

GULF COAST SHRIMP FISHERIES, JANUARY-JUNE, 1948

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to summarize current shrimp production information and to review a number of factors affecting the shrimp fisheries of the Gulf Coast during the first half of 1948. Accurate and current information is essential to sound business operations, while the lack of it restricts normal marketing processes.

During the first half of 1948, shrimp landings in the Gulf area have been larger, imports have increased greatly, cold storage holdings of shrimp have remained at a higher level, and wholesale prices have fluctuated more than during the same period last year.

PRODUCTION

Shrimp landings during the first six months of 1948 in the Gulf area were 15 percent greater than during the same period last year. Landings were greatest in May, with April and January showing the next largest production. This increased catch was made by the fishing fleet even though it was handicapped by adverse weather conditions and two periods of inactivity caused by disputes.

Of the total domestic shrimp catch of the Gulf area, the greatest quantity is landed in Louisiana. In 1947, landings in Louisiana accounted for 65 percent; Texas, 17 percent; Mississippi, 13 percent; Alabama, 3 percent; and Florida (Gulf Coast only), 2 percent.

Table 1 - Shrimp Landings, Gulf Coast - January-June

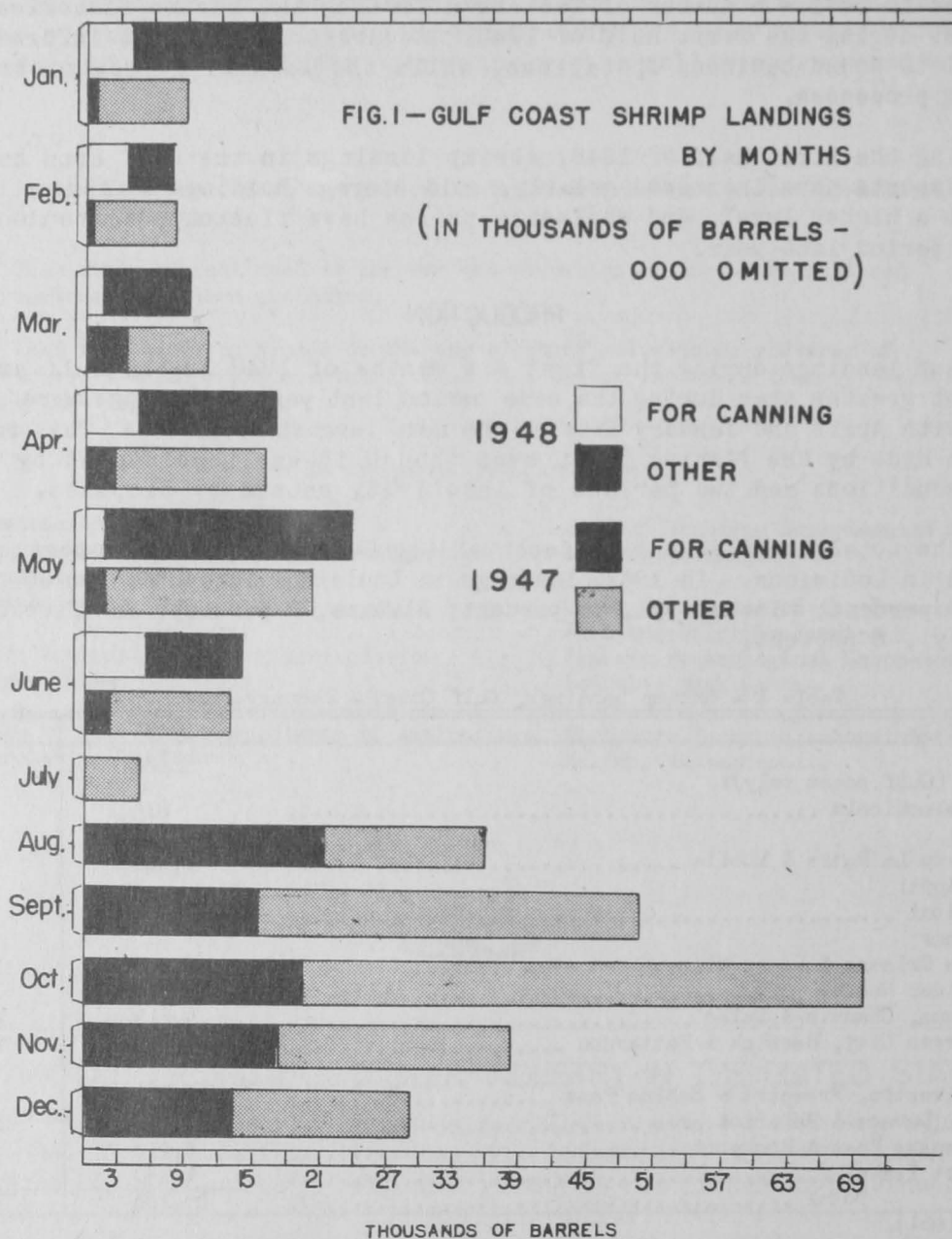
Locality	1948	1947
	bbls.	bbls.
Florida (Gulf coast only):		
Apalachicola	615	1,799
Alabama:		
Bayou La Batre & Mobile	1,148	801
Mississippi:		
Biloxi	13,208	9,805
Louisiana:		
New Orleans & Lower Miss. River area	23,049	16,977
Golden Meadow	9,046	9,208
Houma, Chauvin & Dulac	9,617	13,138
Morgan City, Berwick & Patterson	15,864	11,718
Texas:		
Galveston, Freeport & Sabine Pass	8,291	6,840
Pt. Lavaca & Palacios area	1,898	2,921
Aransas Pass & Rockport	5,218	4,296
Port Isabel	1,150	*
Total	89,104	77,503

