

TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS


Additions to the Fleet of U. S. Fishing Vessels

A total of 43 vessels of 5 net tons and over received their first documents as fishing craft during October 1951--2 less than in October 1950. The east coast of Florida led with 9 vessels, followed by California with 8 vessels, and the west coast of Florida with 4 vessels, the Treasury Department's Bureau of Customs reported.

During the first ten months of 1951, a total of 695 vessels were documented for the first time as fishing vessels, compared with 716 vessels for the same period during 1950.

Vessels Obtaining Their First Documents as Fishing Craft, October 1951					
Section	October		Ten mos. ending with Oct.		Total
	1951	1950	1951	1950	1950
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
New England.....	1	7	31	35	36
Middle Atlantic.....	2	3	30	42	45
Chesapeake Bay.....	2	7	24	70	81
South Atlantic.....	12	9	100	126	153
Gulf.....	11	8	154	143	167
Pacific.....	9	6	267	206	231
Great Lakes.....	5	1	21	11	12
Alaska.....	1	4	65	80	83
Hawaii.....	-	-	3	3	4
Total.....	43	45	695	716	812

NOTE: VESSELS HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO THE VARIOUS SECTIONS ON THE BASIS OF THEIR HOME PORT.



California Turns Down Request for Reduction of Anchovies and Herring

A request of more than a dozen California sardine processors to reduce anchovies, herring, or sauries into commercial oils and meals was turned down by California State Fish and Game Commissioners at their December meeting in Fort Bragg, according to a December 12 news release.

Processors asked that 20 percent of their present sardine reduction allotment be used for other species. Twenty percent of the standard 1951-52 sardine reduction quota would amount to 309 tons for each of the more than 100 holders of permits.

The Commission acted after hearing a strongly-worded statement from the Department of Fish and Game which warned that the population of anchovies in California waters is not large enough to support the proposed reduction industry in addition to the present bait and canning industries.

"Anchovies are one of the most important foods for such valuable fish as salmon, albacore, mackerel, barracuda, yellowtail, kelp bass, halibut, and other species," it was asserted. "The effect of a large-scale reduction operation might well spell disaster to the fishery."

The Bureau of Marine Fisheries stated that herring serve as food for salmon, rockfish, and other commercial and game species. Their importance increased with the scarcity of sardines. Small quantities have been canned in recent years, and this type of utilization should be encouraged, according to the Bureau, while the outright reduction of herring should not.

No fishery has developed for the saury, it was claimed, and it is doubtful if they could be caught in worthwhile quantities with gear now used.



California Sardine Industry Regulation Urged

"Remedial legislation designed to control the entire sardine industry must be adopted in the immediate future," said the Chief of the California Bureau of Marine Fisheries at a recent meeting called by the State's Fish and Game Commission. "To manage any fishery," he asserted, "it is desirable for the management agency to have reasonably broad regulatory powers in order that the annual take may be adjusted to the productivity of the resource. Under the system it is possible to amend regulations to meet changing conditions, which often change so rapidly as to be emergencies."

A Department of Fish and Game plan to rehabilitate the California sardine fishery was greeted with mixed reactions by more than 100 industry and sportsmen representatives attending the meeting, points out a December 19 news release from that Department.

The proposed management plan recommends that power to set sardine and mackerel seasons and bag limits be given to the Commission, with aid from a seven-man advisory committee appointed by the Governor. A minimum seasonal take of 100,000 tons of sardines and 5,000 tons of Pacific mackerel was suggested.

The scarce sardine, once the mainstay of the State's commercial fishing industry, was the subject of a day-long discussion in Monterey's City Hall. The only points upon which all participants agreed were that the sardine is no longer plentiful in coastal waters, and that additional research is necessary.

Because members of various sardine industry factions could not agree on a general plan, the Director of the Department called for the creation of a 21-man steering committee. It will represent fishermen, boat owners, cannery workers, processors, reductionists, sportsmen, the Department, and the public. The initial meeting to recommend suitable action is to be held soon.

