

# COMMERCIAL FISHERIES REVIEW

July 1948

Washington 25, D.C.

Vol. 10, No. 7

## FISHERIES REVIEW--GULF STATES, 1947

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The fisheries in the Gulf States in 1947 generally experienced fair to good production. In comparison with 1946, landings of shrimp and crabs decreased, but landings of fish and oysters increased. Lower prices, with few exceptions, prevailed during the summer and early fall months than during the winter and spring months. Costs of new construction, repairs, equipment, replacement parts, nets, and other items including labor remained high. Freight and railway express rates increased during the year.



PART OF THE MORGAN CITY SHRIMP FLEET, TIED UP BEFORE THE BLESSING

In spite of high construction costs, a large number of new fishing vessels entered the fisheries. During 1947, according to the U.S. Bureau of Customs, 490 new fishing vessels (5 net tons and over) were documented for the first time in the South Atlantic and Gulf States, as compared with 351 vessels in 1946.

Weather conditions determine, to a major extent, whether fishing craft will operate. During the first quarter of 1947, small craft warnings were hoisted over the major sections of the Gulf Coast on at least 11 different occasions. During the balance of the year, September was the only month in which adverse weather conditions greatly affected fishing operations. The hurricane which moved across Florida into the Gulf of Mexico passed inland east of the Mississippi River during the early hours of September 19. Strong winds, and particularly high water, did material damage to shore installations along the coastal section of Mississippi and in Louisiana east of the Mississippi River, but only a few fishing craft were severely damaged or lost. The Fish and Wildlife Service estimated that damages to fisheries establishments and fishing craft amounted to approximately \$2,000,000 in Mississippi and \$140,000 in Louisiana. A number of oyster beds in Mississippi and Louisiana waters were reported to have been destroyed or badly damaged by the hurricane.

Total shrimp landings, exclusive of shrimp used for drying, were approximately 3 percent less than in 1946 (Table 1) assuming that 5,000 barrels were landed during July, when data on the landings were incomplete.<sup>1/</sup> Landings during

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<sup>1/</sup>Data on landings of various fishery products were obtained daily only from the principal fishing localities on the Gulf Coast, and are not to be considered as being complete for the various States listed in this report. These data serve merely as an index in ascertaining the trend of a (given) fishery. July landings were obtained only for the New Orleans and Lower Mississippi River area due to curtailment of operations because of lack of funds.

the 5-month period August through December 1947 accounted for 73 percent of the total quantity for the year compared with nearly 65 percent of the total for the

Table 1 - Landings by Localities and Areas, Gulf Coast--1947

Locality and Area	Fresh-water Fish	Salt-water Fish	Hard Crabs	Soft Crabs	Oysters		Shrimp		Other Shellfish
					For Canning	Other	For Canning	Other	
					U. S. bu.	U. S. bu.	bbls.	bbls.	
<b>FLORIDA:</b>									
Apalachicola	4,210 <sup>1/</sup>	197,000 <sup>1/</sup>	-	-	-	13,873 <sup>1/</sup>	-	5,651 <sup>2/</sup>	-
<b>ALABAMA:</b>									
Mobile, Bayou LaBatre	163,190	3,111,190	164,590	-	75,788	60,470	3,411	6,552	-
<b>MISSISSIPPI:</b>									
Biloxi	-	-	229,600	-	726,729	16,430	10,791	28,441	-
<b>LOUISIANA:</b>									
New Orleans and Lower Miss. R. Area	469,800	1,391,740	4,556,240	15,689	154,867	318,174	50,085	38,882	90,130
Golden Meadow	-	-	-	-	180,875	9,584	9,207	20,540	-
Houma, Chauvin & Dulac	-	-	-	-	108,716	89,655	26,936	18,307	-
Morgan City, Berwick & Patterson	1,376,200	97,410	2,552,260	-	-	5,829	-	31,526	7,540
<b>TEXAS:</b>									
Galveston, Freeport & Sabine Pass	-	542,900	-	-	-	-	-	17,324	-
Port Lavaca & Palacios	-	800	-	-	-	-	-	17,950	-
Aransas Pass & Rockport	2,220	131,880	49,840	-	-	20,647	-	15,518	-
Port Isabel <sup>3/</sup>	-	172,370	-	-	-	-	-	1,332	-
<b>TOTALS 1947</b> .....	<b>2,015,620</b>	<b>5,645,290</b>	<b>7,552,530</b>	<b>15,689</b>	<b>1,246,469</b>	<b>534,622</b>	<b>100,430</b>	<b>202,023</b>	<b>97,670</b>
<b>TOTALS 1946</b> .....	<b>1,128,865</b>	<b>4,585,990</b>	<b>11,993,500</b>	<b>10,955</b>	<b>725,900</b>	<b>577,810</b>	<b>95,421</b>	<b>221,670</b>	<b>87,460</b>

