

MARKET ACCESS

The Netherlands has traditionally been a proponent of free trade. Some concessions had to be made to this principle by the adherence to the rules and regulations established by the European Community, of which the country has been a founding member. Yet there continues to be a strong awareness of the need to be flexible if the economic importance of the Netherlands as Europe's principal distribution centre is to be maintained and expanded. One good example is the efficiency of the local customs service and its willingness to process consignments that do not fully meet the required documentation or certification.

IMPORT CHANNELS

The Netherlands has a large number of experienced importers, sales agents and distributors well versed in international trade. A large portion of the goods are handled by importers who purchase for their own account and distribute throughout the country and Europe. Because of the size, accessibility, and competitive nature of the Dutch market, importers often insist on an exclusive distributorship. If the importer is a well qualified and experienced firm, an exclusive distributorship often yields the best results, although this is not really common in the fisheries sector, except in the case of canned products. There are furthermore many commission agents and brokers in the Netherlands serving the domestic and European markets for seafood. A Dutch representative can often provide an excellent starting point in exporting to Europe. Dutch firms can easily handle the logistics, linguistics and stocks on behalf of the Canadian exporter.

DISTRIBUTION

The introduction of products into the Dutch market is uncomplicated and may be done in several ways. Representation throughout the Netherlands is facilitated by the compact market and may be achieved with any of the following distribution methods to cover the entire area, depending on the expected sales volume, product support requirements, and marketing techniques. Appropriate methods of distribution include: 1) establishing a sales office to serve the entire country and provide a distribution base for Western Europe; 2) selling through an agent or distributor whose activity may cover specified areas, the entire country, or other European markets in addition to the domestic market; 3) selling through established wholesalers or dealers; and, 4) selling directly to stores, chains, retail cooperatives, or central purchasing organizations.

COMMERCIAL INVOICE

Although no special form of contents are prescribed for the commercial invoice, it is advisable to include the following: 1) date and place of shipment; 2) markings of the packages and their numerical order; 3) exact description of the goods (e.g. customary commercial description according to kind, quantity, grade, weight [gross and net] in metric units, with special emphasis on factors that may affect value; 4) agreed upon price of the goods, including unit cost and total cost F.O.B factory, plus shipping, insurance and other charges; 5) delivery and payment terms; and, 6) the signature of a responsible official from the shipper's firm.