

Table 6

Sea Urchin Imports by Type — 1988 (Metric Tons)

Country	Fresh or Live	Frozen	Salted or Dried	Total
Canada	406	37	10	457
United States	1 305	432	13	1 750
Republic of Korea	848	—	444	1 292
North Korea	4	2	430	436
China	2	30	210	242
Chile	17	179	27	223
Total	2 643	760	1 248	4 651

Source: Japanese Ministry of Finance.

When examined on a per-kg basis, large price variations can be observed, particularly for the fresh product. These price variations relate directly to quality considerations. Canada, perhaps due to a lower quality product and lack of experience in product handling in the early stages, receives a substantially lower average c.i.f. price than the U.S. or Korea.

7 East Coast Imports

A recent trend has been the importation of live sea urchin from the American east coast and, to a lesser extent, from Canada's east coast. According to a report by the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), dated April 17, 1989, export of live sea urchin from the east coast to Japan is increasing, while California, which has been the major source of supply of fresh sea urchin roe, is experiencing declining resources due to overharvesting.

Table 7

Fresh Sea Urchin: C.I.F. Price — 1988 (¥/kg)

Country	Fresh or Live	Frozen	Salted or Dried
Canada	3 087	1 446	2 571
United States	4 578	2 047	1 772
Republic of Korea	7 178	N/A	4 014

Source: Japanese Ministry of Finance.

The major east coast harvesting area in the United States extends from the northern part of Massachusetts to the New Brunswick/Maine border. The harvesting season in this area is reported to run from September, when the sea urchin season ends in Japan, to the end of February, when east coast sea urchin starts spawning and is unsuitable for harvesting. Although there is no specific data available on the export of sea urchin products from the American east coast to Japan, it is estimated that approximately 1 000 tons of live product were shipped in 1988.

After treating the sea urchin to prevent dripping of water, they are packed in cardboard boxes, each with a capacity of approximately 23 to 34 kg. Ice gels rather than regular ice are used in packing, as the latter kills the sea urchin when it melts. A Japanese customs forwarder, stationed at Boston's Logan Airport, collects the shipment and delivers it by truck to JFK Airport in New York, where the cardboard boxes are containerized or palletized and shipped to Japan.