

Economic Significance of Salmon Roe to the Alaska Salmon Industry

This summary of Alaska salmon roe value is prepared by the Salmon Market Information Service (SMIS) at the request of United Fishermen of Alaska. The intention is to demonstrate the economic significance of salmon roe to the Alaska salmon industry, relative to Alaska processors' difficulties obtaining work visas for Japanese salmon roe technicians for the 2004 season. The Japanese technicians pack and grade Alaska salmon roe, most (approximately 90 percent) of which is exported to Japan.

Salmon roe is a major component of Alaska salmon value, comprising an average 20 percent (\$122 million) of first wholesale value for all Alaska salmon during 2000-2002. First Wholesale data for 2003 are preliminary, but the incomplete data indicate 2003 roe value is over \$100 million.

First Wholesale Value of Alaska Salmon Products, All Species 2000 – 2002, Millions of Dollars

	Value, Salmon Meat Products	Value, Salmon Roe Products	Total Value, Roe and Meat	Salmon Roe Percent of Total
2000	\$ 561	\$ 153	\$ 714	21%
2001	\$ 487	\$ 116	\$ 603	19%
2002	\$ 418	\$ 98	\$ 516	19%
2000-2002 avg	\$ 489	\$ 122	\$ 611	20%

Source: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Salmon roe value is particularly important for the continued commercial usage of Alaska pink and chum salmon, which account for the majority (70 percent) of Alaska salmon harvest tonnage since 1998.

Under current market conditions, meat products from chum and pink salmon are marginally profitable at best. The capacity to process and sell the roe is widely recognized as a decisive economic factor in the continued large-scale production of pink and chum meat products.

Alaska processors produced an annual average 354,000 metric tons of pink and chum salmon meat products during 2000 – 2002. During the same period, roe comprised over half (55 percent) of Alaska chum salmon wholesale value and 20 percent of Alaska pink salmon wholesale value.

In the absence of appropriate staffing to handle the roe (skilled Japanese roe technicians) the economic incentive for Alaska industry to harvest and process pink and chum salmon will be severely limited.

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