

By 1985 the Atlantic Canadian roe fishery had begun to demonstrate strong potential for becoming an important east-coast industry. At that time, initial studies (Huynh, 1986; Watson, 1986 b) were undertaken to develop a greater understanding of the reasons behind the price differential between east and west coast herring roe.

**Table 1**

**Prices of 1988 Frozen Versus Salted Roe to Japanese Industry**

Level	Frozen Roe		Salted Roe	
	¥/Kg	Profit Margin	¥/Kg	Profit Margin
Importer	1960-1980	2%-3%	4000	2%
Processor	2000	78%	4080	37%
Wholesaler	3550	27%-38%	5580	13%-20%
Retailer	4500-4900	41%-44%	6300-6700	43%-64%
Consumer	6500-6900		9000-11000	

Source: ASI Intech Research Inc., Study of the Flavoured Herring Roe Market in Japan, Tokyo, 1988.

Table 1 depicts the 1988 price differential between British Columbia salted roe, and seasoned Atlantic Canadian herring roe. A comparison of the processing methods used to prepare salted (west coast) roe, and frozen (east coast) roe are illustrated in Figure 1.

Physiological differences between east and west coast herring, as identified in previous studies (Table 2), are responsible for differences in product type and price range. The important characteristics (crunchiness, size and appearance) of roe from herring harvested along Canada's Pacific coast are more similar to those of the now scarce Japanese herring, than to those of the Atlantic herring.

**Table 2**

**Comparison of East Coast Roe Versus West Coast Roe**

	<b>Atlantic Herring</b>	<b>Pacific Herring</b>
Subspecies:	Clupea harengus harengus	Clupea harengus pallasi
Length of Whole Fish:	29 cm	23 cm
Belly Wall Thickness:	1.5 mm	3 mm
Peak Spawning Time:	May - August (high degree of variability)	April
Egg Diameters: (100 eggs)	1 mm	1.5 mm
Fat Content of Whole Fish:	12-14%	6-8%

Source: Watson, K.A., An Investigation of New Brunswick Herring Roe and its Potential for Value Added Processing, Fredericton, N.B., Research and Productivity Council, 1986.

The softer texture, smaller egg size and unprocessed state of the Atlantic Canadian roe resulted in a product that exhibited less of the desirable "crunchy" characteristics and a higher incidence of discoloration and deformity. As a result, the product commanded a much lower price from Japanese consumers. Seasoned herring roe was thus developed as a product to be marketed year round rather than as an alternative to the expensive, better quality salted product, which has only a seasonal market.

Seasoned herring roe has now become a Japanese "yuppie food" and the demand is expected to increase as the product becomes more popular in unserved market areas of the country.