

# FISH CONSUMPTION BY FOOD STAMP AND RELATED LOW - INCOME FAMILIES

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## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Total consumption of fishery products increased from the April-May to the September-October 1961 survey period among families using food coupons in Detroit, but decreased among similar families in rural Fayette County.

Increases in the consumption of canned fish among families in Detroit accounted for most of the increased use of fish in that area. The added purchasing power of the food coupons appeared to have been the major factor causing this increase in Detroit.

Fewer families using fishery products, plus smaller quantities by users caused the decline in consumption among families using food coupons in rural Fayette County from the spring to the fall survey periods. Seasonal consumption patterns for fish in that area appear to account for the change.

The average retail value per pound of fish--fresh, frozen, and canned--used by most low-income households in both areas during the September-October survey period was higher than the value of that consumed in the April-May period. However, the retail value per pound was the same for the different forms of fish between survey areas.

## BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Data from an experimental pilot Food Stamp Program started in mid-1961 was evaluated to determine the Program's effectiveness in improving diets of needy families and in expanding the demand for food products.

Special household food consumption studies were made of low-income families living in the city of Detroit, Mich., and of rural low-income families in Fayette County, Pa., a bituminous coal mining area. Conditions of chronic unemployment existed in both areas. Information on consumption for a one-week period was obtained both before (April-May 1961) and during (September-October 1961) the operation of the Food Stamp Program. Timing of the studies made possible an evaluation of the effects of the Direct Distribution Program on food consumption of the families not participating in the Food Stamp Program. With the beginning of the Food Stamp Program, the distribution of Federally-donated commodities was discontinued in the pilot areas.

Consumption data were also obtained from low-income families who were ineligible for participation in either public food program but whose incomes were less than \$5,000 per year. Data from those families were used for control purposes to help evaluate seasonal changes in consumption.

The total sample for the study included 1,268 families in Detroit and 837 families in rural Fayette County. These evaluations, however, are based upon foods consumed by matched groups of households or families residing in the same dwelling unit with the same family income (limited changes permitted) during both the Direct Distribution and Food Stamp Program survey periods.

As of February 1962, more than 140,000 food-stamp participants were receiving food coupons in 8 economically depressed areas of the United States. In addition to the two areas mentioned above, pilot Food Stamp Programs are also operating in the following areas:

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Franklin County, Ill.; Floyd County, Ky.; The Virginia-Hibbing-Nashwauk areas in northern Minnesota; Silver Bow County, Mont.; San Miguel County, N. Mex.; and McDowell County, W. Va.

Authorization for expansion of the pilot Food Stamp Program has been announced for the following areas:

Independence County, Ark.  
Nash County, N. C.  
Multnomah County, Ore.  
Luzerne County, Pa.  
Jefferson County, Ala.  
Mendocino County, Calif.  
City of St. Louis, Mo.  
Choctaw County, Okla.  
Grays Harbor and Pacific  
Counties, Wash.  
Douglas County, Wis.

Dickenson, Lee, and Wise  
Counties, Va.  
Logan, Mingo, and Wayne  
Counties, W. Va.  
Vanderburgh County, Ind.  
Knott County, Ky.  
Evangeline Parish, La.  
Lucas County, Ohio  
Grundy, Hamilton, Marion  
and Sequatchie Counties,  
Tenn.

(The Program is also authorized to be extended to the balance of St. Louis and Itasca Counties, Minn.).

The percentage of food stamp families using fish in both areas during the spring survey period was almost identical to the percentage of all families using fish in the entire United States during the household food consumption survey of 1955 (U. S. Department of Agriculture 1956).

Total fish consumed by all households includes that purchased and received as a gift or pay.

#### FOOD STAMP FAMILIES

Food stamp families are those households whose incomes were low enough to be classified as needy by local welfare officials. The majority of those families received donated food commodities under the Direct Distribution Program during the spring survey period. During the fall period, food stamp families exchanged the amount of money they would normally be expected to spend on food for food coupons of a higher monetary value.

