

RECEIPTS OF FISHERY PRODUCTS AT SEATTLE, 1948

By E. C. Hinsdale*

INTRODUCTION

The continued importance of Seattle's position in the northwest fisheries of the Pacific Coast was again proven by the volume of fishery products received during 1948. Landings and wholesale receipts, including imports of fresh and frozen fish, shellfish, and livers totaled 83,101,000 pounds, valued at slightly more than \$16,499,000 (the highest yet recorded). The volume was the second largest since records were first obtained in 1939, exceeded only by the peak year 1945, when approximately 89,500,000 pounds were received.

SOURCES OF RECEIPTS

The principal sources of supply were again the waters of Washington and Oregon, contributing 50,248,000 pounds or about 60 percent of the total receipts. British Columbia was second, supplying 16,420,000 (20 percent), and Alaska third, with 14,790,000 pounds (18 percent). Other sources--California, Gulf States, New York, Nova Scotia, Mexico, South Africa, and Japan--supplied 1,317,000 pounds (2 percent). Japanese imports of 1,082,000 pounds accounted for four-fifths of the volume from miscellaneous sources. (Table 1).

Table 1 - Seattle Receipts of Fishery Products by Source - 1947-48

Source	F R E S H			F R O Z E N			T O T A L		
	1948	1947	Change from	1948	1947	Change from	1948	1947	Change from
	Pounds	Pounds	1947 Percent	Pounds	Pounds	1947 Percent	Pounds	Pounds	1947 Percent
Local ^{1/}	50,424,000	40,117,000	+ 26	150,000	74,000	+103	50,574,000	40,191,000	+ 26
California	75,000	25,000	+200	-	-	-	75,000	25,000	+200
Gulf States	27,000	82,000	- 67	44,000	34,000	+ 29	71,000	116,000	- 39
Alaska	395,000	849,000	- 53	14,395,000	22,388,000	- 36	14,790,000	22,237,000	- 33
British Columbia	5,287,000	11,206,000	- 53	11,133,000	3,277,000	+240	16,420,000	14,483,000	+ 13
Other ^{2/}	40,000	11,000	+264	1,131,000	1,000	+ 3/	1,171,000	12,000	3/
Total	56,248,000	52,290,000	+ 8	26,853,000	25,774,000	+ 4	83,101,000	78,064,000	+ 6

^{1/}Washington and Oregon.

^{2/}New York, New Jersey, Mexico, Japan, Nova Scotia, and South Africa.

^{3/}Over 1000 percent.

The trend towards heavier imports of fishery products is shown by the advancement of British Columbia to second place in the total volume of receipts. Although imports of fresh fishery products from the Province dropped to less than half the 1947 quantity, due principally to an embargo placed on the exports of some species of fresh fish and the diversion of water-borne shipments through competing ports, the imports of frozen products (heaviest on record) rose to more than three times the volume for last year. Heavier imports of frozen halibut, chum and silver salmon, albacore tuna, and soles and bottomfish fillets were responsible for the increase. The decline of Alaska to third place in volume was caused mainly by the 95-day West Coast maritime labor dispute during the last quarter of the year when the heaviest coastwise shipments of frozen products are normally made. Frozen receipts totaled 14,395,000 pounds, a decline of 36 percent from last year. While one Puget Sound port, not affected by the labor dispute, received large quantities from the north, the bulk of Alaska's outbound shipments were discharged at Canadian ports for transshipment to the United States. In addition, Alaska's shipments of fresh fishery products to Seattle were less than

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half the 1947 volume, influenced to a large extent by good consumer demand, higher prices, and the retention of more fresh salmon in the Territory.

FACTORS AFFECTING LANDINGS

The trend for greater halibut landings in Alaska was influenced by three major developments:

1. Establishment of more freezing facilities at strategic ports and the improvement of port facilities in others;
2. More equitable price range for halibut which encouraged and aided fishermen;
3. Landing at the nearest port because of shorter fishing seasons and heavier small-boat competition. (This enabled the fishermen to make more trips to the grounds than would have been possible by making the longer haul to Seattle.)

As a result of these developments, halibut landings at Seattle and major Canadian ports have, with few exceptions, steadily declined during the past 10 years. Shipping difficulties, labor disputes and price differentials have, on occasion, contributed to several deviations from the general downward trend.

