

The eastern seaboard is a target market for Atlantic salmon from Norway. The Norwegian Fish Farmers Sales Organization has opened an office in New York and allocated a budget of \$1 million to develop this market. Currently, the Norwegians are able to sell a 3 kg Atlantic in New York or Boston more cheaply than an equivalent King salmon from B.C. Although there were some mixed signals, it appears that the northeastern U.S. prefers Atlantics over Pacifics. The general conclusion among the group was that B.C. marketing efforts might better be directed to areas other than the eastern seaboard at this time.

Fulton Fish Market



In addition to researching the Boston Seafood Show and area, three members from the BCSFA delegation and trade commissioner Bob Steinbock of the Fisheries Division, External Affairs and International Trade Canada visited the Fulton Fish Market in New York. The objective was to learn about the operations of the Fish Market in general and in particular its possibility as a channel for sales of fresh Pacific salmon. The group met with Richard Lord, a representative of collective sellers of the fish market, and other representatives and toured the area. (A selection of Fulton Fish Market Companies appears in Appendix G.)

The Fish Market is a wholesale seafood market with 70 wholesalers. It is located on South Street in lower Manhattan. Open from 4 to 8 a.m., it sells mainly to day distributors who arrive at 4 a.m., buy their required products through selective shopping, load onto trucks, and usually start their deliveries by 6 or 7 a.m.

The market was originally a direct-delivery dock for local fish boats. Later there was a live holding complex that kept fish in nets in the river beside the market but pollution has stopped any live holding of fish. Further, boat delivery has ceased because of present-day commercial water travel logistics and all products are now brought in by truck. The market has been in general decline in terms of volume, quality and general demand for some years now. Discussion is underway to build a new and more acceptable facility in a better location.

The group arrived at the market early in the morning and were surprised by the lack of hygiene and circa 1900 marketing methodology. Fish were brought out from coolers in the morning, boxes were stacked haphazardly in front of the market and the occasional box was open for inspection. Fish were left in the open air or sitting in water for at least the 2 or 3 hours when the group was there. In general all fish were handled roughly and carelessly and even fish that were dropped on the dirty floor were gaffed and flung back into a box.

Of special note was some B.C. farmed fish. Processing dates on the box indicated it had been processed 14 days earlier. The gills were still in and were white and covered with mucus. They were and looked like they had been sitting for days in 10 cm (4in.) of water with minimal ice left. Scale loss was severe. Surprisingly, the meat quality appeared acceptable and vendors at the market commented on two occasions that Pacific salmon kept better than Norwegian salmon. If anyone should know about holding fish for long periods of time, it would be the vendors at the Fulton Fish Market.

Pacific salmon at the Fulton Market were being sold at \$0.35 to \$0.40 per lb. (450 g) less than Norwegian salmon. Buyers at the market did not appear sophisticated in their knowledge nor particular about the quality. They wanted cheap fish and that is what they got. The "best buy" was a 14-day-old, 2 to 4 lb. (900 to 1800 g) gill-in Pacific salmon.

Norwegian farmed salmon was available in relatively large volumes. At least four companies were noted. The companies at Fulton said they used Norwegian fish because of reliable delivery, consistent supply, good packaging and large size of fish.

Salmon sales accounted for less than five per cent of all fish sales and salmon did not appear to be a specialty item or highly regarded.

Considerable secondary processing was being done in the back of many shops. Filleting and steaking was common.