

APPROVED PLANTS

All Canadian fish or shellfish plants wishing to export to the EU must be on a list of approved plants. The most recent lists published are decisions 93/495/EEC and 93/606/EC. These lists are updated regularly.

APPROVAL OF CERTAIN PLANTS

Until an official decision concerning them is handed down, the following products: ready-to-eat dishes (dishes in which the fish has been cooked) surimi, minced fish and cooked peeled shrimp must be prepared in plants that have been approved by the French government. Contact the Canadian Embassy for further information.

PRODUCTS INTENDED TO BE CONSUMED ALIVE

For the time being, products such as mussels, oysters, live scallops and sea urchins may be exported to France only under a special exemption. This means that importers of these products must request special authorization (from the DGAL fish products office). Discussions are under way in an attempt to reach a sanitary reciprocity agreement for these products between Canada and the EU.

HEAVY METAL CONTENT

In general, concentrations of heavy metals in fish and crustaceans must not exceed 0.5 mg per kg of product for mercury (1 mg in certain products such as shark and monkfish), and 1 mg per kg for lead.

INSPECTION

All fish products are subject to inspection by veterinarians and by Customs and Fraud Prevention Service personnel when entering the country.

CUSTOMS DUTIES

Products may be subject to quotas (indication of a quantity) and suspensions at reduced rates or duty-free; not all of these are necessarily mentioned in this report and they may change from year to year (in principle, these quotas are to be abolished eventually). Duty is charged on the basis of the CIF price. Except where agreed otherwise, it is the importer who is required to pay these duties. In practice, the customs broker pays the applicable duty and VAT on the day the product is imported, and then bills the importer, who reimburses him within a specified time (usually 15 days). There is no limit on the quantity of sea products that may be imported into France.

The customs department ("Service des Douanes") is the final authority in determining which tariff item to apply. If there is any doubt, there exists a procedure whereby samples may be submitted in order to determine the tariff item. This procedure, known as the Renseignement Tarifaire Contraignant, binds the importer and the customs service for six years. In any case, it is necessary to go through a customs agent.

Customs duties on some fish products will decline with the new GATT agreement. This diminution does not affect all products and is progressive, extending from 1995 to 1999. Consult the Canadian Embassy in Paris for further information or details concerning market access to the French market.