



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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The dogfish shark, once considered a pest by fishermen because of its destructive habits, has become the nation's chief source of vitamin A, replacing the soupfin shark which in 1943 provided 42 per cent of the vitamin A output of U. S. producers, the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior reported today.

At the same time, Service officials called attention to a sharp decline in the total production of vitamin A, which totaled 30.1 trillion units for the first six months of 1944, or 35 per cent below last year's production of 46.6 trillion units during the same period.

Of the total production this year, livers of dogfish accounted for 9.7 trillion units and soupfin shark livers for 8.6 trillion. Although the dogfish livers yield an oil of considerably lower potency than the valuable soupfin livers -- averaging about 13,000 units per gram compared with 105,000 units -- the much larger poundage of dogfish livers landed caused vitamin A production from the dogfish to exceed that from any other source.

Purchases of dogfish livers by processors of vitamin oils totaled 2,816,000 pounds from January 1 to the end of June, 1944, which was about four times the purchases during the same period last year.

While landings of dogfish livers rose to unprecedented levels, the yield of the soupfin shark fishery continued the decline which first became evident last fall. Purchases of soupfin livers fell from 685,000 pounds during the first half of 1943 to 369,000 pounds this year.

According to the normal course of the fishery, which is centered in Seattle, even larger catches of dogfish may be expected during the remaining portion of the year, while the yield of soupfins usually is about the same as in the first 6-month period.

The dogfish of the Pacific coast of the United States is a small gray shark about 4 feet long and is closely related to the dogfish of the Atlantic coast, the south Pacific, and the Indian ocean. It is found from San Diego as far north as the Aleutian Islands. Before the development of the vitamin industry fishermen generally considered it a pest because of its habit of tearing holes in their nets and also because of its voracious appetite for fish. The dogfish bears a small, sharp spine on each of the two fins on the back; it is said to use these for defense, curling up like a bow to strike. Like most other sharks, it produces fully developed young instead of depositing eggs.

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Supplying the booming market for dogfish livers is a fleet enlarged by the addition of many boats normally engaged in other fisheries. Many of these boats are fishing as far north as Southeastern Alaska, and are devoting their entire time to dogfish.

During the first six months of 1944, fishermen were paid an average price of 54 cents per pound for dogfish livers, compared with 38 cents in 1943. The average price paid for soupfin livers was \$4.41 this year, as against \$3.32 last year.

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