<sup>1/</sup> Data available only for November and December, 1947.

<sup>2/</sup> Data for June, July, August and September, 1947 not included.

<sup>3/</sup> Does not include data for January through July, 1947.

Notes: For July 1947, data available only for New Orleans & Lower Mississippi River Area.

Capacity of United States oyster bushel equals 2,150.4 cubic inches.

A barrel of shrimp contains 210 lbs. of heads-on shrimp, equivalent to 125 lbs. of heads-off shrimp.

corresponding period in 1946. Total landings in 1947 for the various localities in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas were approximately 11 percent less than average yearly landings for the years 1942-46, inclusive (Figure 1). The quantities of shrimp reported landed at Apalachicola, Fla., Bayou LaBatre, Ala., and Biloxi, Miss., were appreciably less than in 1946, while Texas landings were only slightly greater. Louisiana landings were slightly more than the previous year. As a result of price disputes between Gulf fishermen and dealers, the cessation of shrimping operations, while not extensive, did occur for short periods during the year.



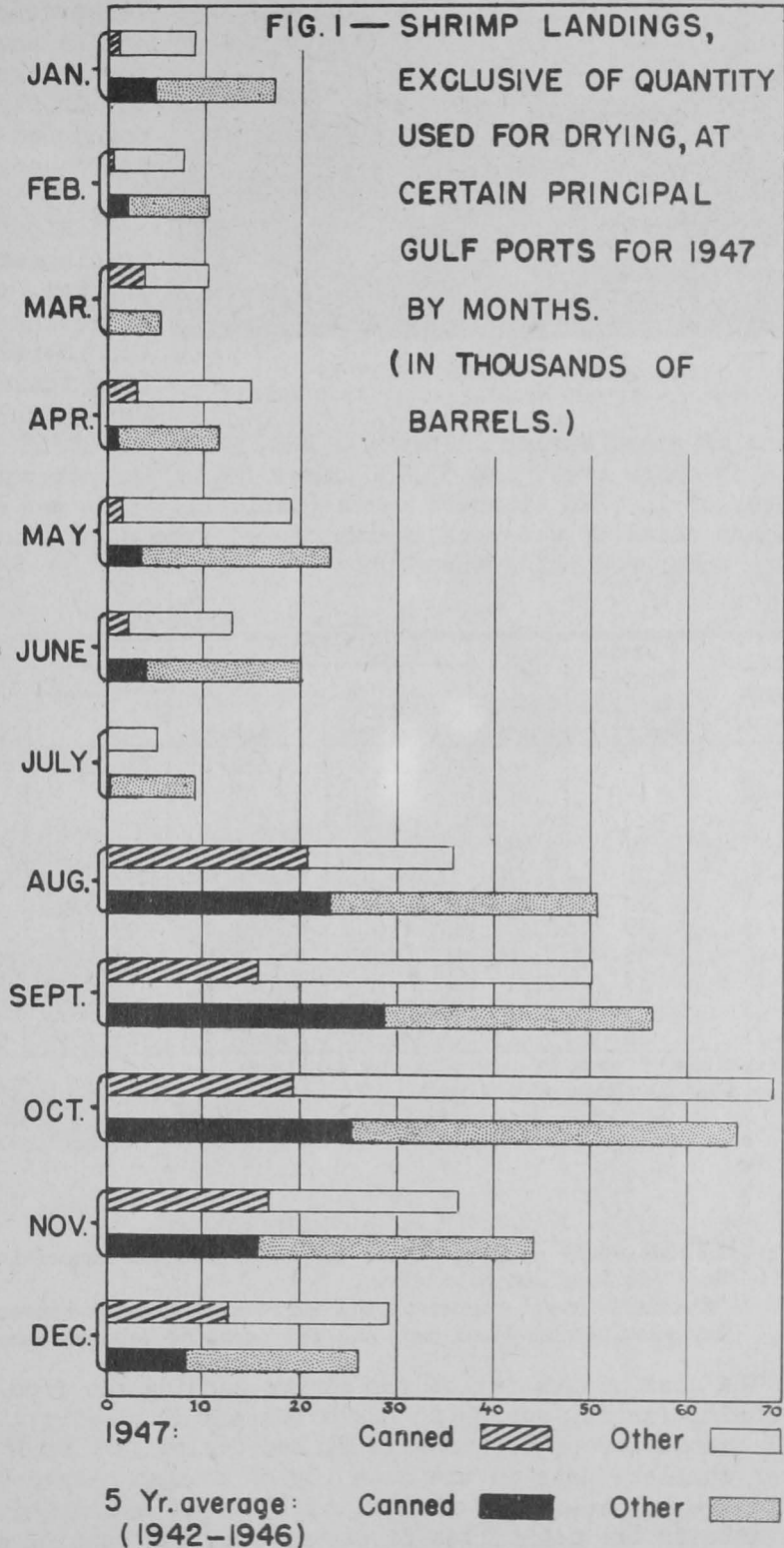
UNLOADING SHRIMP-MORGAN CITY, LA.