Under legislative practice, the only regulatory power in the hands of the Fish and Game Commission is that of setting regulations governing reduction of sardines into commercial oils and meals. All other sardine fishing and processing laws are made by the State Legislature.



California Establishes Regulations for New Shrimp Industry

Regulations governing California's newest industry--ocean shrimp (prawn) fishing--have been adopted by the Fish and Game Commission.

At their December meeting, the Commissioners took action under a recent Legislative Act which will allow shrimp and prawn fishing for the first time in ocean waters off California. Unless results of the experiment are successful, fishing permits will expire in September 1953, according to a December 19 news release from the State Department of Fish and Game.

Recent exploratory cruises made by the N. B. Scofield, research vessel operated by the State Department of Fish and Game, showed commercial quantities of shrimp (prawns) in three general areas off the California coast. Area "A" under the new regulations will extend from the Oregon border to a point off False Cape, near Fortuna. Area "B" runs south to Pigeon Point, near the San Mateo-Santa Cruz county line. Area "C" extends from Pigeon Point to Rincon Point, Santa Barbara.

In offering the proposed regulations to the Commission, the Chief of the Bureau of Marine Fisheries stated that there was much unexplored area along the coast where shrimp (prawns) might be found. "It is hoped that commercial exploitation will bring additional knowledge and information concerning the extent and magnitude of this resource," he added.

The State research vessel caught as much as 450 pounds of shrimp (prawns) in 15 minutes by the use of a 10-foot beam trawl net. Experiments were made to determine which type of gear would not harm the so-called "bottom fishery" for sole, halibut, flounder, and other fishes.

As a result of the findings made aboard the N. B. Scofield, the Commission's new regulations call for use of a beam-trawl net with a mouth less than 45 feet in circumference, and a mesh 1 and 1/8 inches or smaller. Seasons for each area will open April 1 and close September 30, unless a maximum bag limit has been reached, when the season may be closed earlier. Limits are 1,500,000 pounds for Area A, 750,000 pounds for Area B, and 250,000 pounds for Area C.



Federal Purchases of Fishery Products

FRESH AND FROZEN FISH PURCHASES BY THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY, NOVEMBER 1951: For the military feeding of the U. S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air

Purchases of Fresh and Frozen Fishery Products by Department of the Army (November and the First Eleven Months, 1950 and 1951)							
Q U A N T I T Y				V A L U E			
November		Jan.-November		November		Jan.-November	
1951	1950	1951	1950	1951	1950	1951	1950
lbs.	lbs.	lbs.	lbs.	\$	\$	\$	\$
1,772,725	2,112,669	29,618,339	16,516,351	971,490	872,885	12,610,571	6,820,841

Force the Army Quartermaster Corps during November 1951 purchased 1,772,725 pounds of fresh and frozen fishery products (see table). Due to the fact that more meat was available, purchases of fishery products dropped 45.4 percent in quantity and 37.1 percent in value as compared with October 1951. Although

these purchases were 16.1 percent below November 1950, the value was 11.1 percent greater indicating that higher priced items were bought during November 1951.

For the first 11 months of 1951, purchases were greater by 79.3 percent in quantity and 84.9 percent in value as compared with the corresponding period of 1950.



Gulf Exploratory Fishery Program

SHRIMP EXPLORATIONS IN NEW AREAS CONTINUED BY "OREGON" (Cruise No. 12): To continue exploratory shrimp fishing in previously unworked areas in the northwest Gulf and to try out experimental gear in red-shrimp grounds, the vessel Oregon left Pascagoula on November 21 on Cruise No. 12. This vessel of the Service's Branch of Commercial Fisheries is conducting fishery exploratory work in the Gulf. The vessel returned on November 21.

Throughout the trip trawling operations were hampered by bad weather. One trawl was lost and 4 others damaged in rough seas. The Oregon tied up in Galveston from November 13 to November 18 waiting for suitable trawling weather.