RECEIPTS OF LEADING SPECIES AND TRENDS

Salmon: In 1948, salmon receipts (all species) of 25,492,000 pounds valued at more than \$5,500,000 led all other varieties. These arrivals were about 6,500,000 pounds, or 24 percent, below 1947. The value, however, netted fishermen an increase of nearly $3\frac{1}{2}$ cents a pound.

The anticipated heavy spring and fall runs of king and silver salmon failed to materialize and vessel catches, both offshore and in the straits, were somewhat disappointing. As a result, the silver salmon receipts dropped 26 percent and king salmon dropped 19 percent. Since 1948 was not a cycle year for pink salmon, receipts of this species, as expected, fell sharply. The Canadian embargo on

the exportation of pink, sockeye, and silver salmon, inaugurated early in the season, was also instrumental in lowering the port's salmon receipts. On the other hand, substantial gains were made in the receipts of chum and sockeye salmon. Closure regulations, levied in 1947 by the State of Washington, cut into the possible larger catch of chum salmon, particularly in the waters adjacent to the local port. Fishing was permitted only from October through November within set limits off the western shore of Bainbridge Island and several other Sound points. Despite the curtailed chum season, purse seiners caught and landed more than 3,250,000 pounds at Seattle.

Halibut: Other than salmon, no other major fleet fishery of the Northwest showed any marked decline. However, arrivals of a number of important species,

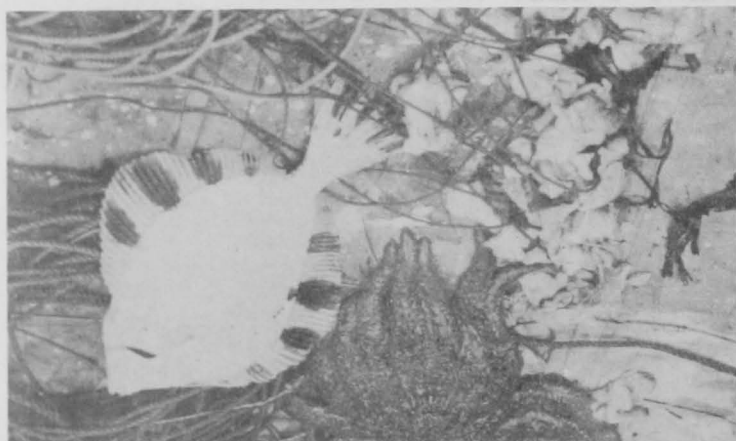


LIFTING A NET LOAD OF FISH ABOARD A PACIFIC COAST OTTER TRAWLER OFF THE COAST OF OREGON.



RED OR SOCKEYE SALMON FISHING VESSELS RACING TO A FAVORITE SPOT TO MAKE SETS AT THE TURN OF THE TIDE.

including halibut, were lower than the previous year, due principally to shipping difficulties. Halibut receipts of 20,326,000 pounds valued at nearly \$4,000,000



FLOUNDER, STARFISH, ARE OFTEN CAUGHT ON HALIBUT LINE. NOTE THE BAIT STILL ON THE LINE AFTER A FOUR-HOUR SET.

was the second most important species by volume. However, this was the smallest quantity received since 1944. The season, the shortest on record, opened on May 1 and closed July 11--a total of only 72 days of fishing. The 1948 halibut catch quota had been increased from 52,500,000 to 54,000,000 pounds. Local halibut vessels made a total of 461 trips to the fishing grounds, or 155 more than last year, and landed 9,080,000 pounds of halibut at Seattle--a very large increase over 1947 landings of 5,874,000 pounds when the local fleet was tied

