



**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

Foreign Agricultural  
Service

Forest and Fishery  
Products Division

Agricultural Handbook

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# A Guide to Exporting Fishery Products





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**A Guide to Exporting Fishery Products.** Souleymane Diaby, Forest and Fishery Products Division, Commodity and Marketing Programs, Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

**Abstract**

This guide is developed to assist the U.S. commercial fishing industry in its export decision making process. It does not prescribe methods, but rather, provides steps for consideration in developing an export marketing strategy. It also refers and links to numerous other information sources of interest to export-minded fishery organizations.

Keywords: Export plan, fishery products, export regulations, export shipping, documentation, export financing, market information, market development cooperators.

**Acknowledgments**

This guide was prepared using the following materials (appendix I):

- "Guide to Exporting Solid Wood Products," U.S. Department of Agriculture
- "Agricultural Export Transportation Handbook," U.S. Department of Agriculture
- "2000 Export Programs Guide: A Business Guide to Federal Export Assistance," U.S. Trade Information Center
- "A Basic Guide to Exporting," U.S. Department of Commerce
- "Breaking into the Trade Game," U.S. Small Business Administration
- "A Basic Guide to Exporting Seafood," New Jersey Department of Agriculture

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# Contents

	Page
Introduction .....	1
Developing an Export Strategy .....	2
Making the Export Decision .....	2
Identifying Your Markets and Products .....	3
Pricing Your Products .....	4
Methods of Exporting .....	4
Promoting Your Products .....	6
Exporting Fishery Products .....	9
Export Regulations .....	9
U.S. Export Requirements .....	9
Foreign Governments' Import Requirements .....	9
Shipping Your Products .....	10
Labeling and Marking Requirements .....	10
Packaging Requirements .....	10
International Freight Forwarders .....	11
Ocean Carriers .....	12
Air Carriers .....	13
Trucks .....	13
Documentation .....	13
Shipper's Export Declaration .....	14
Pro Forma Invoice .....	14
Bill of Lading .....	15
Air Waybill .....	15
Certificate of Origin .....	15
Consular Invoice .....	15
Commercial Invoice .....	16
Health Inspection Certificate .....	16
Insurance Certificate .....	16
ATA Carnet .....	16
Harmonized Commodity Code .....	17
CITES Certificate .....	17
Export Financing .....	18
Methods of Payment .....	18
Cash in Advance .....	18
Documentary Letter of Credit .....	18
Documentary Collection .....	21
Open Account .....	22
Additional Methods of Payment .....	22
Currency of Payment .....	23
Private Sector Export Financing Resources .....	25
Commercial Banks .....	25
Export Trading and Management Companies .....	25
Private Trade Finance Companies .....	25
Factoring Houses .....	25
Government Export Financing Resources .....	25
U.S. Department of Agriculture Programs .....	25
Export-Import Bank of the United States .....	28

Overseas Private Investment Corporation .....	29
U.S. Small Business Administration .....	29
Foreign Credit Insurance Association .....	31
U.S. Trade and Development Agency .....	31
State Export Financing Programs .....	32
Market Information and Assistance .....	33
U.S. Department of Agriculture .....	33
Overseas Offices .....	33
Annual Reports .....	33
Circulars .....	34
The AgExport Connections Office .....	34
Agricultural Marketing Service .....	36
U.S. Department of Commerce .....	36
National Marine Fisheries Service .....	36
National Trade Data Bank .....	37
International Trade Administration .....	37
U.S. Small Business Administration .....	38
Small Business Development Centers .....	38
Service Corps of Retired Executives .....	38
Export Legal Assistance Network .....	39
U.S. Export Assistance Centers .....	39
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative .....	39
State and Regional Export Trade Associations .....	39
Food Export USA Northeast .....	39
Southern U.S. Trade Association .....	40
Mid-America International Agri-Trade Council .....	40
Western U.S. Agricultural Trade Association .....	40
Chambers of Commerce .....	40
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations .....	40
Private Sector Organizations .....	40
USDA Market Development Cooperators .....	44
Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute .....	44
American Seafood Institute .....	44
The Catfish Institute .....	45
List Of Tables .....	
1 - Elements of Pricing Goods for Export .....	5
2 - Methods of Payment .....	19
3 - How Can U.S. Seafood Exporters Obtain Information About Foreign Markets? .....	43
Appendix .....	
I - Selected Publications .....	46
II - Foreign Chambers of Commerce in the United States .....	47
III - Units of Measure .....	49
IV - Sample Transport Documents .....	50
V - U.S. Export Assistance Centers .....	64
VI - Trade Associations/Organizations and State Trade Contacts for Export Assistance .....	69