*Not available.

Note: A barrel contains 210 pounds of heads-on shrimp and equals 125 pounds of heads-off shrimp.

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Although the bulk of the canned shrimp production is produced during the last four months of the calendar year, some shrimp are packed during the other months. On the basis of the quantity of shrimp reported used for canning, it is estimated that approximately 66,000 standard cases were packed during the first half of this year in the Gulf area, while during the same period last year the shrimp pack is estimated at 38,000 standard cases. (Standard cases represent 48 7-ounce cans to the case.)



Strong winds and inclement weather conditions affect shrimping operations adversely even though the winds are not always of sufficient intensity for the Weather Bureau to order small craft warning signals to be displayed. However, some indication of the weather conditions prevailing for various periods can be ascertained by the number of times small craft and storm warnings are displayed.

During the first 6 months of 1948, small craft warnings were displayed over the major portion of the Gulf coastal area at least 16 times for periods ranging from 24 to 48 hours duration. The warnings were displayed 4 times in January, 4 times in February, 7 times in March, and once in April. During the same period in 1947, small craft warnings were hoisted on at least 11 occasions. In spite of this greater number of days in port, the fleet was able to make greater landings in the first half of 1948.

Shrimp fishing craft were tied up twice because of disputes over prices, or other controversies between fishermen and dealers in two sections of the Gulf Coast. One was on the Texas coast at ports from Port Lavaca to Brownsville, for approximately four weeks in March and April, while the other was at Morgan City, Berwick, and Patterson, La., from about February 12 to March 11.

GROOVED OR "RED" SHRIMP

Part of the increased catch has been of the grooved or "red" shrimp. Three varieties of salt-water shrimp are found in the commercial catch of the Gulf area. They are commonly known as common shrimp, grooved or Brazilian shrimp, and seabobs. There is also a fresh-water river shrimp which is taken in the lower Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers in Louisiana, but on account of its small size and low volume of the catch is only of minor economic importance. No accurate information is available yearly on the quantity of each of the salt-water varieties which comprise the domestic shrimp catch. According to estimates by Weymouth, Lindner, and Anderson (1933), the common shrimp makes up 95 percent; the grooved shrimp, 2½ percent; and seabobs, 2½ percent of the total yearly catch, although this will vary depending on the time of year and section of the Gulf Coast.



