inspection rules and that those standards are enforced to the letter of the law. Unfortunately, this "integrity" factor never reaches the ultimate consumer. Point of origin and quality assurance are ignored in the promotion, marketing and merchandising of Canadian fish. It has been suggested that stickers denoting "quality" (perhaps the red maple leaf) and "Product of Canada" identification tags be prominently displayed on all types of fish, all packaging (master cartons and individual pieces), and all promotional materials. Such fillips would not only reinforce an already favourable climate, but also stimulate consumer awareness, enhance acceptance, foster demand and ultimately generate consumer sales. In general, all the above comments provide a clear message to Canadian seafood exporters: The Chicago market abounds with opportunities for Canadian fish supplies.

### Lobster

In the Chicago area lobster is traditionally perceived as an expensive luxury item found only in exclusive establishments and reserved for special occasions. Only people with unlimited expense accounts can enjoy it with any frequency. Fortunately, Chicago reaps the benefits of those with expense accounts who attend, as noted above, the city's numerous conventions, trade shows and corporate meetings. Even though the current