
Fishery Leaflet 238

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THE SPONGE INDUSTRY IN TURKEY ^{1/}

By Jean D. Brennan, Foreign Service Clerk
Ankara, Turkey

Effects of the War--Sponge fishing in Turkey was curtailed to a certain extent during the war years due to large-scale mobilization, causing a reduction in boat crews, and to the rationing of fuel oil used in the fishing boats. However, not being directly involved in the war, the country was able to maintain a steady, although restricted, production and trade.

Equipment--Locally manufactured air-pumping equipment is available for most requirements, but rubber hose, diving suits, and helmets are in very short supply. Existing equipment has greatly deteriorated, as is the case with the 12 h.p. motorboats from which most of the fishing is done. It is believed that with proper diving equipment, operations could profitably be extended to deeper waters, where better qualities and larger quantities could be obtained.

Production--Available unofficial statistics show the following production of sponges:

1940	-	about	15	metric	tons	of	all	varieties
1941	-	"	20	"	"	"	"	"
1942	-	"	17	"	"	"	"	"
1943	-	"	4	"	"	"	"	"
1944	-	"	22	"	"	"	"	"
1945	-	"	27	"	"	"	"	"
(8 mos.)	1946	-	"	20	"	"	"	"

Stocks on Hand--No official figures exist on the stocks on hand, but they are estimated at between 10 and 15 metric tons.

Employment in the Industry--Since sponge fishing is not an organized industry in Turkey, no figures regarding employment are available. Fishing is carried out by individual owners of small craft, assisted by their crews.

Exports--Exports of raw and worked sponge from 1940 through the first nine months of 1946, by countries of destination, are shown in the table below:

^{1/} Report No. 26, American Embassy, Ankara, Turkey, March 5, 1947.

SPONGE EXPORTS

<u>Country</u>	Raw Sponge (kilos)						(9 mos.)
	<u>1940</u>	<u>1941</u>	<u>1942</u>	<u>1943</u>	<u>1944</u>	<u>1945</u>	<u>1946</u>
Germany	9,400	4,717	---	1,038	1,146	---	---
England	16,751	---	4,862	7,824	8,292	18,074	5,737
Spain	---	---	---	40	37	---	---
Sweden	2,127	1,185	2,639	1,545	53	423	203
Iraq	---	---	---	---	199	---	---
Egypt	---	---	---	---	---	100	---
U.S.A.	---	---	---	---	130	---	3,686
Switzerland	25	128	---	---	---	---	432
Belgium	50	---	---	---	---	---	---
Yugoslavia	500	---	---	---	---	---	---
Portugal	---	---	---	---	---	---	200
TOTAL	28,853	6,030	7,501	10,447	9,857	18,597	10,258

Sponge - Worked, Cleaned, Prepared
(kilos)

Germany	---	---	10,135	2,034	---	---	---
England	---	---	---	---	395	---	964
Sweden	---	---	781	764	1,382	1,635	1,586
Iraq	---	---	---	10	440	---	---
U.S.A.	---	---	---	---	---	1,870	1,990
Switzerland	---	---	---	---	---	---	719
Belgium	---	---	---	---	---	---	2,000
Portugal	---	---	---	---	---	150	51
Canada	---	---	---	---	---	---	5,257
TOTAL	---	---	10,916	2,808	2,217	3,655	12,567

(Source: Official Statistical Yearbooks)

Prices--Current sponge prices vary between T.L. 8.20 (\$2.87) and 27 (\$9.45) per pound, according to the grade. The honeycomb variety, available in the largest proportion, is currently quoted at T.L. 24 (\$8.40) to 27 (\$9.45) per pound, f.o.b. Istanbul, selections I to III, trimmed but not bleached. The following are the grades of Turkish sponge:

Kabadika (Honeycomb).

Fina, especially for cutting.

Fil Kulagi (elephant ears) available in restricted quantities.

Fina Solida.

Fina Bogazi.

Skarta (rejects, which are currently quoted at T.L. 1.80 (\$.63) to 3.50 (\$1.23) per pound).

Demand--Aside from small purchases by the State Railways, the Navy and Merchant Marine, and other official and private sources, amounting to between 1-1/2 and 2 metric tons annually, there is practically no local demand for sponge.

Demand from abroad is great, particularly from Great Britain, the Scandinavian countries, and France, although Great Britain's interest in the Turkish market has declined somewhat since direct trading with Greece and the Dodecanese Islands has been resumed.

Outlook--The sponge industry in Turkey is far from modern, but it is believed that replacement of worn-out equipment and measures to protect the fishing grounds would have a beneficial influence on the industry. The recent devaluation of the Turkish lira should exert a favorable influence on the market for sponge, reducing prices in terms of foreign currencies.

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