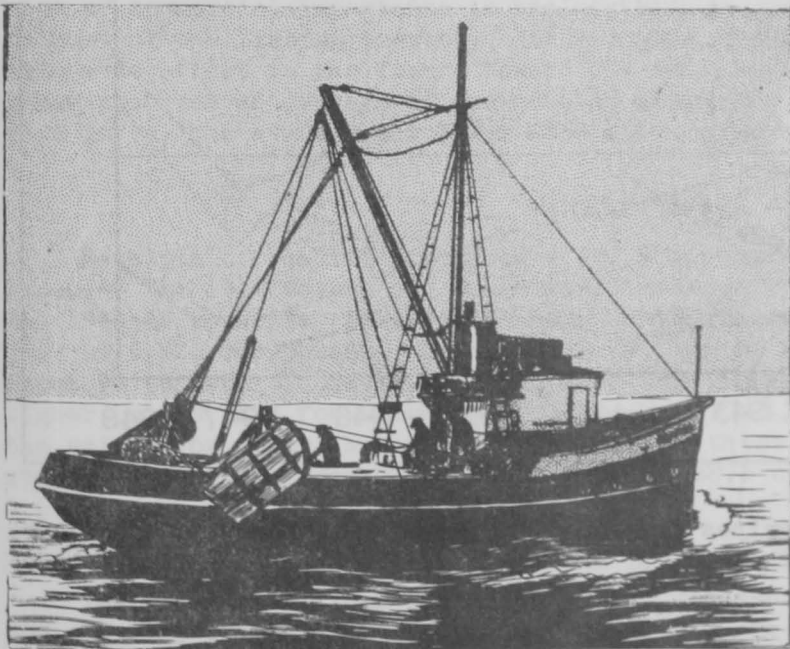
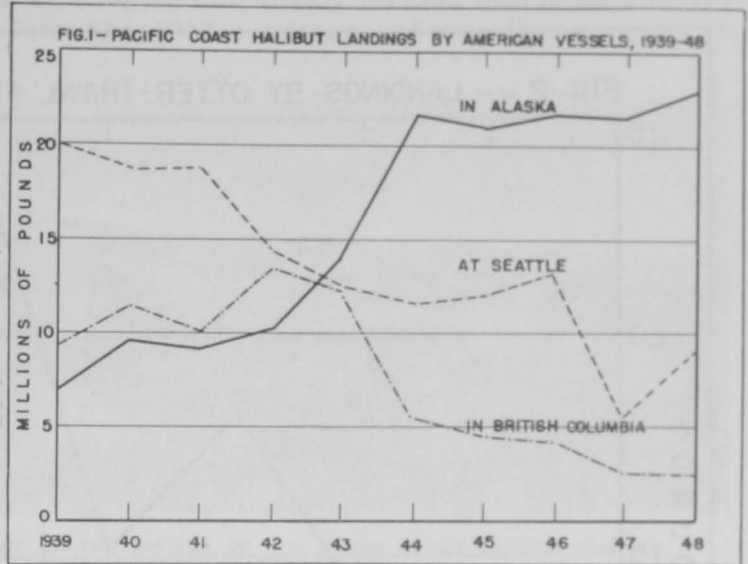
up a large part of the season by a dispute between owners and fishermen. These landings compared favorably with 1944 and 1945, two other years of high volume. The average price for halibut in 1948 dropped nearly 3 cents a pound from the 1947 average of 23.6 cents. Directly due to the shipping labor dispute, receipts of frozen halibut from Alaska declined from 11,000,000 to a little less than 9,000,000 pounds despite strenuous efforts by some dealers to ship via chartered boats. Frozen halibut (1,261,000 pounds) imported from British Columbia took up some of the slack. The bulk of these shipments arrived via rail, trucks and packer boat.

Landings of halibut by American vessels (Figure 1), reveal that those made at Alaska ports steadily increased from a low of 7,000,000 pounds in 1939 to a high of 23,000,000 pounds in 1948.

Sablefish: Shipping difficulties also affected the 1948 receipts of sablefish (3,107,000 pounds) at Seattle. Nearly 1,500,000 pounds were landed fresh by the halibut, long-line, and trawl fleets, and slightly exceeded the 1947 volume. However, a large part of Alaska's shipments of frozen sablefish normally bound for the local port was diverted through strike-free ports with a resulting decline of nearly 750,000 pounds.

OTTER-TRAWL FISHERY

Trawlers enjoyed a fairly favorable market throughout the year, and the fleet operations were exceptionally active. More than 19,000,000 pounds of bottom fish were caught and landed by vessels of the local trawl fleet--more than double the 1947 landings and exceeded only by 1945. Trawlers made 814 trips, which was about one-third of 1946. Due to more strenuous fishing effort, use of better gear, and the discovery and exploitation of several new grounds, the average catch per boat rose from 1,310 pounds in 1946 to 1,747 pounds in 1947 and 2,339 pounds in 1948.