## Introduction

International seafood trade has expanded substantially since the early 1980s. The total value of world seafood exports increased from \$15.21 billion in 1980 to \$51.30 billion in 1998. The United States is one of the world's largest exporters of seafood, accounting for 7 to 14 percent of the world's annual seafood exports between 1989-1998. In 2001, the United States exported about \$ 3.1 billion worth of seafood products to foreign nations. U.S. importance in the international seafood trade varies by species. Salmon, lobster, crab, pollock roe, and surimi are among those for which the United States holds major share.

The major factors involved in this expansion of international seafood trade were: 1) rising world demand for food; 2) high population growth rates; 3) and rising incomes in both developed and developing countries. Furthermore, total demand for fishery products is expected to increase over the next decade.

With the new challenges of meeting rising market demand for fishery products, there also are opportunities for the U.S. seafood exporters to enter, diversify, and expand their presence further into global fishery products markets. Such opportunities will provide income, jobs, and profitability for the industry as a whole. However, meeting the new challenges of expanded international trade requires an understanding of the laws, regulations, and commercial practices in overseas markets.

A genuine commitment to exporting begins with a long-term attitude towards overseas markets. To be successful, exporters must create and follow a foreign market strategy that is integral to their overall business plan.

Developing long-standing working relationships with foreign importers will require maintaining commitments to them even when their markets are weak. A scattered, in-and-out approach may lead to a few unsustained sales. It is far better to gauge one's competitiveness in selected overseas markets from the start. Exporters should understand the requirements of key importers and develop long-term relationships that help solve their customers' supply problems and quality concerns.

This guide is developed to assist the U.S. commercial fishing industry in its export decision making process. It does not prescribe methods, but rather provides steps for consideration in developing an export marketing strategy.





## **Identifying Your Markets and Products**

The next step is to identify potential markets and types of products to be sold. It is imperative that firms interested in exporting take time to research the markets where they are interested in selling products. By building a knowledge base about different countries, the new exporter will be able to pinpoint those countries that are most suited for his/her products. Once countries are targeted, it is essential to become knowledgeable about those countries and develop a consistent pattern of trade contacts with importers. Focusing on one or two countries before branching out can help determine a firm's strengths, weaknesses, and limitations in serving export markets. Once the new exporters develop expertise, they may feel confident about testing new markets and products to diversify their portfolio.

When considering which products to sell overseas, firms should conduct a holistic analysis of potential markets as well as their own capabilities. Items to be considered include type of products (whole or dressed products, fillets, live products, and canned products), availability of the resources (species, quality, and quantity), transportation mode, and proximity to airports and ports. Success in the export market may involve adapting the production plant to produce foreign grades and specifications.

## **Pricing Your Products**

Proper pricing, complete and accurate quotations, and choice of terms for the sale are all crucial in selling fishery products in foreign markets. Your initial pricing should be directed at market entry for a long-term export commitment. Your price should also be high enough to generate a reasonable profit, but still be competitive and attractive to buyers, agents, etc. When quoting a price, you should consider the following factors: foreign exchange rates; packaging; insurance; freight; tariffs and duties; inspection fees; other fees, etc. In addition, allow yourself a realistic price margin for unforeseen costs, unavoidable risks, and simple mistakes that are common in any new undertaking. Table 1 outlines the elements of pricing goods for export.

If at all possible, you should quote the price in U.S. dollars. This will provide some protection against international currency fluctuations. Current benchmark, or average, prices for specific species and grades of fishery products in international trade may be obtained from the publications and newsletters outlined in this publication.

## **Methods of Exporting**

Once a detailed market analysis has been completed, your company should develop a strategy of market entry. There are at least four methods, which may be used alone or in combination:

### ***Filling orders from domestic buyers who then export the product***

These sales are indistinguishable from other domestic sales as far as the original seller is concerned. Someone else has decided that the product in question meets foreign demand. That party takes all the risk and handles all of the exporting details, in some cases without even the awareness of the original seller. Many companies take a stronger interest in exporting when they discover that their product is already being sold overseas.









































































































































