

15 Ajitsuke Kazunoko: Future Prospects

Japanese trading companies and processors indicate that they expect strong growth in the ajitsuke kazunoko market in the future. The product is currently being processed in snack packs that are appealing to Japanese youth and the availability of ajitsuke kazunoko year round is stimulating more consumer interest. To this end, Japanese processors plan to launch additional promotional campaigns in conjunction with Atlantic Canadian processors.

The resource instability and presence of the herring parasite in the European roe should strengthen the Japanese demand for Atlantic Canadian roe.

The decrease in supply of Alaskan pollock roe available this year is going to have a subsequent impact on the ajitsuke kazunoko industry according to a fisheries products representative for Nippon Suisan Kaisha Ltd. The limited shelf life of ajitsuke kazunoko has discouraged large distribution in southern Japan in previous years because processing plants are located only in northern Japan. The traditional southern processors of Alaskan pollock are targeting production of ajitsuke kazunoko as their new major product to replace the rapidly decreasing pollock roe supplies. The establishment of processors in southern Japan is expected to have a dramatic impact on the consumption levels of ajitsuke kazunoko in Japan.

The Japan Fisheries Market Report (September 1988) developed by the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo indicates that frozen roe prices were less in 1987 than in previous years and with the smaller volumes imported (6 000–7 000 MT), there may be a limited supply.

Extending the shelf life of the product, establishing new product variations and undertaking product promotion should lead to increased market development for ajitsuke kazunoko.

16 1988 Fall Mission and Future Directions

In November 1988, representatives of the Atlantic Canadian industry met with Japanese industry representatives. They developed the following proposed strategy for consideration by the industry at large and targeted at improving the quality and marketing opportunities for Atlantic Canadian herring roe:

- *The Atlantic Canadian Herring Roe Committee* — This newly established group would spearhead recommendations and communicate with Japanese industry.
- *Education and awareness* — A program aimed at improving quality would include seminars to introduce improved handling and processing techniques and subsequent training programs for plant workers, fishermen, etc.
- *Minimum Quality Standards* — Canadian industry expressed a preparedness to examine minimum quality standards and to continue the dialogue established with Japanese industry. Canadian industry could possibly determine a minimum quality standard below which products would not be sold. Japanese importers could also refuse to purchase goods not meeting minimum standards.
- *Market Research* — A market study could be undertaken to determine the market forces that influence herring roe consumption levels in Japan.
- *Promotional Campaign* — Subject to market research, a promotional campaign could be initiated incorporating Canadian processors and the Japanese retail sector.
- *New Product Development* — Canadian industry would benefit from exploring the development of new added value products. Freezing the end products is not detrimental to the textural qualities, therefore, frozen distribution to Japan may be possible. Products could include ajitsuke kazunoko; "roe on kelp," etc. Development work on chemical additives to improve roe firmness is also recommended.