

SEAFOOD MARKET IN BRIEF

Overall access to the French market is identical to that of other EEC markets. It is based on strict sanitation procedures similar to the Canadian system, and on an average level of customs duties, which increases for processed products. Special procedures may exist for processed products. EEC regulations for labelling and composition may seem unusual to Canadian exporters. France possesses an agricultural and food products industry that is strong and diversified (with total sales of C\$160 billion in 1992) and traditionally export-oriented (exports amounted to C\$30 billion in 1992, while imports totalled C\$21 billion).

The fish products industry displays much the same profile, apart from the fact that it is characterized by a trade deficit arising largely from constant imports of relatively expensive products. In 1992, France imported C\$3.5 billion worth of fish products, including 92.6 million from Canada. Canada ranks tenth among France's suppliers of such products. France is the largest European market for salmon and smoked salmon and for live and frozen lobster. There are many other products that could easily be marketed in France.

The French usually purchase most of their lobster and crayfish during the year-end holidays. The market for live lobster is a growing one. Among frozen products, there is ample room for more diversification. The total market for live lobster in 1992 was 3,896 tonnes, of which 1,012 were directly from Canada. The market for frozen lobster, whole or in pieces, was 2,023 tonnes in 1992, all but two percent of which was Canadian. Import duty on live or whole frozen lobster is eight percent. French consumption of salmon in all forms is increasing, but the Canadian share of the market has greatly declined. Of 87,326 tonnes in 1992, only 2,424 were from Canada. Mainly frozen crab meat, frozen shrimp, frozen scallops, frozen freshwater fish, frozen cod, other frozen and fresh sea fish.

One important point is the fact that supermarket distribution now plays a leading role in the sale of food products, including fresh and frozen seafood--over half of total food sales occur in superstores and supermarkets. Canadian companies may choose between three types of marketing: selling to a wholesaler, sometimes known as an importer, selling through an agent or selling direct to processors or purchasing pools.

Ready-to-sell products such as frozen salmon, frozen "popsicle" lobster and live lobster (during the Christmas holidays) are often sold directly to them or through a single intermediary in charge of importing. Negotiating with these powerful purchasing pools is always difficult and requires a cautious approach. In addition to the species already mentioned, Canada can increase its sales by diversifying supply and developing species such as burbot and ray, which are popular in France but not in Canada.

The prospects are also good for the following fishery products: frozen salmon, frozen scallops, frozen crab meat, frozen {whole and filleted} pike, other frozen freshwater fish, frozen shrimp, frozen eels, frozen cod, salt cod, frozen monkfish, frozen skate wings, frozen rock cod, frozen herring, fish eggs, and fresh mussels. Please contact the Canadian Embassy in Paris for further information on these and other seafood products.