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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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GENERALLY STEADY MARKETS AND FIRM PRICES PREDICTED FOR FISHERY PRODUCTS

Markets for most of the major fishery products are expected to be steady with firm prices during the fourth quarter of 1955, according to the Commercial Fisheries Outlook, October-December 1955, issued today by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Fishing in general becomes more difficult as colder weather sets in resulting in lowered landings. The North Pacific halibut fishing season closed September 21. Salmon fishing on the Pacific Coast will be limited to a few scattered fall catches. The tuna canning industry will operate at a moderate level. Groundfish landings in New England will also decline with demand being met to a major degree by supplies in cold storage.

Cold storage holdings of most of the major fisheries are at high levels. However, holdings are not expected to be as high as during the fourth quarter of 1954. Demand for frozen fishery products will pick up the beginning of this quarter, although there will be some slackening during the Christmas and New Year holidays.

The fishing industry started the quarter by promoting its products with a theme of "Join the Fish Parade", during National Fish Week, October 3-8. National Tuna Week will be held November 3-12.

Several kinds of highly desirable shellfish are expected to be abundant this quarter, including oysters, shrimp, hard clams, Pacific Coast dungeness crabs in December and Atlantic and Gulf Coast blue crabs in October and November.

Cold storage holdings of freshwater fish in both the United States and Canada are at their seasonal peak this quarter. Freshwater species expected to be in good supply are lake herring, sauger, sucker, yellow perch, and yellow pike. Lake trout and whitefish from Lakes Michigan and Superior will find ready markets with firm prices.

Markets for fish meal and oil will be firm with some upward pressure as supplies become more difficult to obtain. Lower prices for feedstuffs and feed grains will tend to hold fish meal prices down in the face of an expanded world demand.

"At a glance," the outlook for some of the major fisheries is as follows:

Halibut - Supplies estimated 10 million pounds short of 1954's high level, but near the supplies of 1953.

Salmon - Very short canned pack for most species, so look for active demand in the fourth quarter.

Groundfish - Markets will be steady for cod, haddock and ocean perch since cold storage holdings are moderate for each. Prices will increase slightly, but firm up toward the end of the quarter.

Fish sticks - Production for the first half of 1955 is well ahead of 1954. Cold storage holdings of blocks and slabs have maintained an average of nearly 12 million pounds the first six months of 1955. Cold weather will stimulate sales and create a steady market.

Canned tuna - Production slowed by cannery labor disputes, but inventories still high in October. National Tuna Week, November 3-12 will help promote sales.

Sardines - Maine sardine pack lowest since 1938, so prices will increase. Pacific sardines had just appeared along the California coast as the quarter started. The cannery labor dispute and marketing difficulties will keep pack short.

Shrimp - Maximum production is expected in the Gulf area, where over 90 percent of all fresh shrimp are landed. Prices are expected to decline moderately.

Oysters - The main production season occurs this quarter. The greatest problem will be supplying demand. Prices will be firm.

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