

CHINA

Chinese consumers clearly prefer fresh fish in their diets, but also consume significant amounts of specialty dried seafood products such as shark fin, squid, shrimp, geoduck, abalone and oysters. Chinese citizens are extremely discerning where fish and seafood products are concerned and continue to demand products with consistently high quality. Chinese residents incorporate a wide variety of seafood products in their diets. Some of the more popular species which are consumed on a regular basis include: prawns/shrimp, shark fins, squid, octopus, cuttle fish, scallops, abalone, geoduck, lobster, crab, sea cucumber, capelin, oysters, and a number of different fish fillets, crustaceans and molluscs.

Frozen seafood products are slowly making inroads into the Chinese consumer markets, partially influenced by increased access to imported products. Future trends are expected to follow other semi-industrialized nations whereby an increased presence of women in the workforce leads to higher demand for conveniently prepared foodstuffs and seafood products. The current popularity of "microwaveable" food products is slowly influencing seafood consumption patterns, but still offers niche opportunities for Canadian exporters. Major hotels concentrated in the major centres of China are important users of high-value frozen seafood products, including demand for white-fleshed fillets, lobster, salmon and scallops.

Demand for food products in general is expected to increase because of the growth in private expenditure patterns of the population as well as the influx of tourists into China. As the Chinese economy opens up more to international seafood imports, Canadian fish and seafood exporters are well positioned to capture market share within the increased sales. Other significant niche marketing opportunities are developing in the airline catering sector and the growing fast food and beverage sectors. Food categories showing the largest increases in demand for China include fish and marine products, and beverages. Popular species of fish found within the increases are white pomfret, spanish mackerel, golden snapper, hard tail, coral fish, sea bream, dorab, sea bass and grouper.

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