The objective of these projects, assisted by the Fisheries Diversification Program (FDP), was to add value to sea urchin roe destined for the Japanese market.

**Background**

Green Seafoods Ltd. of Winterton, Trinity Bay, first received a license to buy and produce sea urchin in 1993, when the cod moratorium was just one year old.

Research by Green Seafoods has shown that presentation is the key to maximum value in the specialized sea urchin roe or “uni” market. Japanese buyers look for quality in everything - the processing, the layout, colour coordination on a tray, consistency of size and more. Competing with roe from all over the world in one trading room at Tsukiji, Japan, could increase the value of local “uni” by as much as 300%.
Green Seafoods recognized the importance of supplying the top-quality product sought in the Japanese marketplace. The company believed one of the ways this could be done was by skillfully packing roe in a specialized wooden tray, instead of the usual plastic pack. However, this would require specific training of the plant workers.

**Methodology**

Specialists from Japan were brought to Green Seafoods Ltd. to educate the company with respect to the grading and packing standards applied in the Japanese markets. These specialists then advised the company as to how this could be accomplished at the Winterton plant, i.e. precise packing techniques in wooden trays and specialized equipment.

Subsequently, a floor supervisor and a packer from Green Seafoods spent several days in a Brooklyn, New York "uni" plant being trained by highly experienced technicians. In turn, the workers brought their experience back to the Trinity Bay plant.

**Results**

The company’s final report outlined the ways in which their objectives were met, especially how the company’s desire for training and improved quality was met very positively in the marketplace.

The company also reported their capacity to produce a full range of fresh, sea urchin roe products has been enhanced by this project. They are now able to demonstrate skill in packing wooden trays weighing 60g, 140g and 300g, along with the original 100g plastic deli tray.

Producing urchin roe on the wooden tray has increased employment by some 15% per shift. Moreover, the amount of raw material has remained unchanged, while Green Seafoods receives a higher return for their product.

Between 20 and 60% of the plant’s total production is packed in the wooden tray depending on roe quality and market demands.

This means that Green Seafoods is now in a position to respond to market trends for particular top-quality products skillfully and quickly.

**Conclusions**

The company believes it is in a much better position to compete with suppliers from Maine, the west coast of North America, and Japan itself, for a portion of the Japanese “uni” market.

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**Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture**

**Government of Newfoundland and Labrador**

P.O. Box 8700, St. John’s, NL, A1B 4J6
Call: 709 729-3732 / Fax: 709 729-6082
Web: http://www.gov.nf.ca/fishaq/FDP
(Or a DFA Regional Office near you)

The $10 million Fisheries Diversification Program is part of the $81.5 million Canada-Newfoundland Agreement Respecting the Economic Development Component of the Canadian Fisheries Adjustment and Restructuring Initiative.