

yen, in comparison with other currencies (especially the U.S. dollar), has not been a great factor in impeding the recovery of the fish market, the massive outbreak of food poisoning by the *E. coli* bacteria has been exerting negative effects on certain items of fish that are consumed in raw form (*sashimi* or *sushi*). Since the outbreak of the massive infection in Okayama Prefecture in May 1996 and in Sakai City, Osaka, the Japanese government has been trying without success to identify the actual route of infection, the source of which, fortunately, appears not to be from fish and seafood products.

Investment Opportunities

Although Japan does not have a tradition of consuming seal meats, previous missions have resulted in decisions by a small number of Japanese companies to invest in product research and market development for seal meat and seal oil. By visiting potential Japanese processors and end-users, a mission comprising Canadian seal-meat and seal-oil processors and exporters will further expand the interest of Japanese companies in researching uses and developing markets for seal products. Japanese-language literature and product samples will support these investment development efforts.

THE ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan has evolved as a collaborative strategy between industry and governments to develop the market for Canadian seafood in Japan. Increasingly, the industry is asking government to provide enhanced market intelligence and information and to assist in the development of an environment conducive to long-term growth.

In terms of the maintenance and development of the Japanese market for

Canadian fish exporters, Canadian producers will be under increasing pressure to provide products developed to suit the demands of the Japanese consumer. Market development and trade promotion efforts on the part of governments must reflect this concern.

A significant challenge facing Canadians in this market is convincing Japanese chefs and consumers that the diversity of Canadian agri-food, fish and beverage products extends beyond maple syrup, smoked salmon and rye whisky. One of the factors making this objective difficult to achieve is the limited number of Canadian agri-food, fish and beverage products evident on Japanese restaurant menus or retail shelves. If Japanese consumers are to view Canada as a producer of a broad range of food and beverage products, they must begin to see a much wider array of Canadian goods at the retail counter.

The Canadian Embassy meets regularly with Japanese food services operators and retailers to discuss Canada food fairs. To maximize the level of interest among their clientele and amortize their advertising costs over as many products as possible, Japanese importers are generally interested in the greatest possible number of Canadian goods. It is simply not cost-effective for them to undertake promotions based on only a narrow product range. In addition to the broadest possible range of agri-food, fish and beverage products, some food services operators and retailers wish to extend the envelope even further to include Canadian consumer and tourism offerings in their Canada promotions.

The interest of Japanese food service and retail clients in promoting the broadest possible "Canadian package" matches very well with the Canadian strategy to obtain the maximum benefit and synergy from rapidly