



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

For Immediate Release PMs OF TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1943

Although landings of pilchards or California sardines were 18 percent larger during the first two months of the current season than during the corresponding period last year, the pack of canned sardines has declined approximately 4 percent because of a serious shortage of cannery labor, Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes said today.

Because of the number of hand operations involved in canning sardines, the labor shortage in the canneries is more acute than in the reduction plants where machines for the processing of pilchard meal and oil can be operated by relatively few workers.

Coordinator Ickes pointed out that San Francisco and Monterey, where a large number of sardine canneries are located, are centers of war industry and that the housing shortage makes it impossible to bring in additional cannery labor. A plan to transport cannery workers to and from surrounding rural areas so far has not proved feasible because of restrictions on the use of buses imposed by the Office of Defense Transportation, he said.

California landings for August and September amounted to 165,552 tons of pilchards, compared with 139,711 tons during the same months in 1942. Heavy landings at San Francisco, where the catch increased more than 50 percent compared with last year, offset the relatively poor fishing in the Monterey area and were responsible for the increase in total production.

The two-month pack of canned sardines was 721,354 cases, compared with 748,690 cases last year. While the San Francisco pack was larger than last year, it is considered small in view of the heavy landings at that port.

Reflecting the necessary diversion of an increased proportion of the landings to reduction plants, production of meal and oil showed an upward trend. At the end of September, the season's production of pilchard oil was 6,828,441 gallons, compared with 5,301,713 gallons for the same period last season - an increase of 29 percent. The output of meal showed an increase of 17 percent, from 21,967 tons during the first two months of the 1942-43 season to 25,717 tons in August and September, 1943. Pilchards are one of the most important sources of animal feeding meals and of oils valued for their vitamin content and for numerous industrial uses.