

INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION OF FISHERY PRODUCTS BY U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INTERIOR BEGINS INSPECTION OF FISHERY PRODUCTS: Inspection and grading services for fishery products became the responsibility of the U. S. Department of the Interior on July 1, 1958. These responsibilities were recently transferred from the Department of Agriculture by the Bureau of the Budget in accordance with the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956. Regulations to govern the grading and inspection services as a function of the Department of the Interior were adopted by that Department on June 30. ^{1/}

Inspection and grading services are available on a fee basis to processors who meet the existing voluntary Federal standards of quality for fishery products. The standards are devised by the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and were previously made effective by the Department of Agriculture. After July 1, promulgation of voluntary United States standards for fishery products will also be made by the Department of the Interior. Standards in effect at present are for fish sticks, fish blocks from which the sticks are cut, and frozen raw breaded shrimp. Inspection services are also available to assure wholesomeness of the product and conformity to written specifications for fishery products not presently covered by established standards.

Fishery products labels referring to the Department of Agriculture inspection services will be approved by the Department of the Interior for continued use until



the supply is exhausted. The Federal shield will continue to be the background for the quality label under the Department of the Interior. There will be no essential change in the label declarations nor in the operations of the inspection and certification service.

Ten employees of the Department of Agriculture who have been engaged in fishery products inspection have been transferred to the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries which reassigned them to their posts in the New England States.

^{1/}See p. 93 of this issue.

An additional inspection corps of six persons was given specialized training necessary to perform this service. They were assigned where needed, mostly in the South Atlantic and Gulf States.

THREE TYPES OF INSPECTION SERVICES: At the present time there are three types of inspection services available to interested parties:

1. Continuous Inspection: This service provides that an inspector or inspectors be stationed at the plant during all shifts of the processing operation. He will check (a) plant personnel and equipment for sanitation, (b) the raw material for wholesomeness, (c) the processing of the finished product, and (d) select finished product samples for grading. When the final inspection of the finished product is made he will issue certificates attesting to the grade or quality and condition of the lot. He also furnishes the plant management with a daily inspection report commenting on the sanitary conditions and the results of the products inspected.

Continuous inspection services assure the processor and purchaser of satisfactory compliance with the requirements for wholesomeness of the raw materials used and of sanitation established for the handling and processing operations. The processor, in such case, may label his product as being packed under continuous inspection. Several prescribed labeling forms are available.

Costs of continuous inspection are nominal, averaging between \$7,000 and \$9,000 a year. Usually the costs are at the lower end of the range. Final decisions as to costs are reached through the negotiation of administrative contracts between the processor and the appropriate Government agency. Continuous inspection is necessary if the processor wishes to grade-label his product.

Applicants for continuous inspection must conform to certain basic requirements as to health of employees, plant arrangement, and processing techniques. These requirements are primarily intended to facilitate application of sanitary procedures. Minimum, sensible regulations as to health of employees are prescribed. Blueprints of the plant layout are studied and a plant survey made prior to suggestion of any changes which may be necessary in processing techniques. A suitable space for use by the inspector, as an office and laboratory, must be provided. Equipment cleaning requirements are sensible and realistic.

The continuous inspection is based on use of the applicable U. S. Standards of grades for the particular product, if promulgated, or upon Federal, Military Quartermaster Corps, Veterans Administration, or other suitable and satisfactory sets of specifications. Grading services, if applicable and requested, are rendered by the inspector as well. In the latter case, the pack may be distinctively labeled as to grade and to the fact that it was produced under continuous inspection.

The values received from continuous inspection are not alone those of assurance of wholesomeness and quality in the product and the advertising value of the inspection service seal where used. The resident inspector is a source of ideas, of advice and, when his duties permit, of assistance to the research staff at the plant.

2. Lot Sampling: The inspector or official sampler draws random samples from specific lots specified by the interested party. The samples are examined to determine compliance to a Federal Standard or Specification or to any specification approved by the Bureau. An official certificate is issued denoting the grade or quality and condition of the lot.

Any interested person may request the services of an inspector for the sampling, grading or loading of a specific lot of a product. The costs average \$4.50 per hour, which includes travel time. Such services will be given provided an inspector is available and the facilities and working conditions at the point of inspection

are satisfactory. The addresses of the inspectors nearest to your plant may be obtained from the local U. S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries representative.

Oral requests may be made for inspection services, but should be confirmed immediately in writing. An application should include: (1) the name of the product to be inspected, (2) name and address of packer, (3) location of product to be tested, (4) its lot or car number, (5) codes or other identification marks, (6) the number of containers, (7) the type and size of containers, (8) the interest of the applicant in the product, (9) whether the lot has been inspected previous to the application by any Federal agency, and (10) the purpose for which inspection is desired.

Inspection services may be performed on the basis of the appropriate U. S. standards for grades of fishery products; Federal, Military, Quartermaster Corps or Veterans Administration specifications; written buyer and seller contract specifications; or any specification which is supplied by the applicant and is of acceptable content.

If the inspector, or a duly authorized and licensed representative, personally samples the lot presented for inspection, he may so attest by issuing a certificate of sampling.

Normally, the inspector will then certify the product on an official document as to (1) quality, (2) condition, or (3) both quality and condition, depending upon the service requested. In addition, an inspector may, upon request, check the loading of a specific lot of fishery products. He will then attest, by an official certificate of loading, that a certain specific lot was loaded, that packing and icing procedures, as applicable, were of a certain nature, and that the car was officially sealed. The certificates of sampling, inspection and of loading constitute a complete assurance that the product, at time of loading, was of the grade requested and was shipped in accordance with instructions. Reports are promptly prepared and forwarded to the applicant. In certain cases, telegraphic reports, at the request and expense of the applicant, may be made prior to preparation of the official documents.

