

## INTRODUCTION

Lobster was one of the first commercial fisheries to be developed in Canada. In fact lobster canning, along with salmon canning, are two of Canada's oldest processing industries. The first lobster cannery was constructed in the Province of New Brunswick in 1887 and by 1900 there were 767 canneries with most of the production being shipped to the UK. The UK is still our largest market for canned salmon but it has ceased to be a major market for lobster. We are endeavouring to change that.

Two kinds of lobster are marketed for food - the spiny or non-clawed lobster and lobster with claws. There are some 30 species of spiny lobsters. These are known by many names including rock lobster, langouste and crayfish and are found in both warm and cold waters as far north as Japan and the UK and as far south as New Zealand and South Africa.

The clawed lobster consists of only two species, the American lobster, *Homarus americanus* and the European lobster, *Homarus gammarus*. These are the only two shellfish species which can legally be called "lobster" in many countries including the United States. Landings of clawed and unclawed lobster have increased dramatically throughout the 1980's. World landings grew from 107,000 tonnes in 1982 to over 145,000 tonnes in 1988.

Canada is the world's leading supplier of lobster species and accounts for 25 per cent of the total world catch. Other major suppliers are the United States, Australia and Cuba. Landings of the *Homarus* species have shown the largest increase in landings of any lobster species in recent years and continue to grow. However, landings of spiny lobster are thought to have stabilized.

In 1989 Canadian lobster landings totalled 38,500 tonnes with a landed value of some \$ 250 million (Canadian). The lobster fishery produces a landed value second only to that of cod in Atlantic Canada and has become a major source of income for many small boat fishermen. The industry also supports over 200 buyers and processors.

## DISTRIBUTION

The American lobster is found solely in the waters of the Atlantic coast of North America from Labrador to North Carolina and is fished commercially from Newfoundland to Virginia. The areas of greatest yield are the Gulf of Maine, Southwestern Nova Scotia and the southern part of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The lobster fishery is essentially a coastal fishery. The lobster are taken a few miles from shore in depths of water of about 45 metres. In 1971 an offshore fishery was opened on Georges bank in the Gulf of Maine.