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An Examination of the Mid-Atlantic Market for Crawfish

by

Patrick J. Byrne
Department of Food and Resource Economics
University of Delaware
Newark, DE

C. M. Gempesaw II
Department of Food and Resource Economics
University of Delaware
Newark, DE

J. Richard Bacon
Department of Food and Resource Economics
University of Delaware
Newark, DE

U. Carl Toensmeyer
Department of Food and Resource Economics
University of Delaware
Newark, DE

Introduction

There is an increased interest in the mid-Atlantic region concerning the viability of producing and marketing a variety of seafood products such as crawfish. The interest is being sparked by the continuing desire to find alternative sources of income for mid-Atlantic agricultural producers and by the growing consumer demand for high quality seafood products. Knowledge about consumers' seafood preferences and the corresponding response by wholesalers and retailers is important in identifying the market potential of seafood products from the mid-Atlantic region. This lack of market knowledge is a serious barrier in answering the question of viability of seafood production as an alternative for the agribusiness sector.

This project addresses this lack of market information on crawfish and related seafood products. This information can then be used to provide much needed market data to the agribusiness sector. Specifically, the purpose of this project is to assess the market potential for crawfish and other selected seafood products.

Objectives

The overall objective of this project is to collect information from seafood consumers, wholesalers, brokers, and retailers in the mid-Atlantic area about attitudes toward crawfish and other selected related seafood products. Specific objectives are:

1. To determine consumer preferences for crawfish and other seafood products.
2. To identify the market potential for crawfish and other seafood products within the mid-Atlantic region.

Procedures

In order to achieve the above objectives a three-stage procedure will be used. First, consumer preferences for crawfish and selected seafood products will be determined using a mail survey to a random selection of 10,000 consumers. The consumer questionnaire will include such items as: frequency of seafood purchases in general and preferences for the project-specific products. Questions will be asked about preferences for seafood species, reasons for eating more or less crawfish and other seafood items, familiarity with selected seafood products, opinions concerning availability, form of crawfish purchased, where generally purchased, importance of farm raised products, and other issues useful for determining consumer preferences.

Second, demand at the retail level will be investigated on a case study basis using scanner data from selected supermarkets. Scanner data provides a wealth of information such as: price, type of product, form, price of substitute products, quantity sold of both products in question and substitute products, effects of advertising and promotion, and effects of seasonality. The data will allow the determination of demand elasticity coefficients for the selected seafood items.

And finally, seafood wholesalers and brokers will be surveyed via personal interviews using a formal questionnaire. The survey will include questions about source of supply, demand, quantity, pricing, consistency of supply, packaging, fresh vs. frozen, marketing problems, and other factors affecting the market potential of crawfish, and other seafood items.

