

- In 1979, a worldwide fisheries marketing study was published. This study, which was revised in 1980, was a joint effort by Fisheries and Oceans, Industry, Trade and Commerce and private industry;
- In November 1980 and again in 1982, more than 20 Canadian fishing companies participated in the Salon International de l'Alimentation (SIAL) in Paris;
- In December 1981, a French television promotional package for Canadian lobster was jointly funded by a Canadian supplier, the French buyer and the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Furthermore, several Canadian firms are represented in the marketplace. Two companies have established offices there, while a larger number have retained agents to handle their affairs.

Activities such as those described above have provided considerable information and knowledge on the French market.

Canadian Success Stories

Even though sales of Canadian herring have substantially dropped since 1978, the increases in cod and lobster exports have kept Canada's total exports to France in excess of 15 thousand tonnes, worth \$72.5 and \$74.1 million in 1980 and 1981 respectively (see Table V).

The establishment of local offices by major Canadian companies signifies long-term commitment to the French fish market and will no doubt contribute to increased Canadian success in this particular sector. One East Coast company that recently opened an office in Paris increased its sales of frozen fish by more than 500 per cent in a year. Recently, a significant first sale of dried capelin was concluded. Prospects for further orders are encouraging.

Market Considerations

Tariffs and market regulations impede access to the French market. The member states of the EEC Commission jointly negotiate protection of fish stocks and conclude bilateral agreements. Canada has recently negotiated a long-term agreement (LTA) with the EEC that resulted in tariff reductions for certain species on fixed quantities. Even with the reductions, Canadian products are still facing heavier duties than Iceland's and Norway's products.

The Common Fisheries Policy, ratified in January 1983, could affect the market by changing the price structure for fisheries products and the price of fish products in relation to alternative products and bring recourse to measures such as the reference price system that could directly affect Canadian exports. Due to its membership in the EEC, France would be required to adhere to this reference price system which would govern import price levels from third countries. For certain species, this reference price will likely represent the minimum price at which exporters must sell their product.

Health regulations and specifications are numerous. Canadian exporters must be knowledgeable of quality and labelling regulations in France and must adapt their products to French tastes and requirements. Product texture, colour and flavour should be consistent, with each species being properly handled through the distribution chain. The product is expected to be as close to "natural" as possible in terms of freshness, appearance and presentation. There is an increasing use in France of the Total Volatile Basis Test (TVBT) to measure the freshness of products. (The Commercial Division of the Canadian Embassy in Paris can assist exporters in obtaining relevant documentation on laws and regulations pertaining to fish imports in France).

Recent actions by the French government will have a significant impact on Canadian exporters. In 1981, a system of exchange controls was introduced, resulting in a situation where letters of credit cannot be paid until the product has arrived in France. Furthermore, French importers cannot purchase foreign exchange in advance to cover possible currency fluctuations between the French franc and Canadian dollar. In certain instances, Canadian exporters of fish products could increase sales possibilities by agreeing to quote prices in French francs.

In October 1982, the French government announced that all import documentation for shipments must be submitted in the French language. This includes commercial invoices, insurance certificates and transportation documents. At the present time, French authorities have only applied these regulations to commercial invoices. However, Canadian companies are advised to ensure that all documentation accompanying shipments is in French.

For purposes of presentation, retail packs vary in weight from 200 to 500 grams and occasionally 1,000 grams; packages are mainly 200 to 400 grams; freezer centre packs are mostly polyethylene bags containing up to 2 kg; individually quick-frozen fillets are usually 1 or 2 kg packs (polyethylene bags or hermetically-sealed cartons with cellophane windows) for freezer centre market; the hotel, restaurant and institution trade uses frozen portions widely but requirements vary according to the type of establishment. Breaded and portioned products are preferred in 50-gram portions packed 8, 10, and 20 to the pack, with 72 per cent fish content. These are found mainly in self-service stores. Prepared dishes are bought mostly in "hypermarchés" and large self-service stores where the consumer can combine price with one-stop shopping. Packs must list quantity and type of fish in prepared dishes and should have cooking instructions and warn against refreezing. The name of products, country of origin, net weight (metric), date of freezing (where appropriate) and estimated shelf life must be displayed on the outer carton.

Finally, exporters should be aware of the complex French distribution system, i.e. numerous middlemen with the extreme end being the fish buyer or importer, retailer or HRI operator. Fresh fish has the