Changes in the fishing regulations of certain Gulf States had an important bearing upon shrimp landings at a number of fishing ports. The Louisiana legislature, in the summer of 1946, revised the closed seasons for commercial shrimping operations. The inside and outside waters of Louisiana were closed for fishing from June 10 to the second Monday in August. Inside waters were closed from December 15 to March 15. As Mississippi adopted the same closed seasons, no shrimp were taken commercially in Mississippi and Louisiana from June 10 to August 11, 1947. Previous to the enactment of the present closed season in Louisiana, only the inside waters were affected by closed season regulations. These applied to commercial shrimp fishing from March 15 to May 16 and from June 25 to August 16. The high non-resident license fee for fishing craft and fishermen sharply limited operation of out-of-State boats in Louisiana waters with the exception of those from Mississippi. The latter State has a reciprocal agreement with Louisiana for operation of Mississippi craft in certain designated Louisiana waters. Previous to the passage of the legislation in 1946, Alabama fishermen enjoyed the right to operate

in Louisiana waters without payment of the non-resident license fee. A number of Louisiana shrimp trawlers operated out of Texas ports during the early months of 1947. This resulted in controversies between the resident and non-resident shrimp producers. The Texas legislature in 1947 enacted additional laws and fees restricting non-resident fishermen and fishing craft.

Shrimp operations in Gulf waters off the Mexican coast by a few United States shrimp trawlers began in 1946. During the year, it became known generally that only craft of Mexican registry operating under a permit from a Mexican cooperative could legally catch shrimp in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico under the jurisdiction of that nation. At least 48 fishing vessels were transferred from U. S. to Mexican registry and the majority operated from Carmen in the Bay of Campeche. As a result of this, an increased quantity of shrimp was imported into the Gulf States from Mexico during the latter part of 1947.

Shrimp continued in good demand throughout 1947, with fluctuations in prices varying with the supply. Generally, wholesale prices were lower during the first part of the year. During the summer and early fall months, prices gradually increased, but declined in October and November and in some instances dropped to the same level prevailing at the beginning of the year. A slight uptrend in prices was noticeable in December. Wholesale prices of shrimp on the New Or-





leans French Market ranged from \$15.00 to \$90.00 a barrel (210 pounds, heads-on) during the first half of the year and from \$27.00 to \$90.00 a barrel during the latter part of 1947 for small to large shrimp. During the year, prices on the wholesale fish market in New York ranged from 60 to 90 cents and in Chicago from 68 to 90 cents a pound for fresh shrimp (25 and less per pound, heads-off).



