

7. SEAFOOD

Thailand is one of the world's largest marine product producers, possessing a trawler fleet of more than 30,000 vessels. The Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea produce an estimated 2.73 million tonnes of marine products annually. In 1993, the domestic fishery industry grew an estimated 8%.

Although there is the perception that Thailand does not have a market for imported fish because it is such a large exporter, niche opportunities do exist for cold water fish, specialty products and gourmet foods.

Smoked Salmon

In 1992, 4 tonnes of smoked salmon worth 669,831 baht (C\$ 35,254) were imported into Thailand. Norway and Sweden were the primary suppliers. Canada also exports smoked salmon from British Columbia, Quebec, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. Although these provinces do not export in large quantities, volumes are increasing.

End users of smoked salmon are leading hotels and international restaurants. Smoked salmon is also re-exported to neighbouring countries.

Cod

There is a considerable market for cod in Thailand, as cod is not found in nearby waters. The majority of cod is imported from the USSR, Hong Kong and Japan. In 1992, a total of 98,783,365 baht (C\$ 519,650) worth of cod was imported into Thailand. This market has not seen growth in the last couple of years and import figures are expected to remain stable.

Specialty Products

A small, but nonetheless real market can be found in specialty products such as Atlantic lobster, Maritime crab and BC salmon. Institutions such as hotels, leading restaurants and grocery chains (in limited quantities) buy these specialty products for the tourism and expatriate trade.

In the past, Canadian food producers have failed to capitalize on their reputation for high quality, fresh products. These types of products are now being eaten more frequently in Thailand but exporters have a long way to go in terms of capitalizing on opportunities. Canadian seafood enjoys a reputation as a symbol of "status". Taking into consideration Thai consumeristic and status conscious behaviour, if marketed properly, Canadian seafood could acquire a growing share of the seafood market.