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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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SUPPLY VARIES BUT FISH ARE AVAILABLE

If the American housewife fails to find canned salmon on her grocer's shelves at any time during 1956, she will find plenty of fish sticks in the freezers, the Commercial Fisheries Outlook for the first quarter of 1956 indicates.

This publication which is issued quarterly by the Fish and Wildlife Service shows also that the Maine sardine pack is the lowest it has been in fifteen years but that the tuna supply is ample--and that while cod and haddock fillets, halibut, swordfish, shrimp, salt herring and some fresh-water fish supplies are well below the five-year average, there are plenty of flounder fillets, whiting, and spiny lobster tails. Also that some of those who may find canned salmon short might want to settle on smoked salmon, of which there probably will be plenty in the larger cities.

All of this would indicate a generally steady market for most of the major fishery products with slight price increases for the items which are in short supply.

The salmon pack for 1955 was exceptionally small, both in American and British Columbia fisheries. One result of this small pack is that the packers report that already 95 percent of their 1955 output has gone into channels of trade. The Alaskan salmon pack for 1955 was 2,385,000 standard cases, 710,000 cases below the 1954 output. British Columbia canners produced 1,406,000 cases, or 304,000 cases below the 1954 mark.

Shrimp prices which advanced rather unexpectedly during the autumn months will continue high through Lent. Hurricanes interfered with shrimping in the Gulf of Mexico during the fall months, resulting in a declining catch. With the short supply, many buyers apparently entered the market simultaneously with a resulting rise in prices. Some buyer resistance was noted late in December but since holdings will probably not increase this quarter, prices will continue at a high level.

While the Maine sardine pack took a sharp drop during the year, the California pack showed an increase but the strong export demand which is in evidence enhances marketing prospects for the California product.

Hurricanes also hit the oyster industry during the past two years and the supplies this season will be light. The market is strong and prices will be higher than they were a year ago.

Because of bad weather in the closing days of the halibut season in the Pacific, the catch was down 13 million pounds. Storage holdings are down five million pounds. All of which seems to indicate that there will be an increase in halibut prices.

America will experience its usual midwinter lull in fresh-water fish production, but imports from Canada are expected to follow their usual high midwinter pattern.

Prices on cod, haddock and ocean perch fillets will rise slightly and then steady.

But America's newest fish morsel, the fish stick, is stepping into a lot of gaps. Production for the first nine months of 1955 was up 45 percent above the like period in 1954. Supplies at present are ample and the prices are competitive.

Copies of the Commercial Fisheries Outlook for January-March, 1956, Fishery Leaflet 336aa, may be obtained from the Division of Information, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington 25, D. C.

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