NEW ORLEANS' FRENCH MARKET AT  
6:15 P.M.--BEFORE NIGHTLY ACTIVITY STARTS

Nineteen canning plants (one in Alabama, eight in Mississippi, and ten in Louisiana) voluntarily operating under the Seafood Inspection Service of the U. S. Food and Drug Administration from July 1 to December 31, 1947, utilized 9,556,600

pounds of green shrimp in packing 121,332 cases of 48 5-ounce cans, 2,705 cases of 48 5½-ounce cans, and 53,730 cases of 48 7-ounce cans of wet-pack shrimp, or a total of 143,226 standard cases (Table 2). This was much less than the 234,151 standard cases of wet-pack shrimp canned from July 1 to December 31, 1946, by 21 plants under Federal Inspection.

Table 2 - Shrimp Pack

Season	Plants Operated & No. Reporting	Days of Operation	RAW SHRIMP		CANNED SHRIMP			TOTAL
			Received	Packed	Wet Pack		Glass	
					No. 1	Other sizes	All sizes	
lbs.	lbs.	Std. Cases	Std. Cases	Std. Cases	Std. Cases			
1947-48 (July 1 to Jan. 3)	19	694	10,819,009	9,615,894	-	-	-	144,254 <sup>1/</sup>
1946-47	21	1,272	20,337,078	18,454,000	247,836	12,159	-	259,995
1945-46	28	1,296	21,300,000	10,692,100	160,821 <sup>2/</sup>	-	407	161,228
1944-45	39	2,494	39,645,431	27,661,249	409,383	-	702	410,085
1943-44	39	2,616	41,749,075	26,279,469	386,149	-	-	386,149
1942-43	39	2,935	47,581,940	39,315,245	573,959 <sup>3/</sup>	2,457	6,350	582,766
1941-42	39	3,056	53,163,777	46,701,803	635,315 <sup>4/</sup>	43,426 <sup>5/</sup>	6,785	685,526
1940-41	40	2,641	58,589,281	49,546,484	714,782 <sup>6/</sup>	23,652 <sup>7/</sup>	9,419	747,853

<sup>1/</sup> Breakdown of pack by can size not available.

<sup>2/</sup> Includes 10 cases of dry pack.

<sup>3/</sup> " 21,222 cases of dry pack.

<sup>4/</sup> " 75,412 " " " "

<sup>5/</sup> " 26,885 " " " "

<sup>6/</sup> " 106,579 " " " "

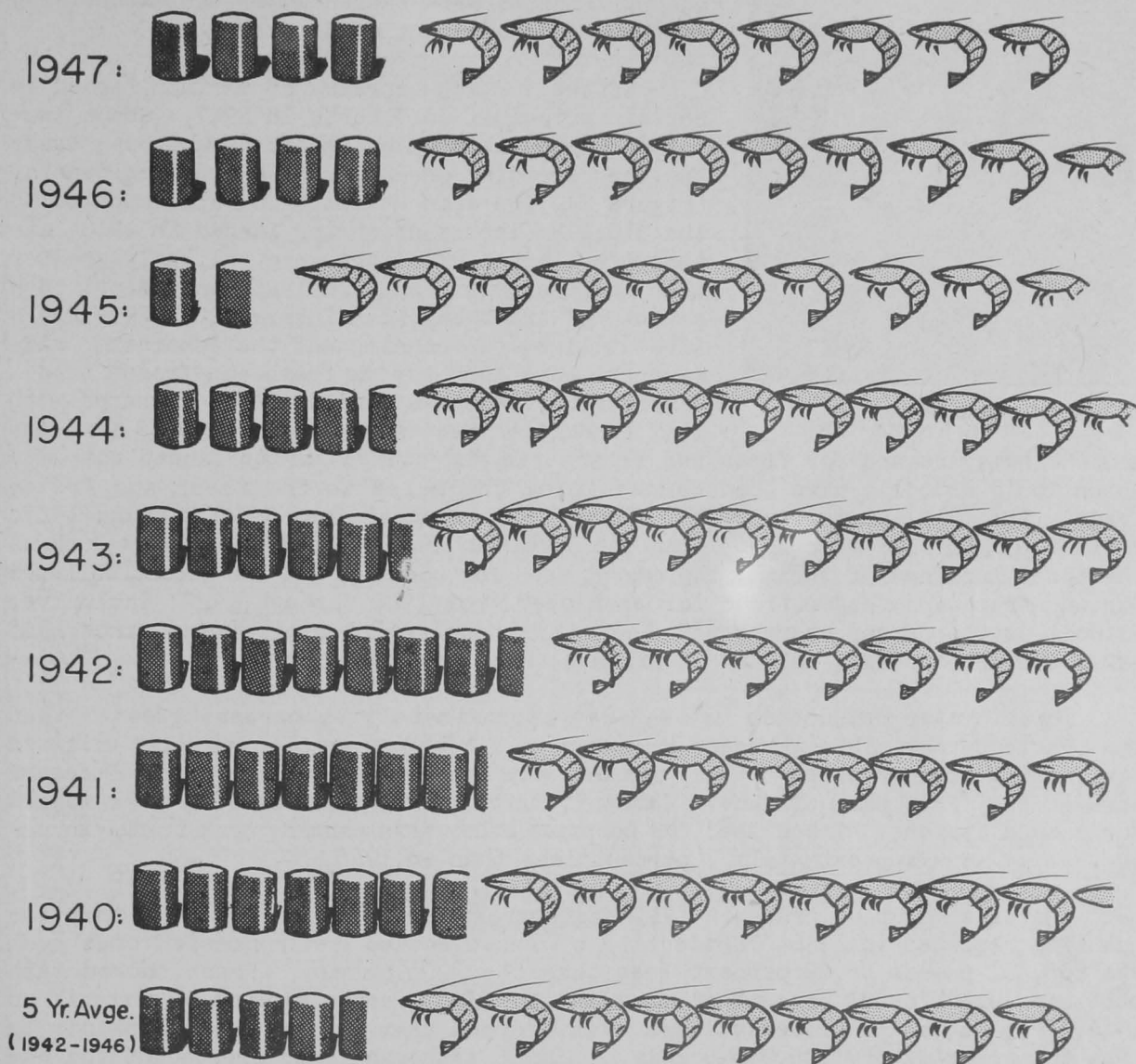
<sup>7/</sup> " 13,334 " " " "