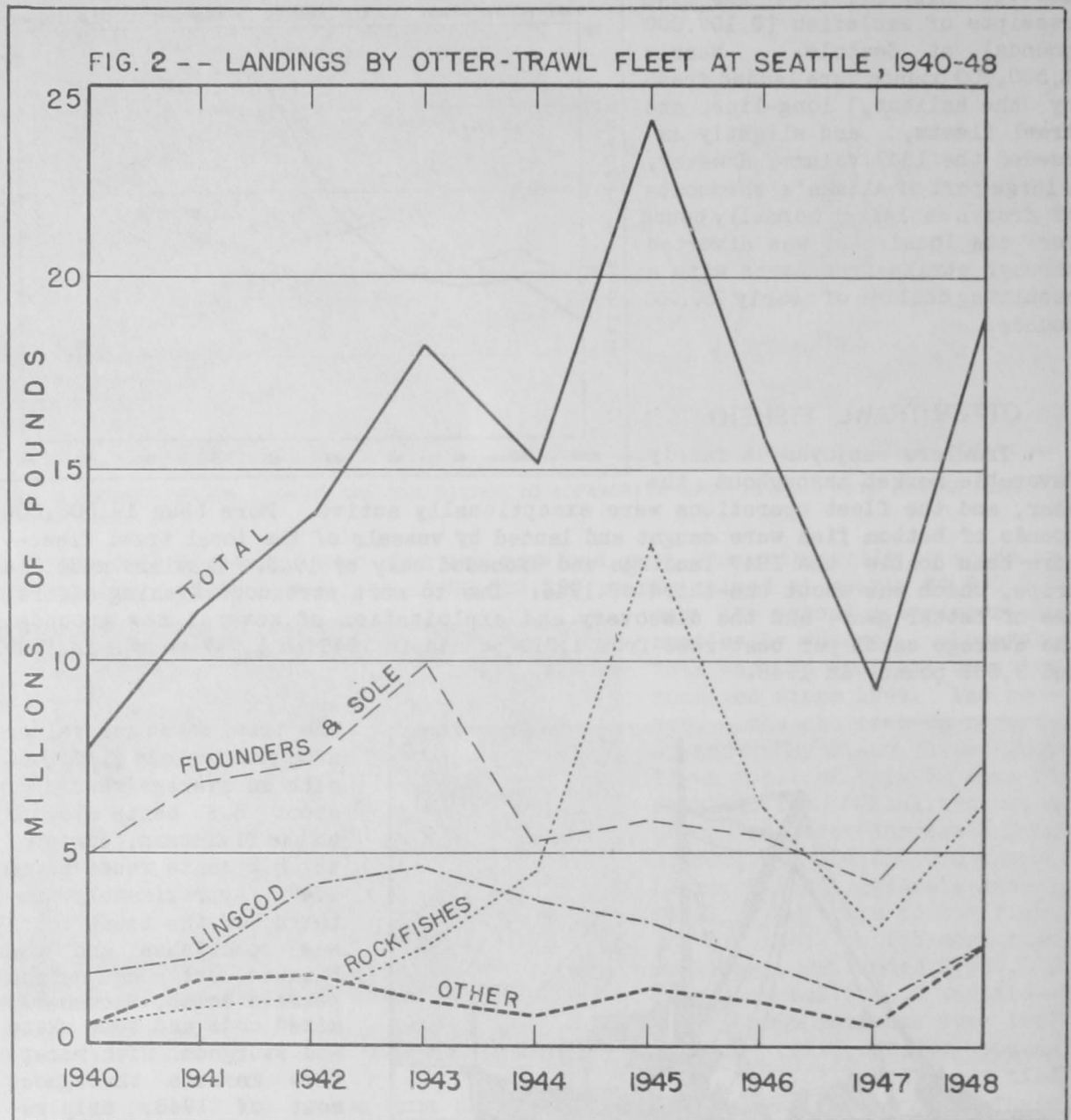


A TYPICAL PACIFIC COAST OTTER TRAWLER

The trawl catch was valued at approximately \$1,067,000 with an average return of about 5.6 cents a pound to the fishermen, compared to 5.2 cents received in 1947. Approximately one-third of the total catch was rockfishes and the balance mostly English and petrale soles, flounders, mixed cods and some skate and sturgeon. With receptive markets throughout most of 1948, trip restrictions were few and of small consequence, and little opportunity was afforded for gluts to develop.

For a number of years, otter-trawl landings at Seattle indicated that

nearly all species increased from 1940 to 1943 but dropped sharply in 1944, 1946, and 1947 (Figure 2). The downward trend during these years was largely the result of drastic cuts in purchases by the Armed Forces and some curtailment in civilian



buying. However, since high prices prevailed for meats and other protein foods, consumer resistance lessened in 1948 and substantial gains were made in the landings of all trawl fish.