SORTING SHRIMP ABOARD A SHRIMP TRAWLER IN THE GULF

The seabob is of small size and produced mainly from the shallow coastal waters of Louisiana. It is only of importance locally where the greater bulk is used by drying platforms, although some are used for canning, and a nominal amount are sold to the local raw trade.



WASHING SHRIMP ABOARD A GULF SHRIMP TRAWLER BEFORE PUTTING IN HOLD

The grooved shrimp, on the other hand, is comparable in size and quality to the common shrimp. The grooved shrimp differs from the common shrimp in minor structures and by an inherent reddish-like color peculiar to the grooved shrimp.

It is common knowledge that when deterioration of common shrimp reaches a stage that it would be considered generally poor or only fair quality, a distinctive reddish color appears. Because of this fact, the trade has long associated the appearance of a reddish color with poor quality shrimp. Thus, difficulty is encountered in selling the grooved shrimp. Even though the quantity of grooved shrimp caught is generally very small in proportion to the total yearly catch, there are times when grooved shrimp may make up a goodly portion of the daily catch and at such time sales difficulty may be encountered.

During the first six months of 1948, especially from January through April, large grooved shrimp made their appearance in appreciable quantities in the commercial catch. The trade resistance to the purchase of grooved shrimp reached a

climax in certain localities in Texas when a fisherman could not find a market for that variety even though daily catches were not great.

Beginning May 1, very small grooved shrimp were caught in shallow coastal waters of the Gulf. In Louisiana, the minimum size limit of 68 heads-on shrimp per pound is not applicable to the grooved shrimp from May 1 to the beginning of the closed season. The closed season for inside Alabama waters does not apply to the catching of grooved shrimp from June 28 to July 12, 1948. The majority of these small shrimp were dried, some were canned, some prepared as cooked-peeled shrimp, and small quantities were sold to the raw trade. By the middle of June, grooved shrimp ranging mostly from 30 to 50 per pound were being caught and some were sold at the French Market in New Orleans without much difficulty because of the local scarcity of the common shrimp.

IMPORTS

Imports of shrimp from the Gulf Coast of Mexico were very much greater in the first 6 months of 1948 than during the same period last year (Table 2). The quantity of shrimp imported for consumption through the Customs districts on the Gulf Coast were, according to U. S. Customs figures, 2,718,783 pounds for the months of January through June 1948. The greatest quantity entered through the ports of Brownsville, Port Isabel and Laredo, all within the Laredo Custom district. New Orleans and Morgan City, La., of the New Orleans district, imported the next greatest quantity. In contrast, imports entered at the Laredo district were only 59,061 pounds during the first 6 months of 1947, and none for the other Customs districts on the Gulf Coast. Shrimp imports from the east coast of Mexico were also made through Miami, in the Florida district. None was received through this district in 1947.

Table 2 - Shrimp Imports from Mexico at Gulf States and Florida Ports

Month	1948				1947			
	C u s t o m s D i s t r i c t				C u s t o m s D i s t r i c t			
	Florida	New Orleans	Laredo	Total	Florida	New Orleans	Laredo	Total
Jan.	6,357	147,261	102,201	255,819	-	-	-	-
Feb.	37,858	-	221,778	259,636	-	-	-	-
Mar.	96,115	92,435	408,230	596,780	-	-	-	-
Apr.	126,410	171,048	253,154	550,612	-	-	-	-
May	118,587	166,750	244,659	529,996	-	-	4,700	4,700
June	157,198	147,425	221,317	525,940	-	-	54,361	54,361
Total...	542,525	724,919	1,451,339	2,718,783	-	-	59,061	59,061