DUMPING A MIXED CATCH OF SHRIMP AND FISH CAUGHT BY THE OREGON IN A NIGHT DRAG. SOME SPECIES OF SHRIMP ARE CAUGHT ONLY AT NIGHT.

A series of trawling stations were made in 10, 15, 30, and 50 fathoms. Except for good catches off Southwest Pass in 40 fathoms, brown-grooved shrimp were found to be sparsely scattered from 15 to 50 fathoms. When working in the 10- to 15-fathom range, good catches of white shrimp were made off the central Louisiana coast at night. Three 200- to 220-fathom drags were made SSW. of Galveston. All produced very small quantities of red shrimp.

On November 11 a single blackfin tuna was taken trolling southeast of Ship Shoal light in 173 fathoms. No schools of tuna were observed throughout the entire trip.



Maine Sardine Pack for 1951 Below Average

The Maine sardine canning season, which opened on April 15, closed on December 1 as per State law, according to a news release from the Maine Development Commission. The total pack of Maine sardines this year totaled 1,500,000 cases as compared with 3,800,000 cases in 1950 and a 20-year average of 2,500,000 cases (100 3½-ounce cans to a case). Maine sardines were packed in soybean, peanut, and olive oils; and in mustard sauce. Quite a few 3/4-pound mustards were produced.

The season looked like an economic disaster for canners, fishermen, and factory workers alike until early September. Fish had never been so scarce and Maine's 47 plants were idle most of the time. The shortest pack since the record bust of 527,000 cases in the depression year of 1932 was predicted. However, catches picked up in September and continued through October and November. The industry's productive machinery swung into action but could not get enough fish to make up for lost time. It was a short pack and bad news for the canners, who need volume to keep in the black, but disaster was averted.

Fishermen, canners, and biologists appear to be in agreement that the scarcity of fish is only temporary and was caused by a poor spawning season two years ago. They look for the schools to be back as large and plentiful as ever next season.

The canners paid approximately \$375,000 to the State Tax Assessor to finance an industry-development program. Payments were based on a tax of 25¢ a case imposed by the last Maine legislature at the request of the industry. A 17-week nationwide advertising campaign was launched in July but discontinued in late September due to the short pack and uncertain conditions.



Metal Cans--Shipments for Fish and Sea Food, January-September 1951

Total shipments of metal cans for fish and sea food for January-September 1951 amounted to 78,955 short tons of steel (based on the amount of steel consumed in the manufacture of cans), which was considerably below 99,342 short tons of steel during the corresponding period in 1950. A decline in West Coast sardine and tuna canning and Maine sardine canning were largely responsible for this drop in shipments of metal cans.

During September this year, cans totaling 10,051 short tons of steel were shipped for use in canning fish and sea food as compared with 15,390 short tons in September 1950.

NOTE: DATA CONVERTED TO SHORT TONS OF STEEL ARE ON THE BASIS OF 23.0 BASE BOXES OF STEEL PER SHORT TON OF STEEL.



Nylon Netting Effectiveness Tested

Inclined to discount the marked superiority claims made for nylon commercial fish netting is the Michigan Conservation Department's Fisheries Research Institute at Ann Arbor, according to a November news release from that agency.

Limited tests on inland lakes, however, indicate that the more costly nylon material has superior thread strength, rot immunity, and handling ease in comparison with other net types. Although experiments were carefully handled, the Institute points out that Great Lakes conditions might introduce elements not present in inland lakes.

Of the 1,841 fish collected, 995 were lured into nylon nets and 846 into linen ones.

Rock bass and sunfish were trapped in the nylon nets the most. Yellow perch and large-mouthed black bass more frequently were found in the linen nets.