Notes: Includes only packing plants under the Seafood Inspection Service of the U. S. Food and Drug Administration.

"Standard Cases" represent the various size cases converted to the equivalent of: dry pack, 48 6½-ounce cans and wet pack, 48 7-ounce cans per case.

The most active period for shrimp canning was from August 11, the opening of the shrimp fishing season in Louisiana and Mississippi, through December. Only small quantities of shrimp were packed during the other months of the year. Although complete data on the quantity of shrimp packed by all Gulf Coast canning plants are not available at this time, it is estimated, on the basis of reports by plants on the quantities of shrimp used for canning and Food and Drug Administration reports that the pack for the period July 1 to December 31, 1947, amounted to approximately 288,000 standard cases. On the basis of this estimated total

FIG.2 UTILIZATION OF SHRIMP LANDINGS AT CERTAIN PRINCIPAL GULF PORTS.



FOR CANNING — 25,000 Bbls. ( 210 lbs. per bbl. )



OTHER THAN CANNING — 25,000 Bbls. (210 lbs. per bbl.)

pack, this would mean that only approximately 50 percent of the total shrimp canned by Gulf Coast plants were packed by plants operating under the Seafood Inspection Service of the Food and Drug Administration for the period July 1 to December 31, 1947. But in 1946, approximately 75 percent of the shrimp canned by Gulf and South Atlantic plants were packed by plants operating under the Federal Seafood Inspection Service. For a number of years prior to 1946, 90 percent or more of the total yearly shrimp pack of the South Atlantic and Gulf States were canned under the supervision of the Seafood Inspection Service.



ONE POUND OF SHRIMP  
(11 TO LB.) HEADS-OFF

and the heavy demand for fresh and frozen raw and cooked shrimp caused supplies which would normally have been canned to be channeled to the fresh and frozen trade. The 1945 landings were the lowest for any year from 1940 through 1947, inclusive, and also much lower than the 5-year average (1942-46). Figure 2 shows the total landings of shrimp, the amount used for canning, and the amount utilized for the fresh and frozen trade for each year from 1940 through 1947, inclusive, as well as the 5-year average (1942-46). Although canning of shrimp since 1945 has shown an increase, in 1947 it did not reach the prewar level.

