

UNITED STATES SEAFOOD MARKET

There is a strong demand in the United States for convenience food. Most Americans are only willing to spend fifteen minutes to prepare their main daily meal. Seventy per cent of U.S. households own microwave ovens, and many of the large American food companies expect that by 1994 more than 80 per cent of their food will be microwavable. By that time, almost two-thirds of American households will contain just one or two people and two-thirds of women will be in the work force. Consequently, the already strong demand for convenience products and prepared meals is expected to increase.

American consumers have become more willing to try new kinds of foods. This has resulted in retailers carrying a much greater variety of foods.

American consumers are very concerned about having a healthy diet. This is expected to result in an increased demand for seafood.

Although the number of U.S. supermarkets has declined since 1958, the average size of the stores has increased. Many supermarkets have added new sections, including fresh seafood sections. Due to their limited shelfspace, many U.S. retailers now require "slotting allowances" to be paid by producers to get their new products on the shelves.

The U.S. Food Marketing Institute (FMI) reports that U.S. consumers consider retail price to be an important factor in their buying decisions, especially for seafood. Sixty-three per cent of U.S. shoppers consider the availability of fresh seafood to be important in choosing where they shop. Although only 39 per cent of retailers view their seafood counters as profit centres, 53 per cent see it as a means to attract customers to their store.

According to FMI, 18 per cent of U.S. consumers expect to eat more fish in order to improve their health and 91 per cent of retailers expect seafood sales volumes to increase. Currently, the most popular seafood species at retail are shrimp (61.1 per cent), salmon (29.3 per cent), catfish (18.3 per cent) and orange roughy (16 per cent).

According to the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), at the start of the decade U.S. per capita consumption was 12.8 pounds (edible weight). By the end of the 1980's, American per capita consumption of seafood had increased to 15.9 pounds, a record high for the USA. Per capita consumption of the major seafood products in 1989 was as follows: