



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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RETURN SEEN OF PACIFIC PILCHARD (OR SARDINE)

An upswing in the landings of the Pacific pilchard was noted this past year, with reported landings of 600,000,000 pounds of the fish, Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman stated today.

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service statistics show that pilchard landings had reached an all-time low of 272,000,000 pounds in 1947, contrasting to the approximate 1,200,000,000 average of prewar years -- which had attained a peak in 1936 of 1,500,000,000 pounds landed.

The Pacific pilchard, or sardine, supported the largest fishery in the Western Hemisphere during prewar years -- nearly 25 percent of all the fish caught in the United States. But, for reasons largely unknown, commercial fishermen were unable to find the fish in normal quantities after 1944. By 1947, the total catch had declined to about a fifth of the average catch for more than a decade previous.

In the calendar year 1949, about two-thirds of the Pacific pilchard or sardine catch was canned for human consumption. In 1940 only about one-third of the catch was packed as sardines. The remainder of the catch was processed into meal for use in domestic stock feeds, and into oil for feed and industrial uses.

The oil is very largely used for such purposes as stock and poultry feed supplements because it supplies valuable vitamins. A great deal is used for making soaps, linoleums, paints, and in various manufacturing processes. The meal is a valuable protein concentrate used in stock feed.

An important feature of canned sardines, at present price levels, is that they are one of the lowest priced protein foods on the market. The present demand by consumers for sardines shows a marked increase -- indicating that consumers think sardines are not only good eating, but also "budget balancers".

When the canning of sardines started more than 25 years ago in southern California the little fish were canned in small, square cans with oil after the French manner, but as the great canning industry grew, utilizing the adults of the species, the larger fish were packed in one pound cans (frequently in tomato sauce) -- but are still known the world over as California sardines. From British Columbia down through Washington and Oregon, however, they are generally called pilchards.

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