

The Committee recommends that:

- (3) The economic viability of local processing be investigated by the respective provincial governments.**

4.1.2 Rough Fish (Low Value Species)

The freshwater fishery, like all fisheries, is faced with the problem of unsaleable and underutilized species. The characteristics of these species, which include carp, mullet and ling cod (or burbot) along with associated misconceptions, make these products difficult to market.

During the Committee's hearings in the Western Region's fisheries, the subject of rough fish was brought up many times. It was cited that the FFMC appeared not to have allocated enough effort in marketing carp, mullet and other rough fish species. The FFMC's position is that there are no solutions to this problem that would not impinge on its normal marketing operations. The FFMC has, however, often indicated its willingness to agree to licensing arrangements for: a) species that it does not currently handle; and b) species that it currently handles but only for disposition and sale to new markets.

The FFMC, as a single-desk selling operation, controls the dispensing of special dealer licences for the purchase and resale of fish in the Western Region, as well as for intra-provincial sales and for the marketing of fish inter-provincially and abroad.

It is also possible that a long-term solution to the rough fish problem lies in the development of surimi. This is a fish product made by processing minced fish into an intermediate product. This material can be used as a base for a wide variety of imitation seafood products such as simulated crab legs, shrimp and scallops. Most Japanese surimi products today use Alaskan pollock, which is a species available in great abundance and at low prices (3 to 4 cents a pound). Research and development efforts are being made to determine the feasibility of using low-value and underutilized species in surimi production. For example, on Canada's East Coast, small-sized low-valued cod is already used as raw material for high grade surimi.

As long as surimi producers can obtain supplies of very cheap fish such as Alaskan pollock, there will be resistance to the use of other species. However, in a period of rising prices for fish as food, it is inevitable that the price of Alaskan pollock will also rise, opening up the possibility of substituting other species for surimi production. This may be the opening required for the low value freshwater species to be harvested for higher returns.

As a result of the above, the Committee recommends that:

- (4a) The responsibility of granting licences for the purchasing, processing and marketing of carp, mullet and other low value species be given to an impartial body composed of federal and provincial officials with the inclusion of a representative from the FFMC.**
- (4b) Research and development work be accelerated to find alternative uses for rough fish species.**