Total oyster production in 1947 was approximately 36 percent greater than the previous year. This increase is accounted for by the greater quantity utilized for canning during the past year. Oysters were processed for canning from December through the first part of June. January, March, and April were the peak months for canned oysters. Those used for purposes other than canning (raw trade, shucking, etc.) were approximately 7 percent less than in 1946.

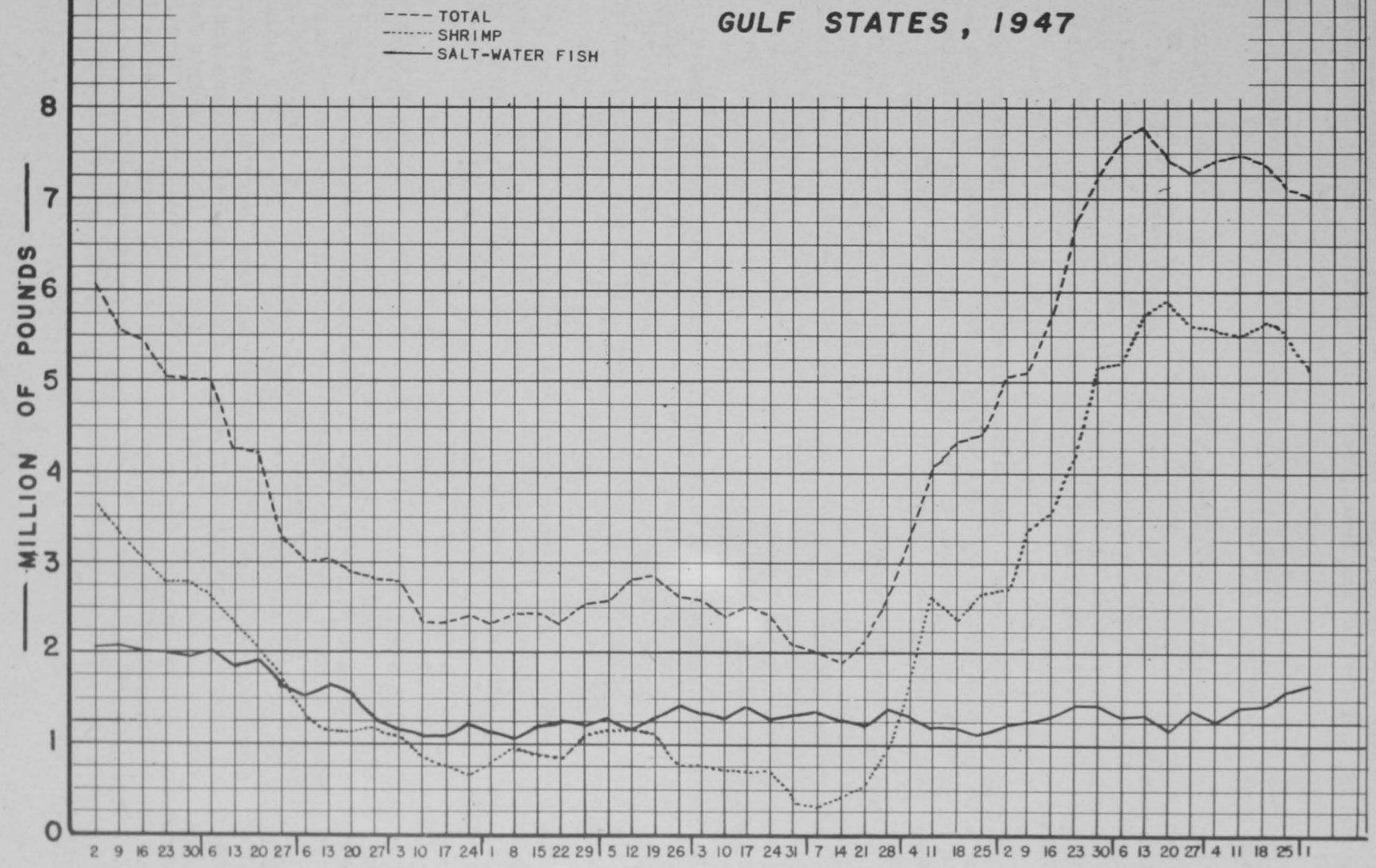
The catch of blue crabs in 1947 was approximately 37 percent less than the quantity reported in 1946. Production of fresh cooked and processed crab meat was 806,362 pounds or 48 percent less than the 1946 output. Fresh cooked crab meat accounted for 83 percent of the total for 1947 as compared with 58 percent for 1946. Production of processed crab meat dropped from around 650,000 pounds in 1946 to approximately 135,000 pounds in 1947. Although crabs are caught the entire year, the bulk of the landings occur during the warm months. A scarcity of crabs existed in Mississippi. High prices demanded by fishermen for hard crabs and the smaller demand for fresh cooked and processed crab meat were important factors affecting and causing the decline in the 1947 production.