TUNA

The largest receipts of tuna (1,356,000 pounds) on record were received during 1948 at Seattle, nearly six times the 1947 quantity. Approximately three-fifths of these receipts were frozen albacore and skipjack imported from Japan for the first time in many years. The bulk of the Japanese fish were ultimately shipped to California for canning.

Fresh albacore tuna landed in Washington and Oregon totaled nearly 13,000,000 pounds, a drop of 500,000 pounds from the 1947 landings and the third smallest catch since 1941.



INDIANS HAULING IN SALMON BEACH SEINE ON THE SHORES OF THE SITUK RIVER IN THE YAKUTAK BAY DISTRICT OF ALASKA.

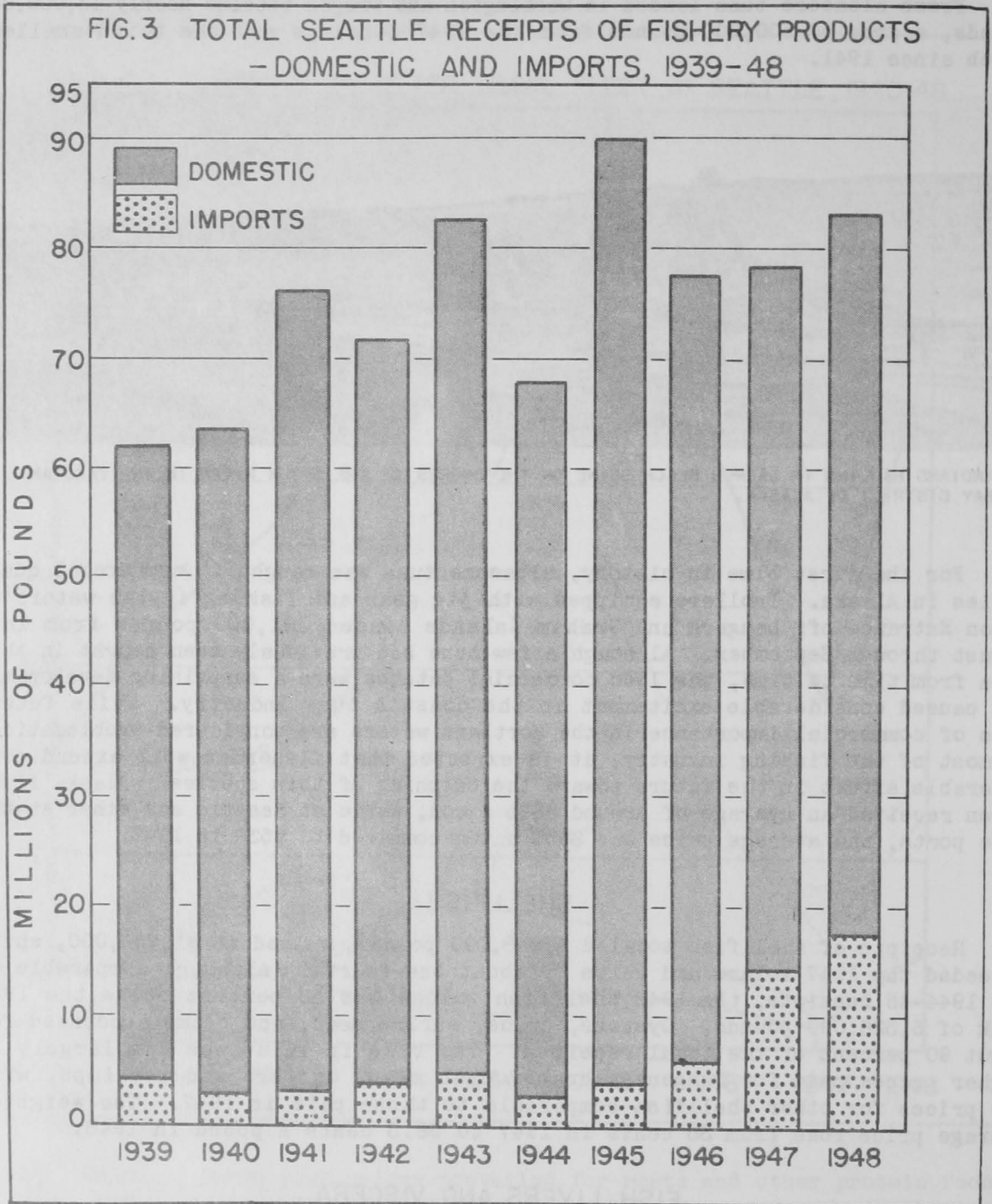
For the first time in history, albacore tuna was caught in commercial quantities in Alaska. Trollers equipped with jig gear and fishing in the waters of Dixon Entrance off Langara and Graham Islands landed 361,000 pounds from late August through September. Although a few tuna had previously been caught in this area from time to time, the 1948 commercial catches were a surprising development and caused considerable excitement in the coast's tuna industry. While future runs of commercial importance in the northern waters are considered problematical by most of the fishing industry, it is expected that fishermen will expend considerable effort in the future toward the catching of this species. Alaska fishermen received an average of around \$525 a ton, while at Seattle and other state-side ports, the average price was \$630 a ton compared to \$530 in 1947.

