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Fishery Products

Latvia Bans Retail Sale of Baltic Salmon

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Report Highlights:

As of February 1, 2005, the Latvian Food and Veterinary Service banned the retail sale of salmon caught in the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Riga due to high dioxin levels. Latvia has asked the European Commission for permission to continue to sell Baltic salmon if consumer warnings are posted.

Includes PSD Changes: No
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Riga [LG1]
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Latvia Bans Retail Sale of Baltic Salmon

As of February 1, 2005, the Latvian Food and Veterinary Service (FVS) banned the retail sale of salmon caught in the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Riga.

The British firm Central Science Laboratories informed the FVS that they had detected levels of dioxin above the maximum allowed in eight of 13 fish tested. The remaining five salmon, as well as Baltic herring and sprats, also tested positive for dioxin but at lower levels. The British lab also detected dioxin in the livers of cod. However, as the European Commission (EC) has not yet established a maximum dioxin level for cod, it will continue to be sold in the retail market.

The Ministry of Agriculture of Latvia has requested the EC to authorize a transition period for the domestic retail sale of Baltic salmon. During the transition period, retail sales would be allowed provided that consumers were warned of the risks related to consumption of dioxin-contaminated Baltic Sea salmon.

The EC has granted transition periods to both Sweden and Finland to sell Baltic seafood with high dioxin levels. This period expires at the end of 2006. Consumers are advised that women of childbearing age should not eat salmon more than once a week.

Most Seafood Sourced from Norway

The ban is unlikely to have any significant economic impact on the Latvian seafood sector. Most salmon sold in Latvia is not sourced from the Baltic Sea but from Norway. During the first nine months of 2004, 1,487 metric tons of Norwegian farmed salmon were imported into Latvia.

Latvian Salmon Imports by Source, Jan-Sept 2004

Country	Volume, metric tons	Import price per metric ton, US\$
Norway	1,487.2	3,352
Sweden	84.1	3,815
Estonia	21.4	1,833
Russia	20.5	1,444
USA	20.1	2,585
Denmark	15.5	3,907
The Netherlands	13.3	1,963
Lithuania	12.7	5,537

Source: State Fisheries Department, MOA Note: USD 1 = LAT 0.54

Impact on Local Fishing Industry Unknown

Latvian fishermen were rather slow in filling the 2004 salmon quota of 59,500 fish. Only 12.6 percent of the quota was filled. The ban on retail sales will negatively affect the operations of about 35 coastal fishing boats with licenses for the 2005 salmon catch. Latvian Fisheries Association President Inarijs Voits said it was too early to predict the impact on the industry, but noted that in the long term the ban could lead to considerable financial losses.

Agriculture Minister Roze has asked for an investigation into the pollution problem. Ministry officials have begun working on a compensation plan for coastal fishermen.