Wholesale and Retail Prices

WHOLESALE PRICES, NOVEMBER 1951: Bad weather along the East Coast and in the Great Lakes area and scarcity of fish on the West Coast curtailed fisheries production during November 1951. Consequently, during the month edible fishery products prices were substantially higher (4.5 percent) than during the previous month and 1.8 percent above November 1950. The edible fish and shellfish (fresh, frozen, and canned) wholesale index for November was 111.2 percent of the 1947 average (see table). In spite of Thanksgiving, demand was reported good.

Haddock and other groundfish landings in November 1951 were particularly light and prices for fresh drawn large offshore haddock jumped 25.8 percent above October and were 13.4 percent higher than in November 1950. Frozen western halibut and frozen salmon also sold at higher prices, but these products were still priced below November 1950 quotations--16.7 percent and 0.7 percent, respectively. Due to particularly light production in the Great Lakes area, fresh-water fish prices in November 1951 were considerably higher than in November 1950. From October to November 1951, prices dropped for most fresh-water species, except lake trout at Chicago which registered a considerable increase. Drawn, dressed, or whole fin-fish prices in November were 1.8 percent above the corresponding month a year earlier and 9.3 percent above October 1951.

Processed fresh fish and shellfish prices in November were 3.4 percent higher than in the previous month and 12.7 percent above November 1950. Because of lighter production and a shortage of frozen haddock fillets, fresh haddock fillet prices climbed 9.7 percent from October to November 1951, and were 54.5 percent higher than in November 1950. Fresh headless shrimp in No-

GROUP, SUBGROUP, AND ITEM SPECIFICATION	POINT OF PRICING	UNIT	AVERAGE PRICES (\$)			INDEXES (1947 = 100)		
			Nov. 1951	Oct. 1951	Nov. 1950	Nov. 1951	Oct. 1951	Nov. 1950
ALL FISH AND SHELLFISH (Fresh, Frozen, and Canned)						111.2	106.4	109.2
Fresh and Frozen Fishery Products:						126.9	116.1	124.7
Drawn, Dressed, or Whole Finfish:								
Haddock, large, offshore, drawn, fresh	Boston	lb.	.14	.11	.12	145.3	115.5	128.1
Hallbut, western, 20/80 lbs., dressed, fresh or frozen	New York City	"	.33	.33	.40	96.6	94.8	116.0
Salmon, king, lge. & med., dressed, fresh or frozen	" " "	"	.54	.53	.55	132.9	130.1	133.9
Whitefish, mostly Lake Superior, drawn (dressed), fresh	Chicago	"	.51	.64	.52	145.9	184.9	149.6
Whitefish, mostly Lake Erie pound net, round, fresh	New York City	"	.55	.66	.53	123.5	149.2	120.7
Lake trout, domestic, mostly No. 1, drawn (dressed), fresh	Chicago	"	.57	.51	.48	125.2	111.4	104.3
Yellow pike, mostly Michigan (Lakes Michigan & Huron), round, fresh	New York City	"	.49	.49	.41	115.0	115.2	95.1
Processed, Fresh (Fish and Shellfish):						97.0	93.8	86.1
Filletts, haddock, small, skins on, 20-lb. tins	Boston	lb.	.39	.36	.25	140.1	127.7	90.7
Shrimp, lge. (26-30 count), headless, fresh or frozen	New York City	"	.50	.49	.51	72.0	71.1	73.6
Oysters, shucked, standards	Norfolk area	gal.	5.19	5.00	4.31	127.7	123.1	106.2
Processed, Frozen (Fish and Shellfish):						102.6	102.6	97.0
Filletts: Flounder (yellowtail), skinless, 10-lb. bxs.	Boston	lb.	.42	.42	.35	135.6	135.6	113.0
Haddock, small, 10-lb. cello-pack	"	"	.29	.26	.23	130.1	118.1	104.1
Ocean perch (rosefish), 10-lb. cello-pack	Gloucester	"	.26	.26	.26	130.0	128.5	130.0
Shrimp, lge. (26-30 count), 5-lb. bxs.	Chicago	"	.50	.53	.52	72.3	77.2	74.9
Canned Fishery Products:						109.0	106.8	112.5
Salmon, pink, No. 1 tall (16 oz.), 48 cans per case	Seattle	case	20.68	20.68	23.64	134.9	134.9	154.1
Tuna, light meat, solid pack, No. 2 tuna (7 oz.), 48 cans per case	Los Angeles	"	13.00	12.75	14.75	84.6	82.9	96.0
Sardines (pilchards), California, tomato pack, No. 1 oval (15 oz.), 48 cans per case	" "	"	7.20	6.75	6.25	80.5	75.5	69.9
Sardines, Maine, keyless oil, No. 2 drawn (3 1/2 oz.), 100 cans per case	New York City	"	10.70	9.83	5.25	104.9	96.4	51.5

