

The delivery argument is also of prime importance in convincing such Belgian processing plants as La Couronne Rokerij to purchase Canadian fish. Although one problem has already been taken care of by the sharp increase in the price of Norwegian salmon, these companies still possess a competitive edge because they deliver less than full container quantities. And although smoked salmon is consumed in Belgium year round, there nevertheless exists a sharp peak during the end-of-year holiday season. Of course, Canadian competitors would also have a competitive edge if they smoked, processed and packed the salmon themselves. Especially during the holiday season, they could achieve good economies of scale by bringing large quantities of ready-smoked salmon to the Belgian market, which could be sold directly to the food chains.

It is important to point out that this shifting market has not yet written off the importer as a major market entry point for Canadian seafood products. Vertically integrated companies that have also launched export and retail chains remain an interesting marketing prospect for Canadian seafood. Companies like Pieters Visbedrijf, De Bacquer, Morubel, Van den Abeele and many others still play an extremely important part on the Belgian seafood scene.

PROMOTION

In April 1993, the first European Seafood Exposition took place in Brussels, with extensive participation from Canadian exporters through a large Canadian group stand. It was a prime opportunity to introduce new Canadian exporters to the EC marketplace, as well as introduce less traditional Canadian seafood to a broad professional public. The organization of this European Seafood Exposition is in the hands of Diversified Expositions, who have built up a major reputation through the organization of the annual International Boston Seafood Show. The organization was carried out in close co-operation with the international trade organizations and associations for seafood in Europe. In order to effectively market this fair throughout the EC, a 16 month-long advertising campaign was launched. One hundred thousand pieces of direct mail were sent out in the various languages of the EC, backed up by a year-long telemarketing campaign. Last but not least, a seafood conference was held during the fair.

In addition, purchasers from the various food and fish retail sectors are known to attend the biannual fairs in neighbouring countries. Emphasis is put on the Sial fair in Paris and the Anuga fair in Cologne. At both fairs Canadian exporters have the opportunity to participate in the large Canadian stand, offering excellent marketing opportunities towards a wide range of international professional purchasers.

On a much smaller regional scale, the Belgian food fair Tavola in Kortrijk can also be a vehicle for introducing Canadian seafood. Nevertheless, one should remember that this fair specifically focuses on specialty food items, and that it is thus far less important for the introduction of a wide range of Canadian seafood.

Promotion vis-a-vis the final consumer is of prime importance. This can be partly achieved through a customer friendly packaging system. Emphasis should be placed on accurate information about catching and processing systems, explaining the guaranteed freshness of the product. Given the Belgian reticence to try frozen seafood products, the continual emphasis on freshness and quality would appear to be the only argument which could win over that part of the Belgian public who still traditionally buys "fresh fish" at the fishmonger. Of course, accurate branding will be important, but it will have to be a dual branding. Not only the company branding is important, but so is the clear recognition that it concerns a Canadian seafood product.