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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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MARKETS FOR FISHERY PRODUCTS EXPECTED TO BE GENERALLY STEADY

Markets for edible fishery products are expected to be generally steady during the first quarter of 1955, with a firmer tone anticipated toward the end of the quarter, according to the Quarterly Outlook for Marketing Fishery Products, January - March 1955, a report issued today by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

As a rule, production of fishery products is lower in the first quarter of the year because of inclement weather.

In analyzing the general fishery situation for the current quarter, the report states that three relatively new products--fish sticks, frozen shrimp soup and frozen oyster stew--are creating greater demand for ground-fish, for small size shrimp, and for oysters. The production of fish sticks reached about 50 million pounds in 1954, as compared to seven and one-half million pounds for 1953, and negligible quantities in the previous year.

"If consumers exhibit the same demand for frozen shrimp soup as they have for fish sticks, the demand for small and tiny shrimp will increase many fold. Frozen oyster stew may affect the market for not only fresh oysters but canned oysters as well."

The market for ground-fish fillets will be fairly steady, with some slowness for small haddock fillets. A joint Government-industry promotion campaign now underway is expected to improve the market for small haddock fillets by reducing current inventories to more normal levels. With the exception of pollock, the supply of ground-fish fillets is liberal. Cold-storage holdings on December 1, 1954, were 67 percent higher than in the same period of 1953. Imports of ground-fish fillets for the first 10 months of 1954 were well ahead of the comparable period in 1953.

A weak market is forecast for halibut because supplies are liberal but demand is moderate.

A firm market is anticipated for fresh and frozen and canned salmon. The supply of salmon is moderate and with little production expected during the first quarter, the demand will be active.

The market for sardines will be dull, with a moderate to liberal supply. The Maine sardine pack for the 1954 season was slightly under three million cases. Steady prices for this product are anticipated for the first quarter of 1955. The market for Pacific sardines will be unsettled due to the liberal supply of domestically packed sardines and competition from imported sardines not-in-oil,

primarily from Japan and the Union of South Africa. The absence of Pacific sardines from the domestic canned fish market for two years will affect the demand since other products have been substituted.

Canned tuna faces a dull market, with supplies liberal and demand moderate.

Both oysters and Dungeness crabs will be in full production on the Pacific Coast in the first quarter but crabs on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts will be in light supply. Oyster production will decline in March along the Atlantic Coast but will show a firm market, with light supply and good demand. Oyster canneries on the Gulf Coast will be in full operation during the quarter.

The market for fresh and frozen shrimp will be unsettled due to heavy supply. Cold-storage holdings of shrimp hit a record peak of just under 33 million pounds on December 1, 1954. Imports for the first 10 months of 1954 were six percent ahead of last year for the comparable period. Low prices are anticipated until stocks have been reduced.

For most varieties of fresh-water fish, the domestic supply will be light during January and February, with the market being supplied principally by Canada. Supplies of whitefish and yellow pike will be light to moderate and light for lake trout. Lake herring and sauger pike will be in liberal supply. With a generally lighter production during the first quarter, prices will remain steady for most species.

The fish oil market will be firm with supply moderate and demand good. Total production of fish oil for the first 10 months of 1954 exceeded 18 million gallons, the most of which was menhaden oil. Prices for menhaden oil have remained steady due to a better than average export market. Exports of fish oils in 1954 were 52 percent ahead of 1953.

The market for fish meal will be steady. Supplies are moderate and the demand will be good. The production of fish meal was average and the use of fish meal for poultry feed should be high, resulting in a healthy market.

The report, entitled Quarterly Outlook for Marketing Fishery Products, January-March 1955, is designated as Fishery Leaflet 336w. Copies may be obtained free of charge from the Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Information, Washington 25, D. C.

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