

SEAFOOD MARKET IN BRIEF

More than half of the Dutch population is located in the western coastal area of the country which includes the three major cities, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, the latter being the country's administrative centre. All three cities are within an hour's drive of each other. Fast, efficient train and bus service link all Dutch commercial centres. A businessman can make a morning appointment in Rotterdam and be back in Amsterdam for an afternoon meeting. Dutch businessmen are generally scrupulous about honouring appointments and expect the same from visiting Canadian businessmen.

The Netherlands represents an ideally compact and concentrated market, which helps considerably to reduce transportation and distribution costs for Canadian seafood exporters. An additional advantage of selling seafood to the Netherlands is that Rotterdam is the world's largest port and serves as an excellent entry point into the lucrative EC markets. As well, Amsterdam is one of Europe's busiest airports. In fact, there are more than 160 million people within a radius of 500 kilometres of the major Dutch cities. Because of its strategic location, the Netherlands has taken over a great proportion of the transport business for the Common Market nations.

In the Netherlands there is a long tradition of selling landed fish through auctions. For the fisherman, as well as the trader, the system has proved to be of great value. The open structure in price development and sales conditions of the system has strengthened the power of competition between them, and has strongly developed the awareness of quality. The fast logistic handling in the auction halls and at the processing plants, and the excellent means of distribution, guarantee a top fresh product on the wholesale markets in Europe (Billingsgate, Boulogne, Bremen, Madrid, Milan, Paris/Rungis).

The Dutch consume approximately 40 grams of fish per inhabitant per day, or about 14.6 kilograms per annum. This may not be much in comparison with surrounding countries not much, but the quantity is constantly rising. This is partly due to an intensive promotion campaign by the *Dutch National Fish Promotion Bureau*, whose main slogan is that "fish is good for the heart and blood-vessels and brings the cholesterol percentage down. There are about 1,200 Dutch specialty fish stores and around 1,000 firms that go weekly from market to market to sell fish. They are organized in the Association of Dutch Fish Retailers VNV, a very active organization which does pioneering work to upgrade the fishmongers job by organizing sales and product quality courses for many levels of their members.

The main fish that the Dutch eat is Nieuwe Haring (matjes herring). The average Dutch citizen eats around 15 herrings a year, but, not all Dutch like herring. Thus, it is estimated that consuming citizens eat over 30 herring per year, which means only 50 percent of the population eats herring. Second favourite choice of the average Dutch citizen is a variety of fried fish, such as plaice, cod pollock and mussels. Cod is sometimes eaten in small pieces which are called "kibbelingen".