DETROIT: Per capita increase from the spring to the fall in the consumption of fish by food stamp families in Detroit was attributed largely to an increased use of canned fish (table on following page). More food stamp families served canned fish. Also, members of those families were consuming larger quantities than in the preprogram period. The consumption of canned fish also increased among other low-income families in Detroit; however, the increase was larger among food stamp households. The increases may be attributed primarily to the effects of the Food Stamp Program and secondarily, to seasonal consumption factors.

Generally, the retail value per pound of canned fish consumed by food stamp families during either time period was below that of any of the other household groups surveyed. However, the retail value per pound of canned fish used by most low-income families, food stamp families included, was between 8 and 11 cents a pound above that used in the spring. This shows a shift toward the use of higher-valued canned items, such as canned salmon, by the Detroit families during the fall period.

In both time periods the kinds of canned fish used by most low-income families in Detroit in order of total quantity were: tuna, salmon, and sardines.

Consumption of Fish by Groups of Low-Income Families During a One-Week Period in Detroit, Mich., and Rural Fayette County, Pa., April-May-September-October 1961

Area and Type of Product	Season	Food Stamp Households <sup>1/</sup>			Direct Distribution Households <sup>2/</sup>			Ineligible Households <sup>3/</sup>		
		Families Using	Average Per Capita		Families Using	Average Per Capita		Families Using	Average Per Capita	
		Percent	Quantity Pounds	Value Cents	Percent	Quantity Pounds	Value Cents	Percent	Quantity Pounds	Value Cents
<b>DETROIT:</b>										
Fresh and frozen . . . .	spring	43.7	0.28	9	52.9	0.44	16	46.2	0.45	20
	fall	47.1	0.26	12	39.2	0.45	16	35.9	0.37	18
Canned . . . . .	spring	32.2	0.08	4	28.4	0.08	4	25.6	0.10	6
	fall	49.4	0.20	11	34.3	0.11	7	30.8	0.12	8
Other <sup>4/</sup> . . . . .	spring	1.1	5/	5/	2.0	0.01	5/	2.6	0.02	1
	fall	5.7	0.01	1	1.0	5/	5/	2.6	0.01	1
FISH, TOTAL . . . . .	spring	62.1	0.36	13	66.7	0.53	20	57.7	0.57	27
	fall	73.6	0.47	24	64.7	0.56	23	59.0	0.50	27
<b>RURAL FAYETTE COUNTY:</b>										
Fresh and frozen . . . .	spring	31.4	0.19	6	20.4	0.11	4	44.1	0.20	10
	fall	28.2	0.12	5	16.7	0.08	3	22.5	0.09	4
Canned . . . . .	spring	24.3	0.06	3	9.3	0.01	1	16.2	0.05	4
	fall	26.8	0.06	3	16.7	0.02	2	18.9	0.06	3
Other <sup>4/</sup> . . . . .	spring	2.9	0.01	1	1.9	0.02	5/	2.7	0.01	1
	fall	0.0	0.00	0	0.0	0.00	0	2.7	0.01	1
FISH, TOTAL . . . . .	spring	52.9	0.26	10	27.8	0.14	5	55.9	0.26	15
	fall	47.9	0.18	8	31.5	0.10	5	37.8	0.16	8

<sup>1/</sup>Eighty-two percent of the families in Detroit, and 93 percent in rural Fayette County received donated foods in the spring survey period. In the fall period, these families received food coupons.

<sup>2/</sup>Direct Distribution families received donated foods during the spring survey period, but were not participating in either public food program in the fall.

<sup>3/</sup>Ineligible families are low-income families who did not participate in either Program during either survey period because their income, though below \$5,000 per year, was too high for participation.

<sup>4/</sup>Shellfish, smoked and cured fish.

<sup>5/</sup>Less than .005.

The proportion of the food dollar consumed as fish by food stamp families increased about one percent--from nearly 3 percent in the spring, to about 4 percent in the fall. Rises in the retail value per pound and quantity of canned fish consumed by food stamp households accounted for most of this increased share.