SHELLFISH

Receipts of shellfish totaled 4,558,000 pounds, valued at \$1,756,000, which exceeded the 1947 volume and value by about one-fourth. Although comparable to the 1944-46 receipts, the 1948 shellfish volume was 18 percent below the 1945 peak of 6,326,000 pounds. Oysters, crabs, shrimp meat, and clams accounted for about 90 percent of the total receipts. The rise in value was due largely to higher prices paid for Dungeness crabs, crab meat, oysters and scallops, with the prices for other shellfish comparable to those paid in 1947. The weighted average price rose from 38 cents in 1947 to 38.5 cents a pound in 1948.

FISH LIVERS AND VISCERA

The local fish liver situation caused processors increasing concern, since for a number of years there has been a gradual drop in receipts. In 1948, Seattle received 3,511,000 pounds of livers and viscera, 5 percent below the 1947 receipts, and the smallest volume since 1942. Largely responsible for the decline were smaller receipts of grayfish (dogfish) livers from local areas, and frozen livers and viscera of halibut and sablefish from Alaska. Fishing for grayfish was fairly extensive in Hood Canal, central Puget Sound, and the Grays Harbor areas, but the fish were reported to be quite small in size with a smaller liver yield per



fish. Catches of soupfin shark, from which the most valuable liver is obtained, showed some improvement over last year, but was of too small a volume to indicate a return of the former heavy runs. No market or other commercial use for grayfish or soupfin was developed during 1948, with the result that the carcasses of these fish continued to be thrown overboard.

The 1948 value of the livers and viscera was approximately \$2,879,000 slightly more than last year. While the average price per pound for some bottom fish livers

was lower than last year, the prices paid for soupfin and miscellaneous livers raised the over-all average price to 81.7 cents a pound. This was the next highest average price recorded, being exceeded only by the 1945 average of 84.5 cents a pound. With few exceptions, the average price trend has been upward, rising from 25.8 cents in 1940 to the present figure. This increase in value has developed through expansion of the pharmaceutical and other commercial uses of edible fish oils, and the practice of blending oils to meet the market's demands for both high and low potency oils.

OTHER FISHERY PRODUCTS

Supplementing the receipts of fresh and frozen fishery products, nearly 8,000,000 pounds of cured products, 14 tons of fish meal, and 1,250,000 gallons of oil were landed at Seattle. The cured fish volume was about 52 percent heavier than last year with imports of salt cod and herring from Europe accounting for a sizable portion. Meal and oil receipts were somewhat less than in 1947, principally due to the poor herring catch in Southeastern Alaska. Received for the first time were moderate amounts of shark, tuna, whale and miscellaneous oils from Japan and South America.

DOMESTIC RECEIPTS AND IMPORTS

Domestic receipts (United States and Alaska) were more than 65,500,000 pounds, with a value of approximately \$13,750,000. This represented an increase over 1947 of 3 percent in volume and 1 percent in value, but nearly 24 percent under the 1945 domestic volume of 85,500,000 pounds.

Imported fishery products in 1948 totaled over 17,500,000 pounds, valued at nearly \$3,000,000, which was the highest import volume and value recorded. From 1939 to 1946 the import volume (Figure 3) remained low, but during 1947 and 1948, it rose sharply. Although Canada has consistently supplied most of the imported fishery products, the volume from other foreign sources has increased to a point of importance.



THE FISH LIVER OIL INDUSTRY

Many types of processing equipment can be used for the preparation of vitamin oils. In the selection of the equipment for a particular plant, some of the items to be considered are:

1. Kind and volume of material
2. Process contemplated
3. Availability and relative cost of power and heat from the various sources such as electricity, steam, water power, internal combustion engines, etc.
4. Amount of mechanization and automatic control,
5. Cost and availability of labor.