

POST OBSERVATIONS

The Commercial Division of the Canadian Embassy in Brussels has again selected the fisheries, sea products and services sector as a priority area for export market development activities. The purpose of the synopsis is to provide those engaged in the process of promoting exports from Canada with the means to obtain condensed marketing data and information on export opportunities at an early stage in the export planning process. Submissions from the Canadian Embassy in Brussels relating to the fisheries and seafood sector are summarized below.

MARKET

The current Belgian seafood market provides a broad range of opportunities, and Canadian exporters can play a very important role whenever they go adequately and wholeheartedly about their marketing in Belgium.

Since the market has become increasingly volatile, opportunities for market penetration not only focus on the importers. Purchasers for the main food chains and for the specialized frozen food processing companies are currently looking into expanding into new varieties of seafood, or trying to substitute traditional suppliers in the market.

The same is true for the traditional processing companies for smoking and marinating seafood. It should be remembered, however, that the Belgian market is one which places prime importance on service, ranging from J.I.T. delivery systems to the ability of ordering less than full container quantities.

While many opportunities are opening up for Canadian exporters due to the changing product awareness of Belgian consumers, this market can only be tackled efficiently if exporters are willing to adjust to the typical requests of the Belgian customers. As European taste is different, exporting companies must follow a marketing approach that is completely different from that used in the North American market.

CANADIAN EXPORTS

Traditionally, Canadians have been supplying salmon and lobster to the Belgian market. However, both products are mainly in demand during the peak period of the end-of-year holiday season. The Belgian market generally has very few possibilities for stocking products in advance, so Canadian firms should take into account flexible delivery delays and therefore do part of the stocking themselves.

It would also be preferable to perform the processing of salmon and lobster in Canada itself. This way, Canadian firms could enter at a further stage in the retail pyramid, achieving better economies of scale than their Belgian processing counterparts.

Next to the "traditional two" of Canadian seafood exports, a whole range of new opportunities lies in store for inventive exporting companies. This is already being proved by the success of the Canadian mussel in the Belgian market, which was traditionally very much geared towards the Dutch mussel. The sudden price increase of its Dutch counterpart created an extra incentive for Canadians to export their mussels, but even without the price argument, Canadian mussels still have a good competitive edge.