

Chile: A Fertile Market For U.S. Fish Eggs

By Lewis Stockard

A USDA partnership resulted in an agreement to re-open the Chilean market for U.S. fertilized salmon eggs. This market was effectively shut down in 1999 because of concerns about bringing infectious salmonid anemia (ISA) into Chile. At the time of the shutdown, U.S. exports of salmon eggs to Chile were \$1 million a year. With the renewal of trade, U.S. salmon egg exports are expected to at least double to \$2 million annually.

FAS and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, worked with Chile's National Fisheries Service and its Under Secretariat of Fisheries to revise import protocols so that trade could resume.

Science and Diplomacy Unite

To restore trade, FAS staff worked with APHIS officials and scientists to convince Chilean officials that U.S. salmon eggs were safe.

FAS and APHIS officials proved that the United States maintains effective monitoring and control programs to detect and prevent the spread of all aquatic diseases, including ISA.

It took two years of hard work and intensive negotiations to ease the prohibitive import requirements, but an agreement is now in place that reopened market doors to U.S. salmon eggs for breeder fish in Chile.

An Important Niche in Latin America

Chile's import market for salmon eggs is estimated at nearly \$9 million per year. The largest imports occur during the winter, when Chilean farms are unable to produce enough eggs to meet demand. U.S. Atlantic salmon eggs are most often shipped between December and April, while coho salmon eggs are typically shipped in January. This window of opportunity is the

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result of the complementary growing seasons in the United States and Chile.

Because U.S. exporters can ship high-quality eggs during the seasonal shortage in Chile, analysts expect that U.S. exporters may be able to double the 12-percent market share that they held in 1999. ■

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