

SHELLFISH

Italy's production of all shellfish is estimated officially at around 60,000 t., but the real figure could well be twice as much. Production is in steady decline, however, as pollution and over-fishing have considerably reduced marketable resources. Major products from domestic waters (with estimated catch figures in parentheses) are as follows: caramote prawn (7,000 t.), mantis squillid (4,500 t.), mediterranean mussel (5,000 t.), cuttlefish (10,000 t.), Loligo squids (8,000 t.), common octopus (9,000 t.), molluscs (20,000 t.). Import tonnage in 1990 was more than double the official catch volume, i.e. 200,000 t. of fresh/frozen/preserved products. Major import items (with tonnages in parentheses) included the following: pandalis shrimp (7,438 t.), other shrimp (15,970 t.), live lobsters (1,578 t.), mussels (10,975 t.), Loligo vulgaris squid (7,940 t.), Illex squid (7,799 t.). Total imports of canned shellfish products amounted to about 11,000 t.

Shellfish demand is concentrated in the major coastal cities, and is generally greatest during the summer vacation period, when normal domestic requirements are augmented by strong foreign tourist demand. While there is a very small market of household sales, the major users are restaurants, hotels, caterers, etc. which have strong preference for fresh products whenever possible.

The Italian consumer is quite demanding as far as product quality is concerned, and is usually willing to pay the higher price entailed. In general, supplier offers are rejected less on price considerations than on quality. The following sections provide more detailed information on products of interest to Canadian exporters.

SQUID: Three species of squid are commonly fished in Italian waters, the "calamaro" or common squid (*Loligo vulgaris*), the "totano" or European flying squid (*Todarodes sagittatus*) and the "totano volatore" or Mediterranean flying squid (*Illex coindetti*). Commercially the latter two are generally lumped together, and the only distinction made is between the calamaro and the totano. The former has firmer flesh, consequently better cooking and keeping quality and fetches a significantly higher price. In recent years the domestic catch has usually run around 7,000 t. of calamari and some 5,000 t. of totani. Not all of these totals are fished in the Mediterranean, as the Italian ocean fleet also takes squid each year off the coasts of North and South America as well. Besides domestic production, Italy also currently imports up to 50,000 t. per year from other sources.