November was quoted 1.3 percent higher, but still sold 2.2 percent below the corresponding month in 1950. Shucked oyster prices also increased 3.7 percent and were 20.2 percent higher than in November 1950. Demand for oysters has been particularly good this season.

From October to November, frozen headless shrimp prices continued to fall (6.3 percent), but this decline was offset by higher prices for frozen haddock fillets (10.2 percent) and frozen ocean perch fillets (1.2 percent). Flounder fillets remained unchanged at September prices. Compared with November 1950, frozen headless shrimp sold 3.5 percent lower, but frozen haddock fillets were priced 25 percent higher and frozen flounder fillets 20.0 percent higher. The index for processed frozen fish and shellfish for November 1951 was at the same level as in October, but 5.8 percent above November 1950.

The canned fishery products subgroup index continued to rise and in November 1951 was at 109.0 percent of the 1947 average--2.1 percent above October 1951, but 3.1 percent below November 1950. From October to November 1951, prices climbed 8.8 percent for canned Maine sardines, 6.6 percent for California sardines, and 2.1 percent for canned tuna, while canned pink salmon prices remained unchanged at September levels. Compared with November 1950, the month's prices were higher by 103.7 percent for Maine sardines and 15.2 percent for California sardines, but lower by 11.9 percent for tuna and 12.5 percent for pink salmon. The United States and Alaska pack of canned fish for the year 1951 was estimated at 790 million pounds as compared with 965 million pounds in 1950, due mainly to smaller packs of tuna, mackerel, and Maine and California sardines.

RETAIL PRICES, NOVEMBER 1951: Higher prices for all foods were paid by urban families of moderate incomes between mid-October and mid-November, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor. During the period, the retail price index for all foods rose 1.0 percent and it was 6.1 percent above mid-November 1950 (see table).

Item	Base	I N D E X E S		
		Nov. 15, 1951	Oct. 15, 1951	Nov. 15, 1950
All foods	1935-39 = 100	231.4	229.2	210.8
All fish and shellfish (fresh, frozen, and canned).	do	351.1	353.2	336.6
Fresh and frozen fish	1938-39 = 100	295.8	294.7	278.5
Canned salmon: pink	do	477.4	489.1	473.1

Contrary to the increased retail prices paid for all foods, fishery products prices at retail declined between October 15 and November 15, 1951, due mainly to lower prices for canned pink salmon. The adjusted retail price index for all fresh, frozen, and canned fish and shellfish went down to 351.1 percent (a 0.6 percent drop), but was still 4.3 percent higher than on November 15, 1950.

Following the pattern of the wholesale fish index, the retail fresh and frozen fish index climbed 0.4 percent between mid-October and mid-November to 295.8 percent of the 1938-39 average and this index was still 6.2 percent above the same period a year earlier.

Retail prices for canned pink salmon continued to decline. After reaching a peak for the year on May 15, 1951, these prices between May 15 and June 15 dropped and have continued their downward trend since then. The index for canned pink salmon on November 15, 1951, was 2.4 percent below the previous month, but 0.9 percent above mid-November 1950.