The proportion of fish consumed as fresh and frozen by families using food coupons in Detroit decreased to 55 percent in the fall, from 78 percent in the spring. This decline resulted more from the relative increase in the use of canned fish, rather than from a large decline in the actual quantity of fresh and frozen fish consumed. The decline in the proportion of fresh and frozen fish consumed was smaller among other low-income families than was noted among food stamp households.

The percentage of households in the food stamp family group in Detroit using fresh and frozen fish increased from the spring to fall periods; whereas, all other family groups showed a decline. Although the average retail value of fresh and frozen fish consumed by families using food coupons in Detroit was smaller than the value for other groups, it was only among food stamp households that the value increased during the fall period. These findings indicate that the added purchasing power of the food coupons enabled more families to consume fresh and frozen fish and of a higher retail value per pound.

**RURAL FAYETTE COUNTY:** In contrast to Detroit food stamp households, the per capita consumption of all fish consumed by families using food coupons in rural Fayette County decreased to less than one-fifth pound in the fall, from approximately one-fourth pound in the spring or by 30 percent. Lower usage rates for fresh and frozen fish accounted for most of this decline. Fewer families served fish in those forms, and family members consumed smaller quantities during the fall period. Except for a relatively large increase in the retail value per pound of fish used by those households, this pattern was quite similar to that of the other household groups surveyed in the rural areas. These changes were similar to the seasonal fish consumption pattern followed by other rural low-income families in Fayette County during the fall season.

Total consumption of canned fish by families using food coupons in rural Fayette County was small and remained constant during both survey periods. The order of importance--in terms of pounds--of canned fish consumed by those families was the same as that for the Detroit families. The percentage of the food dollar spent for fish by rural families using coupons was between 1 and 2 percent of the total food budget in both time periods.

#### DIRECT DISTRIBUTION FAMILIES

Direct distribution families are also needy households whose diets were supplemented during the spring survey period by Federally donated foods. During the fall period, some of those households did not participate in the Food Stamp Program. Since the Direct Distribution Program is discontinued in areas where Food Stamp Programs are implemented, families choosing not to participate in the latter program are no longer provided with Federally donated foods.

Although the relative use of each form--fresh, frozen and canned--among Detroit direct-distribution households varied between survey periods, total fish consumption was about the same. An increase in the per capita consumption of fresh and frozen fish by users offset a 25-percent decline in the number of families using those forms.

The increased use of canned fish resulted from a slight increase in the number of families serving, and also from larger per capita quantities by the using families. Similar shifts in the consumption of those fishery products by ineligible low-income families indicated that the changes probably resulted from seasonal factors.

Total fish consumed by rural Fayette County direct-distribution households decreased slightly from the spring to the fall survey periods. Fish consumption in those households was considerably less than that consumed by rural food stamp families. Among rural direct distribution households, the total value of all fish consumed was less than one percent of the value of all foods consumed by those households.

#### INELIGIBLE FAMILIES

Ineligible families are low-income households whose annual income, though less than \$5,000, exceeded the eligibility limits for participation in either the Food Stamp or Direct Distribution Programs during both survey periods. Those families lived in the same area as did those of the food stamp and direct distribution households.

The purpose for studying this group of families was to provide a basis for determining seasonal changes in consumption between the two survey periods. Food consumption by those families was not influenced by either of the two public food distribution programs.

Total consumption of fish by ineligible families in Detroit decreased from the earlier survey period. This decline resulted from a lower per capita use among the using families. Decreases in the total consumption of fresh and frozen fish was mainly responsible for the decline. More families used canned fish in the fall; however, the per capita consumption by the users declined from the spring period.

In rural Fayette County total consumption of fish by ineligible families also declined from the spring period. The decline resulted from fewer families using along with a slight decline in the per capita consumption by the users. Like similar families in Detroit, this decline was caused primarily by a decrease in the consumption of the fresh and frozen forms of fish. Except for canned fish in rural Fayette County, the retail value per pound of all forms of fish used increased from the spring to the fall period.

#### LITERATURE CITED

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