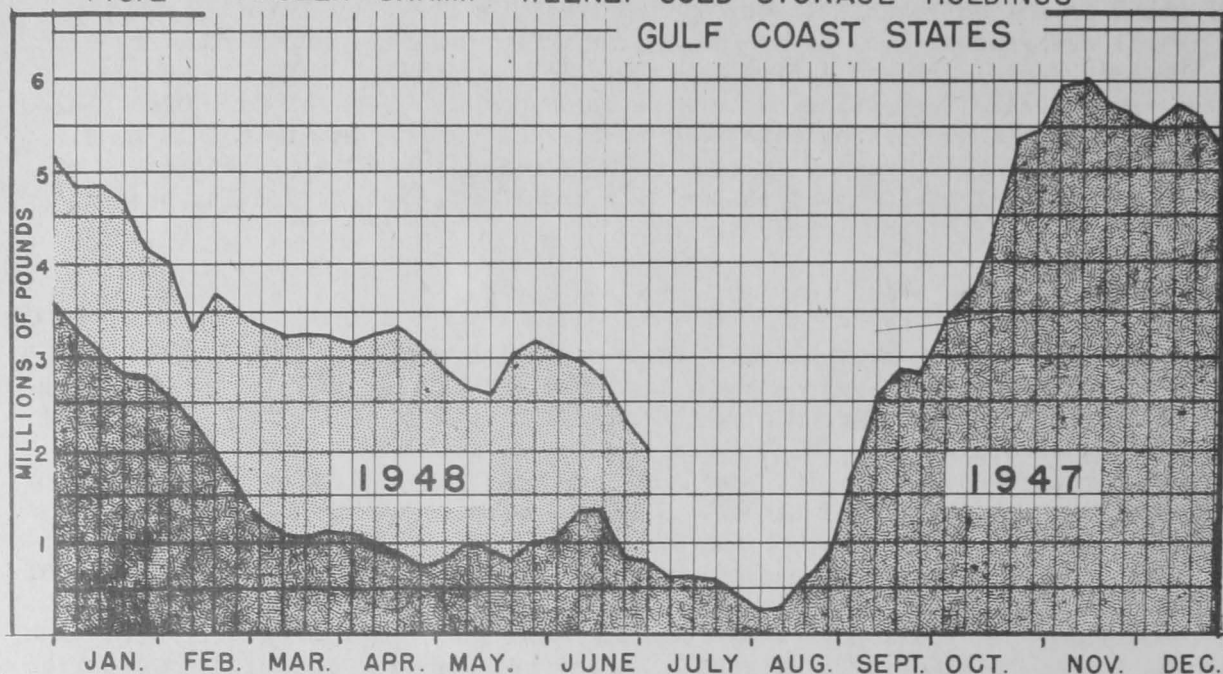
In 1947, when it became generally known that only fishing vessels of Mexican registry could legally operate for shrimp in those waters of the Gulf of Mexico under the jurisdiction of Mexico, a number of United States documented vessels transferred to Mexican registry. Records indicate that in 1947, 48 fishing vessels documented in the United States were released for transfer to Mexican registry, and from January 1 to May 27, 1948, 71 additional fishing vessels were transferred. Ciudad del Carmen on the Bay of Campeche has been the base of operation for practically all the former American shrimp vessels, with some fishing active off the coast of the State of Veracruz, during the first three months of this year.

COLD STORAGE HOLDINGS

Cold storage holdings of frozen shrimp from January through June 1948, as reported by 13 warehouses of the Gulf States has varied from a peak of approximately 5,160,000 pounds on January 1 to a low of 2,047,000 pounds on July 1 (Figure 2). During the same period last year, 11 warehouses reported a maximum of 3,629,000

pounds on January 2 and a minimum of 713,000 pounds on April 24. Compared to the total frozen shrimp holdings, the percentage decrease from the January peak has been less this year than the corresponding period in 1947.

