

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Plentiful supplies of fish, including a wide variety of marine and fresh water species, are available throughout the country for the Lenten season, the Fish and Wildlife Service reported today.

Not only is there a large quantity of frozen fish on hand - holdings at the first of March were believed to be about 100,000,000 pounds - but as the spring fishing season gets under way market supplies of fresh sea foods will increase in quantity and variety, according to Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, director of the Service.

In New England, center of the fresh fish industry, production has suffered somewhat since the first of the year because of a labor disagreement affecting the large trawlers at Boston, but is expected to pick up rapidly as soon as the large boats resume active fishing. Many of the Gloucester trawlers, which have been fishing off the Virginia Capes during the winter, are now returning to their home port and will give a further boost to New England Production, Dr. Gabrielson said.

The first mackerel of the year should appear in the markets during Lent. Mackerel seiners in New England ports are now getting ready for the opening of the mackerel season - probably about the end of March - when the mackerel first move in from their offshore wintering grounds.

In the Great Lakes area, fresh water fish such as lake trout and pike should become more plentiful during the latter part of March, when fishing ordinarily is resumed in the northern lakes.

Shad from Georgia and South Carolina is now plentiful in the markets, and the Chesapeake Bay fisheries for this species will open up before the end of March.

The shad runs are normally followed by croakers, sea trout, butterfish, scup and other species that winter offshore and move in to bays and coastal waters in the spring. Last spring, however, the runs of croakers came unusually early, appearing in the pound nets of the Chesapeake Bay along with shad and herring.

The catch of shrimp, the most important sea food of the South, should pick up during the next few weeks for a brief period. An increase in shrimp production normally occurs in the spring when the large or "jumbo" sizes are taken just before they begin an offshore migration into deep water.

The Fish and Wildlife Service reported that supplies of frozen fish and shellfish are well distributed throughout the country and that good quantities of practically all the common varieties are available.

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