

Usually the preference is given to Loligo species, but depending on prices and availabilities, significant amounts of Illex species will also be purchased. Squid is generally processed into rings for serving in mixed seafood dishes, either fried or grilled, or frequently preserved in brine and served chilled. Given the generally high demand for food quality, also in terms of visual presentation, it is necessary that squid colour and texture be similar to fresh-caught, and hence it is a standard requirement for imported products to be frozen at sea. Packing must be neat so that the product displays well, and larger sizes are usually preferred (300 g, or tube length of over 20 cm.). This size requirement depends, however, on the supply situation at any given moment, and there are periods when smaller sizes may be in greater demand. The current EC duty rates are 6% for Loligo species and 8% for Illex. There is no particular market for dried squid.

**LOBSTER:** There is a small but potentially interesting market in Italy for live lobster (known as "astice" in Italian). Total imports in 1990 amounted to 1,578 t., more than double the previous year's total, of which 30 t. from EC countries (mostly France), 1,295 t. from the U.S.A. and 248 t. from Canada. It should be noted that much of the product of both EC and USA origin is trans-shipped Canadian product. Due to problems of mortality during shipping, many companies have been hesitant to enter this market, but if firms can organize a reliable shipping program with good technical support en route and at both ends, these problems can be resolved satisfactorily. From the standpoint of health requirements, the only certification required is a mercury certificate, declaring that the mercury level is less than 0.7 ppm.

Up to now there has been little interest in frozen lobster or lobster meat, but with the strong, unfulfilled demand for the live product, importers should eventually be willing to consider the frozen product as an alternative. Again, quality considerations are paramount.

**CLAMS:** Also in this case the market up to now has been limited. With increasing problems of pollution in traditional supplying countries, however, demand has developed for supplies from North America. The product of greatest interest at present is the veneridae species, similar to the Italian "vongola verace". Italian health authorities only permit imports from authorized production zones which satisfy Italian standards for water purity. The only Canadian zone approved thus far is the coast of British Columbia, whose local species, Venerupis Japonica and Protothaca staminea, closely resemble the "vongola verace". Shipments must originate from plants authorized by the Italian authorities, be accompanied by a certificate declaring the product is derived from approved waters of origin, and can only be imported by authorized firms equipped with suitable depuration facilities. The customs duty rate for clams is 8%.