

Because Chicago can easily receive fish products from all parts of the world (O'Hare International Airport is number one for direct flights), the Midwest enjoys the broadest variety of ocean, native, freshwater and aquacultured products in the United States. Because fresh fish, which is in great demand, can be transported quickly and easily to other Midwestern states, it is little wonder that Chicago has been deemed the "*Seafood Capital of the Nation*". In addition, the Chicago market is very receptive to Canadian fish and seafood products, as every available species from Canada is already being purchased and marketed in the Midwest.

The Chicago importers network reports that speed is of the essence in ensuring choice goods; even the remotest suppliers can replenish inventories in less than a day, and any Canadian firm who cannot compete on these terms will be at a definite disadvantage. Foodservice institutions such as hotels, restaurants, schools and hospitals are demanding an increasing amount of high quality seafood. Volume products include cod, shrimp, salmon and even surimi. The age of hypermarkets is in full swing in the Midwest, and the demand at the retail level is also increasing.

Cleveland lies at the centre of the industrial and financial heartland of the United States. This area, only one third the size of Ontario, has a population of over 20 million. Many wholesale food companies such as Riser and Cardinal support hundreds of wholesale accounts in addition to their corporate accounts, such as nursing homes, restaurants, schools and other foodservice operations. There is a growing marketshare for convenience and prepared foods, including value-added seafood products and specialty seafoods. Private labelling for store brands will be a major force in the Midwest marketplace, and there are opportunities for Canadian fish and seafood exporters that specialize in private labelling.

There are approximately 30 seafood wholesalers in the Cleveland area and many purchase Canadian fish and seafood products. Purchases are primarily Canadian salmon, cod, rope-grown mussels and shellfish, primarily lobster. The trend in fish and seafood consumption in the Cleveland area remains fairly high, and remains consistent. Preferred products include wild and farmed salmon, lobster, tuna, pollock, clams, rope-grown mussels, scallops, trout, pickerel, Arctic char, and snow crab.

Detroit and the territory within the region encompassing over 15 million people, generating in excess of 275 billion in Gross State Product. The region represents good opportunities for value-added prepared seafood products, alternate fish sources, convenient or portion packaged seafood products, and importantly, competitively priced goods. Traditionally, the region's buyer network is made more accessible by using food brokers who are generally very receptive and eager to represent Canadian product lines.

Indiana is a state which is often overlooked as an export target for Canadian fish and seafood products, due somewhat to its "low" profile. The state population, however, is approximately 6 million and the largest city, Indianapolis, the fastest growing city in North America, accounts for approximately 1.5 million. Indianapolis is centrally located in the state as well as in the mid-central United States, and is accessible by many major interstate highways which makes it a fantastic distribution hub. Freshwater fish is by far the largest volume sub-sector in this market, due primarily to consumer familiarity with these species of fish through physical proximity to the Great Lakes. Walleye, perch, bass, and smelt are the most popular commercial species and are purchased in both fresh and frozen state, whole or filleted. The most popular markets are restaurants at the foodservice level, and supermarket fresh fish counters at the retail level. As well, fresh fish distributors sell a lot of product through the food markets.