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[Abalone] markets, opportunities

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Aquaculture Department, Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center

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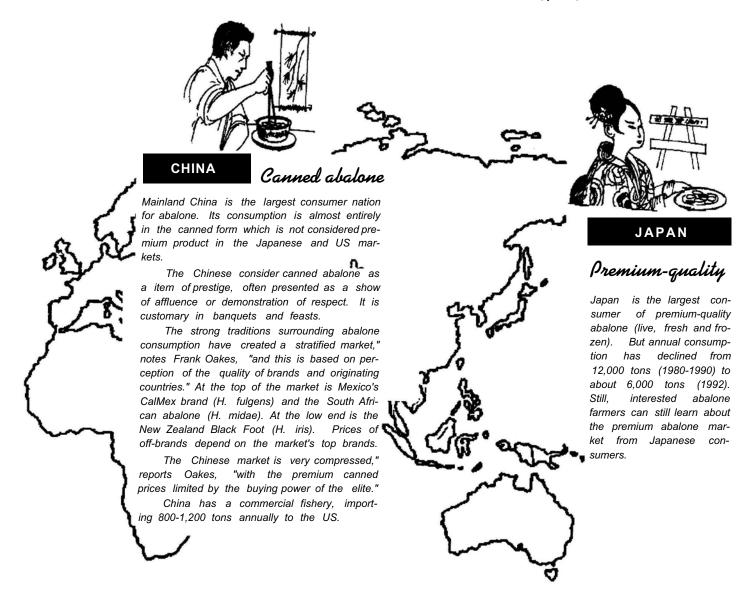


Markets, opportunities

The Abalone Farm, Inc. or AFI is a big player in the abalone market, very much like Shemberg's preeminent position in the seaweeds industry in the Philippines. AFI entered the abalone market in 1982, and has since successfully marketed at least six abalone products (see tables next page). In 1993, AFI distributed cultured abalone worth US\$2 million into the US, Canadian, Japanese, Hong Kong, and New Zealand markets. This value is roughly equivalent to what the whole of the Philippines exported in 1991.

The fishery statistics for abalone export-import worldwide are not well-organized into a format coherent to the industry, reports AFI's Frank Oakes. Below are the major consuming markets based on AFI's experience.

-MTC/APS







To these consumers, appearance is as important as taste and texture. The most prized is the black abalone, ezo awabi or Haliotis discus hannai, which is one of the eight species native to Japan and is harvested from the Ezo Prefecture. (The native fishery is historically significant and highly valued as a cultural resource.) The cultural preference is so strong that smaller abalones, like H. diversicolor supertexta or tokobushi, carry a connotation of inferiority and sell at a large discount into weak and erratic markets.

But abalone farmers shouldn't despair. Abalone species that compare favorably in appearance and taste with ezo awabi can command premium prices, too. "AFI (was able to) provide a live abalone for the premium market at US\$32 per kg," reports Frank Oakes. The abalone are of more uniform size and cost lower per piece. It had reached the high-margin niches such as resort hotels and competed well with ezo awabi.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Small abalone

The Hong Kong market is the largest and most established. the mainland Chinese market.) other metropolitan centers.

"As Asian affluence increases, these markets will become more im-(Hong Kong acts as a gateway to portant," Frank Oakes notes. "The influence of China and southeast Lucrative markets also exist in Asia will be significant in determin-Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, and ing the location and product concepts best suited for future production sites."

The traditional market is California where a commercial fishery exists until the early 1970s. It is primarily expensive, white tablecloth restaurants. Abalone meat is removed from the shell and sliced into steaks which are quite popular.

"AFI entered the market in the 1980s with abalone fillets prepared from 7.5 cm cultured abalone (H. rufescens)," Frank Oakes reports. "With the growing number of (Asian-Americans), demand has increased." This includes fresh abalone meat for sushi. Live cultured abalone also have a brisk market.

Europe is not yet a major market. Present demand arises from the traditional fishery for H. tuberculata. "The market is concentrated in France," notes Oakes, "but there is demand in the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe." The market is undersupplied and could be developed. The European abalone species are small (100 g) and aquaculturists can easily produce small abalones. Europe is a good region for future market expansion.

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REFERENCE

FR Oakes and RD Ponte. 1996. The abalone market: opportunities for cultured abalone. Aquaculture 140: 187-195.



Supply and price structure of major abalone-producing countries [estimated by F Oakes, Aquaculture 140 (1996): 187-195]. Roughly 80% of these abalone products are consumed by Japan, China, and some southeast Asian countries. The rest go to the US, Mexico, Europe, and Korea.

	Species	Yearly supply(tons)	1993 price (US\$ perton) ²
Japan	Haliotis discus	4,000	66,000
Hong Kong	H. discus hannai H. diversicolor diversicolor H. diversicolor supertexta	567	22,200
USA	H. rufescens H. carcharoides H. sorenseni	350	25,000
Mexico	н. sorenseni H. fulgens H. fulgens H. rufescens	2,000	24,000
South Africa	H. cracherodii H. midae	600	25,000
Australia	H. laevigata H. ruber H. roei	6,300	21,850

'Whole body including shell. Calculated as: Live weight (LW,) × 0.38, meat weight; LW, × 0.28, steak weight; LW, × 0.34, canned weight; 1 can = 750 g LW, US\$1 = Mex ₱3.1 = AUS\$7.7 = HK\$7.7 = ¥135

Products derived from Haliotis rufescens cultured at The Abalone Farm, Inc. and their target markets [by F Oakes, Aquaculture 140 (1996): 187-195]

Product	Size¹ (grams)	Market	Product use	Customers
Live (ezo quality) Live (tokobushi) Live petite Premium fillet (fresh/frozen) Petite fillet (fresh/frozen)	100-110 85-100 75-85 85-100	Japan US, Hong Kong US, Hong Kong US, France US, France	sushi, sashimi grilled, steamed traditional Asian cuisine traditional US restaurant cuisine restaurants, traditional European cuisine	hotels, resorts, restaurant distributors, restaurants specialty seafood, distributors restaurants, specialty seafood distributors, retail sales restaurants, institutional food service, retail sales
Processed whole foot (canned)	65-95	China, Hong Kong SE Asia	9	restaurants, institutional food service, supermarkets, retail sales

Whole body weight including shell.