

# U.S. Lobster Lands a Big Success in the EU

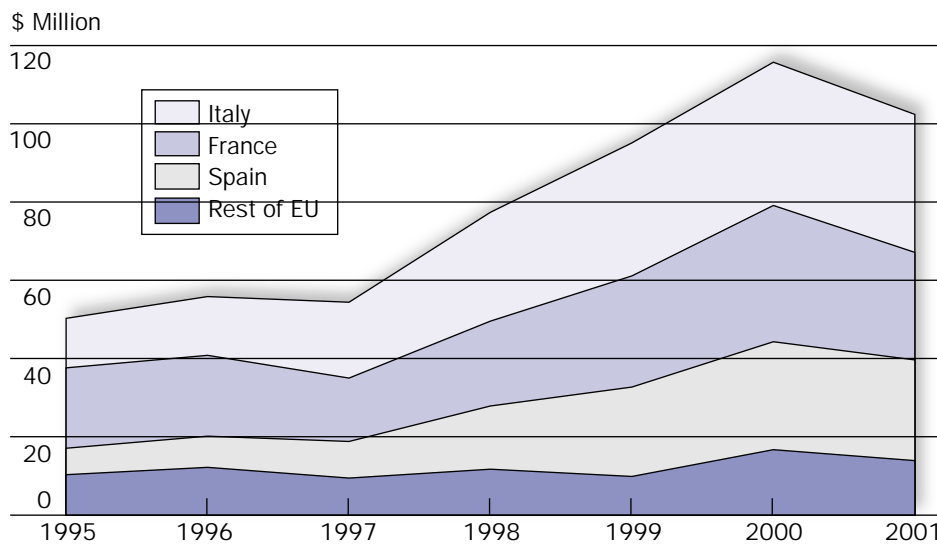
By Joel Chetrick

**U.S.** lobster exports to the European Union (EU) have been a great success story for the U.S. seafood industry, particularly for fishermen in the Northeast, where the resource is found. Over the past several years, U.S. exporters have registered large gains in the top three European markets for lobster—Italy, France and Spain.

Italy led the way with purchases of \$35.3 million in 2001, up 178 percent from \$12.7 million in 1995. In France, the second largest market, the U.S. industry showed strong sales throughout the period, with exports in 2001 of \$27.5 million. Exports to Spain recorded the largest percentage growth (279 percent) for the period, rising to \$25.8 million in 2001, from \$6.8 million in 1995.

Italy, France and Spain rely heavily on lobster imports to meet retail and food service needs. U.S. export sales are tradition-

**Top Three EU Markets for U.S. Lobster Have Shown Strong Growth**



ally strongest during the Christmas/New Year holiday season, when lobster consumption peaks. In Spain, consumption has increased for special occasions such as wedding banquets, and lobster is used as an ingredient in high-quality paellas.

Live lobster from the United States has been available on a consistent basis, and it is price competitive compared to locally caught species, or spiny lobster from the

Caribbean and other suppliers. Export sales are vital to the health and profitability of the U.S. lobster industry. Over one-half of the landed volume of U.S. lobster goes to the export market. U.S. exports to the EU were trending upward for the first three quarters of 2001, but tailed off during the fourth quarter as restaurant sales fell.

Despite the slowdown, exports to the EU still reached their second highest level. Importers and U.S. exporters are optimistic that restaurant dining and tourism will continue to rebound in major European cities. The stronger euro also portends increased U.S. sales opportunities as European consumers have more spending power. Exports in 2002 should have equaled or slightly exceeded those of 2001. ■

*The author is an agricultural marketing specialist in FAS' Forest and Fishery Products Division. Tel.: (202) 720-3248; Fax: (202) 720-8461; E-mail: Joel.Chetrick@usda.gov*

## Serving Up U.S. Lobster

**A**merican lobster is promoted abroad under USDA's Market Access Program (MAP) by the American Seafood Institute (ASI) and the Maine Lobster Promotion Council (MLPC).

Since the early 1990s, ASI, MLPC and exporters of American lobster have exhibited live and frozen lobster at the European Seafood Exposition (ESE) in Brussels, Belgium, where they have made valuable business connections with seafood buyers from Europe and other regions. The strong presence of U.S. suppliers at the show has

helped build awareness of American lobster and boosted exports. For the 2002 ESE (April 23-25, 2002), sales of lobster for the 12 months following the show were projected to reach \$13.7 million, compared to \$6 million the year before.

Under ASI's MAP branded program, several exporters of American lobster also exhibited products at other international seafood trade shows in Europe and Asia, and conducted in-store promotions.