Salt-water fish landings were 23 percent greater than in 1946. Red snapper and mullet accounted for 56 percent of the total landings, while spotted sea trout, red drum (redfish), grouper, and black drum together made up 29 percent of the total quantity reported. Red snapper accounted for one-half and mullet approximately one-third of the total salt-water fish landings in Alabama, while in Louisi-



FIG.3 HOLDINGS OF FROZEN FISHERY PRODUCTS

GULF STATES, 1947



JAN. FEB. MAR. APR. MAY JUNE JULY AUG. SEPT. OCT. NOV. DEC. JAN.

ana, approximately one-half of the landings were spotted sea trout and red drum (redfish). Texas salt-water fish landings were mostly red snapper, landed mainly at Galveston, and spotted sea trout, red drum (redfish), and black drum at other localities.

Fresh-water fish landings in 1947 amounted to 2,016,000 pounds of which 75 percent consisted of catfish.

Cold storage holdings of all frozen fishery products in the Gulf States reached the peak on November 13, 1947, when 7,750,000 pounds were reported by 13 cold storage warehouses. The year's low--slightly over 2,000,000 pounds--occurred during the latter part of July and first part of August. Data on holdings were obtained from 11 warehouses from January to July, 1947, and from 13 warehouses from August 1947 to January 1948 located as follows: Alabama, 2; Mississippi, 1; Louisiana, 6; and Texas, 4.

Holdings of frozen fresh- and salt-water fish varied approximately 800,000 pounds with the peak in January and the low in May. Holdings of frozen fish consisted of at least 30 varieties. Mullet, Spanish mackerel, and New England fillets were the leading varieties in storage in the Gulf States during most of the year.

Frozen shellfish holdings ranged from a low of slightly over 500,000 pounds in August to a high of over 6,250,000 pounds in November. This variation in shellfish holdings was accounted for principally by the quantity of frozen shrimp which totaled 250,000 pounds on August 7 and nearly 6,000,000 pounds on November 13. Frozen shrimp holdings on December 31, 1947, were approximately 43 percent greater and frozen fish holdings nearly 30 percent lower than on January 2, 1947.

Frozen shrimp shipped from the coastal areas of Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas amounted to 299 carloads in 1947, while only 230 carloads were shipped the previous year. October, November, September, December, and June were the months with the heaviest shipments. Considerably over half of the yearly total of shipments were consigned to the Central States.

Railway express (LCL) shipments from New Orleans, La., amounted to 29,576 packages in 1947, nearly 14 percent less than the previous year. Shipments of shucked oysters, shrimp, and fish accounted for over half of the total. Approximately three-fourths of the express shipments were for localities in the southern States.

Total fish and shellfish imports in 1947 from Mexico through Brownsville and Laredo, Texas, as reported by U. S. Customs, amounted to 3,370,232 pounds, or 2 percent, less than last year. Imports at Brownsville were over 13 times greater than at Laredo. Spotted sea trout, red drum (redfish), and croaker made up 82 percent of the total imports of fish. Shrimp imports at these two localities totaled 804,001 pounds, a very large increase over 1946 when 6,369 pounds were reported. Approximately 87 percent of the shrimp were imported during October, November, and December. Imports of fishery products at New Orleans and Morgan City, La., were available only for November and December, 1947. Imports for these two months were: from Mexico, frozen shrimp, 166,470 pounds; from British Honduras, frozen spiny lobsters, 24,283 pounds, and frozen spiny lobster tails, 975 pounds. Total imports into the U. S. of fresh and frozen shrimp from Mexico during 1947 amounted to 13,228,505 pounds which was 10 percent greater than the quantity imported in 1946.

