

MARKET ACCESS

Sweden is considered to have a high standard of living, which is generally shared by all the various groups within the population. This is mainly achieved through the social security system and government policies regarding redistribution of incomes. Private ownership of business enterprises is predominant in the Swedish economy, but public transport, communications, electricity distribution, and railroads are mainly State-operated. Sweden's great natural resources are the basis for its industry; the major industries are wood products, pulp and paper, special steel, and high quality metal manufacturers and engineering (ball bearings, electric generators, telephone equipment, and motor vehicles). Over the years, some major industries have met fierce competition in world markets, largely due to high wage costs.

MARKET CHARACTERISTICS

There are very few firms in Sweden which are solely fish importers. Most of the companies which import fish into Sweden are also engaged in some other activity along the distribution chain. Commission agents frequently act as importers when they purchase foreign fish products for their own account. Wholesalers also import some fish products which they in turn distribute to the retail stores. The large retail chains also import fish products. For the retailer, this sort of direct importing activity is limited to established, well-known volume products.

DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

Retailers

The retail trade in Sweden is dominated by private companies. The private retailers account for over 65 percent of the total retail sales in Sweden. The consumer cooperatives have approximately 18 percent of the market, the multiples have over 14 percent, and the mail order trade has 2 percent. The consumer cooperative sector is almost completely dominated by KF stores, operating under the names of Obs, Domus or Konsum, and B&W.

The private retail trade is dominated by a few, very large voluntary chains which account for more than half of the total sales in that sector. The following chains have stores across Sweden; ICA (equivalent to IGA in Canada), and Favor. The stores are owned by independent businesses who in theory are free to purchase from whomever they want. In practice, the stores usually buy from a supplier. ICA retailers purchase through their own wholesaling facilities, while Favor deals with Dagab.

In the multiple sector there is only one company, Ahlens, which owns over 15 department stores with food sections. Fresh fish is distributed to the retail stores in quite a different fashion than frozen or prepared fish. The retail stores tend to buy their fresh fish supplies directly from the fishermen or fishermen's cooperative. On the west coast of Sweden, much of the fresh fish is sold by auctions.

Wholesalers

There are two fish organizations in Sweden, the Swedish Fish Wholesalers Association, based in Gothenburg with 20 members, and the National Federation of Swedish Fish Wholesalers, which has a membership of 17.