FIG. 2 — FROZEN SHRIMP—WEEKLY COLD STORAGE HOLDINGS—
GULF COAST STATES



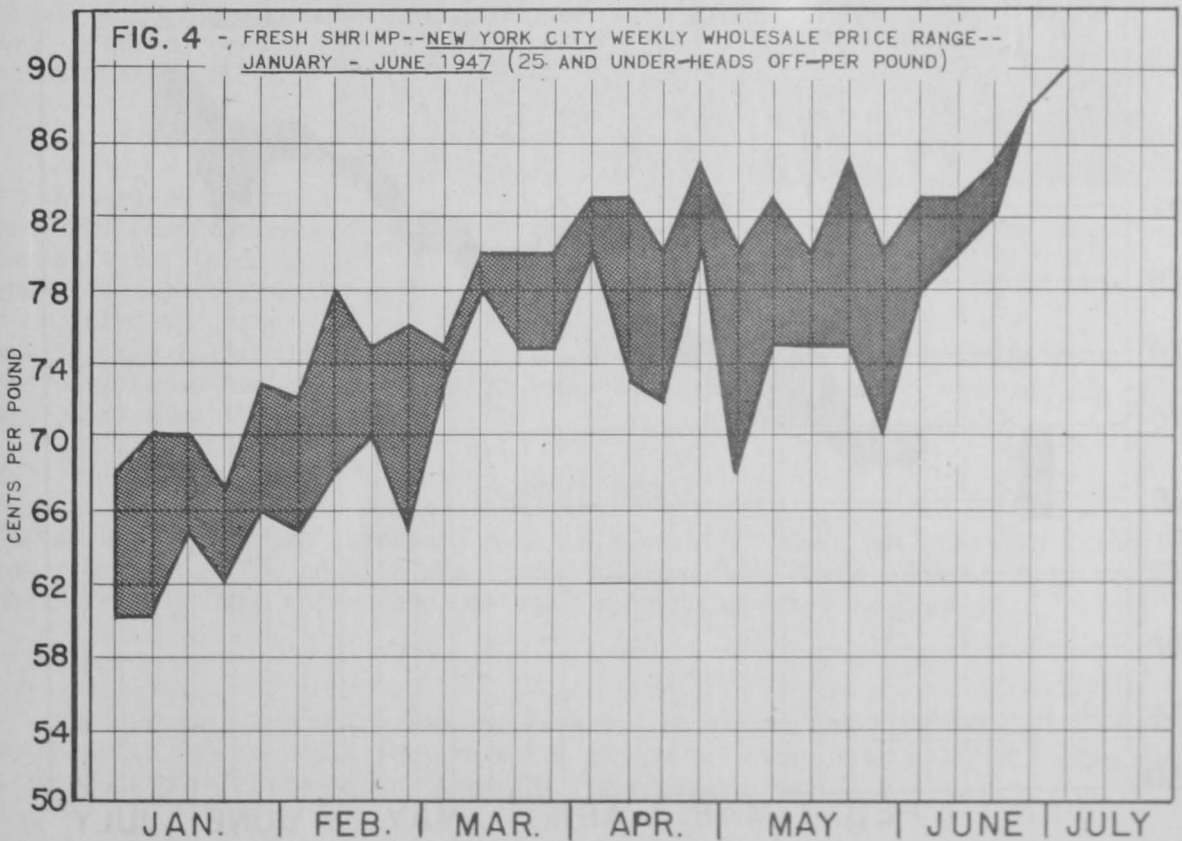
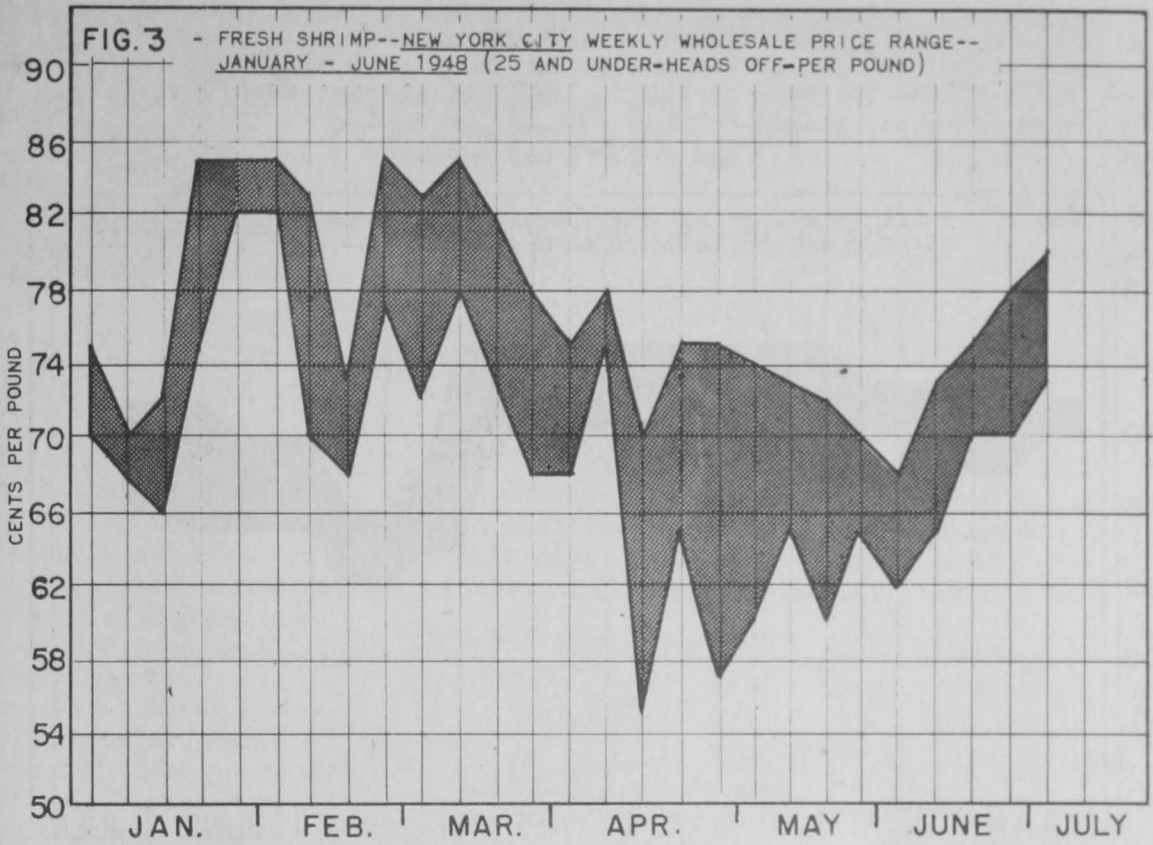
WHOLESALE PRICES