Since, usually, no certain knowledge as to compliance with sanitary and processing requirements is available to the inspector, the lot so inspected may not be labeled as to grade on the individual package. It may, however, be so advertised in accompanying material. Further, the master cartons are stamped with an official seal attesting to the fact of official sampling by an accredited inspector. The carton stamp and grade certificate then constitute an assurance as to product quality when forwarded.

3. Unofficial Samples: This service consists of examining samples as described in Lot Sampling, submitted by an interested party. A certificate is issued concerning the particular samples examined.

Inspections can cover factors other than quality of the product that are necessary to give the applicant an accurate description of the quality and condition of the samples. Factors having a bearing on the market value of the product are considered, such as condition of the labels and packaging. A special analysis also can be made upon request.

RELATION OF LABELING TO STANDARDS AND INSPECTION: Any Packer may label his products Grade A, Grade B, etc., provided that they comply with the requirements of the grades set forth in the United States standards for the product. But only fishery products packed under continuous inspection of the U. S. Department of the Interior (U. S. D. I.) may include "U. S." before the grade designation. The packer and distributor are both responsible for the accuracy of statements on the labels. If the products are not of the grade claimed, the packer and distributor are subject to penalties for misbranding under the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic

Act. Those interested in the official grade marks permitted by the U. S. Department of the Interior should refer to the U. S. D. I. Regulations governing Inspection and Certification of processed Fishery Products, promulgated by the Secretary of the Interior in the Federal Register of July 3, 1958. 1/

COSTS OF INSPECTION SERVICES: Fees are charged for inspection and grading services to reimburse the Federal Government as nearly as possible for the actual cost. The fee is paid to the Treasurer of the United States through the Bureau's Regional Offices.

Applicants and persons interested in receiving information concerning the inspection and certification of fishery products should write to one of the following addresses:

(1) Chief, Branch of Technology, Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, U. S. Department of the Interior, Washington 25, D. C.

(2) Chief, North Atlantic Technological Research, Fishery Technological Laboratory, U. S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, 61 Sumner Street, East Boston 28, Mass.

(3) Chief, Middle and South Atlantic Technological Research, Fishery Technological Laboratory, U. S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Post Office Box 128, College Park, Md.

HOW VOLUNTARY U. S. STANDARDS FOR FISHERY PRODUCTS ARE DEVELOPED: Owing to the critical shortage of technical manpower and to the multitude of fishery products, a system has been developed to organize the process of development of individual fishery products standards along orderly economical lines. The system used at present is as follows:

The first requirement is the full realization on the part of industry of the need for standards for a particular product. The National Fisheries Institute, under the terms of its contract with the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, has acted as liaison agent between industry and Government, making standards information available to the former and advising the latter as to the desires of the industry. The benefits of standards in promoting orderly marketing procedures are pointed out to the industry members.

An industry statement is forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior requesting that such development work be initiated. Such a request should represent the thinking of a substantial portion of the processors producing the particular product for which the standards are desired. The product, in addition, should be one of such relative importance in the fisheries industry as to justify the expenditure by the Department of moneys and of valuable scientific manpower.

After acceptance of the request by the Secretary of the Interior, the project is scheduled for initiation as soon as availability of funds and manpower permit. Qualified technical people in the industry are requested to furnish such information as they may possess. Industry members at the policy level are contacted as to the acceptability of proposed requirements to prevent inclusion of unrealistic features in the standards.

The area technical people work with the designated Service representative to establish the principal quality factors of the product together with an assessment of the relative importance of these factors. Information on regional industrial techniques of evaluation according to quality gradations is included for study and for incorporation, if found applicable, in the standards.

1/1 See p. 93 of this issue.

Ancillary standards for product-related matters, such as packing or packaging, may be developed if considered necessary to the success of the standards of quality. Information as to product forms, sanitation requirements, handling, processing and distribution techniques is necessary to develop intelligently a realistic set of standards.

The industry policy group advises on the general acceptability of the tentative requirements of the provisional draft of standards and inspectors handbook as developed from the information supplied by the industry technical committee and by the Bureau's technological laboratories. The recommendations of the groups are considered and revisions deemed necessary are made.

The proposed voluntary U. S. standards are submitted for promulgation in the Federal Register in the form of a Notice of Proposed Rule Making. A 30-day period for further industry comments is then allowed prior to insertion in the Federal Register of a Notice of Final Rule Making. On the effective date of this Notice the standards become an official documentation of the definition of a product and of its several grades of quality and condition. The procedures of development, throughout, are such as result in the utmost cooperation between industry and Government. Standards, so developed, reflect the earnest desire of the industry for enhanced quality, and yet, are realistic and capable of being applied under commercial conditions.



IRRADIATED FOODS--A GLIMPSE IN THE FUTURE

In 1954 the United States Quartermaster Corps, in cooperation with several other government agencies, began investigating the possibilities of a new method of food processing--irradiation of foods with gamma rays. Foods given a proper dosage of gamma rays can remain at ordinary storage temperature for longer periods of time without spoiling. Low amounts of radiation inhibit the sprouting of potatoes, carrots, and onions. A slightly higher dosage controls trichina in pork. The higher the dosage the more spoilage microorganisms are destroyed.

When the food has gone through a radiation bath and is deemed safe for shipment, it goes to Army installations and universities which further test the food for flavor, toxicity, and radiation. At present, only volunteers have tested these irradiated foods and have found no harmful consequences.

This new process of food preservation is a glimpse into the future that the Army is hoping will prove successful. Among other irradiated foods that have shown promise at the close of 1957 are blanched scallops, halibut, oysters, and shrimp.