

Canada restructures its east coast fisheries

Changes mean steady flow of prized Atlantic fish to UK (and other) buyers

East coast fishing industry has been restructured around three strong corporations – Fishery Products International Ltd in Newfoundland, National Sea Products Ltd in Nova Scotia and les Pêcheries Cartier in Quebec.



Photo: External Affairs

Not long ago, the deep-sea fishing industry on the east coast of Canada was in serious financial trouble. But not any more. After restructuring, the industry has pulled itself out of its difficulties and now looks to be facing an excellent future.

For foreign buyers, this means a steady flow of the highly prized Atlantic fish. It also means even higher quality, as the new efficiencies within the industry show up in the final product.

For Canadian producers, the restructuring means a new (and much needed) lease on life. Fishing is an important industry in Canada, employing 100 000 people directly, but giving work to thousands more who work in affiliated industries such as vessel design and construction, gear manufacture and supply, and wholesale and retail operations.

Canada is world's biggest exporter

Fishing is also an important export industry. In fact, Canada is the world's leading exporter of fish – a position it has held for the past six years – sending some \$1600 million (£885 million) of fish and fish products each year to about 50 other nations. This accounts for about 74 per cent of Canada's total fish production.

Most of these exports go to the US (about 62 per cent of total exports) and the countries of the European Economic Community (16 per cent), although Japan (12 per cent) is also an important market, especially for the fisheries on Canada's west coast.

The main species exported are west coast salmon and herring and east coast cod, flatfish, crab, lobster and scallop.

In addition, Canada ships overseas some \$25 million (£14 million) of fish each year as food aid to developing countries, either through the Canadian

International Development Agency (CIDA), through the United Nations World Food Programme or through bilateral agreements (see article on page 7).

Growth has been rapid

In spite of the economic problems on the east coast, Canada's fishing industry has been growing rapidly in recent years. Partly, this has been the result of improved fishery resources (through sound stock management), a steady demand both at home and abroad, and a number of successful advertising and promotion campaigns run by Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

But it has also been the result of the declaration, in 1977, of a 200-mile fishing zone. Since that declaration, landings of groundfish have risen more than 50 per cent and landings of cod have risen more than 100 per cent.

Triple-size salmon being raised in B.C.

British Columbia is leading the world with a fisheries research programme that is putting salmon almost triple the normal size into Canadian waters.

A federal Fisheries Department project is releasing nearly half a million salmon into coastal waters specially reared for large sizes and higher production. The fish get fat because they're sterilized and devote all their energy to growing. While their untreated counterparts wear themselves skinny getting to spawning grounds, the sterilized fish just swim about eating and growing.

About 200 000 sterilized coho will be released into the Pacific Ocean this summer, followed by another 225 000 next year.



Photo: External Affairs