Generally, shrimp wholesale prices were higher during the first quarter than during the second quarter of 1948, while in 1947, the reverse was generally true. Price fluctuations were greater during the first half of this year than during the same period in 1947.

Shrimp wholesale prices on the French Market in New Orleans remained higher during the first six months of 1948, with the exception of March and June, when the price was about the same as the same period in 1947. The peak price for jumbo shrimp (15 and less heads-on shrimp per pound) in 1948 ranged from \$72.00 a barrel in May to \$90.00 a barrel, in February, March, May and June. During the same period in 1947, the peak price ranged from \$66.00 in April to \$90.00 a barrel in March and June for jumbo shrimp. Smaller size shrimp were correspondingly lower. (A barrel of shrimp contains 210 pounds of heads-on shrimp, which for all practical purposes is considered equivalent to 125 pounds of heads-off shrimp.)

During the first quarter of 1948 the wholesale prices of jumbo shrimp (numbering, heads-off, 25 and less per pound) on the wholesale salt water fish market in New York City were higher, while during the second quarter, lower prices prevailed than during the corresponding period in 1947 (Figures 3 and 4), according to the New York Fishery Market News Service reports. From January through June of this year, the average weekly fluctuations in wholesale prices for fresh jumbo shrimp in New York City was 7.7 cents per pound in contrast to an average weekly variation of 6.3 cents per pound during the same period in 1947.

The wholesale prices of frozen jumbo shrimp (25 and less per pound) in Chicago during January and most of February was slightly higher than the same period in 1947, according to the Chicago Market News Service reports. During April, May,



and June 1948, the price ranged considerably lower than during the same period in 1947 (Figures 5 and 6). The average weekly fluctuation in wholesale prices of frozen jumbo shrimp in Chicago varied 4.6 cents per pound during the first 6 months of 1948, while during the same period in 1947 the average weekly variation in price was 2.8 cents per pound.

