
FISH PRODUCTS

Japan is the world's largest market for fish products, absorbing more than one third of total world exports. Japan imported US\$13.2 billion worth of fish products in 1992, an increase of almost 6% in dollar terms from 1991. Canadian exports of fish products totalled more than C\$650 million in 1992, leaving us with roughly a 4.3% share in 1992 and making us the eighth largest supplier (Russia moved into seventh place in 1992, ahead of Canada).

While the current economic slowdown in Japan has led to lower prices for fish products and decreased consumption of higher priced products, market growth remains positive, in the range of 1-1.5%. As the Japanese domestic catch has steadily declined, and as Japanese consumption of fish products will remain constant, the opportunities for increased imports are good. The current strong yen should make Canadian fish products more attractive to Japanese buyers as well. However, competition is also among the stiffest in the world.

I. Market Opportunities

Japanese imports of fisheries products continue to grow, rising from just more than 1 million metric tonnes in 1980 to more than 2.9 million metric tonnes in 1992. This is largely due to declining Japanese domestic catches, as a result of smaller resources and reduced access to supplies in international waters. Imports are becoming a more important part of the Japanese domestic supply situation for fish products, having risen from 25% of supply in 1987 to more than 35% in 1991.

While the general trend is upward, Canada's share of the Japanese market for fisheries products has dropped. In part, this is due to the growth in imports of products that we do not produce, eg. warm water shrimp, most tuna and eel. However, we have also not been able to take part in the large expansion of Japanese imports of fish products such as salmon, mackerel, and surimi. Nevertheless, Canadian surimi operations are in the early stages, and we should be able to take more of the market in the coming years.

Japanese domestic consumption of fisheries products remains relatively steady at a level of approximately 72 kg. per person per year (in Canada it is about 7 kg. per person).