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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FISH VOLUME AND VALUE DROP BELOW 1954 LEVEL

The 1955 fish catch was two percent below that of 1954 in weight and 10 percent lower in value, according to preliminary estimates released today by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

These estimates which are preliminary and subject to some modification show that the total catch made by American fisheries in 1955 was 4,600,000,000 pounds compared with 4,700,000,000 in 1954. The preliminary estimate of the value indicates that the money paid the fishermen for the delivered catch will be about 10 percent below the \$360,000,000 paid last year.

The loss in value was due to the sharp declines in the catches of higher priced fish especially salmon, tuna and halibut, Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay said. The loss in volume of these fish was compensated to a great extent by increases on the catches of cheaper fish such as whiting, Alaska herring and a record catch of menhaden.

Menhaden accounted for almost 40 percent of total United States and Alaska catch, which includes nearly 200 items. Menhaden are used for fishmeal and oil. The meal is used in various animal foods and most of the oil is exported.

The salmon pack for 1955 was 3,225,000 cases, the lowest pack since 1906, more than 900,000 cases below the 4,162,000 cases packed in 1954 and only a little over one-third of the record 8,955,000 cases packed in 1936.

The year saw record production of fishmeal and good production of fishoils. Production of fish sticks, a recently created specialty, reached a new high of between 65,000,000 and 70,000,000 pounds compared with 50,000,000 for 1954, seven and a half million pounds in 1953 when production of this product was first undertaken.

Shrimp and haddock, which one year ago showed extremely high inventories and a depressed market, are now practically in balance with good demand and adequate supply. Special marketing campaigns to move haddock which the Fish and Wildlife Service conducted under provisions of the Saltonstall-Kennedy Act aided materially in the bettering of the commercial condition of haddock.

Shrimp is America's most valuable fishery on the basis of income to the fishermen. The high inventories which existed early in the year had a somewhat adverse effect. The catch will be slightly below that of last year and the amount paid the fishermen will be somewhat less than the \$70,000,000 paid in 1954.

The Maine sardine production of 1,300,000 cases was the lowest since 1940 and well under last year's pack of 2,900,000 cases. The quality of the 1955 pack, however, is considered better than in any recent year due to the small size of the individual fish. The reason for the small catch this year is due to absence of herring (sardines) in the Maine waters.

The salmon catch was valued at \$24,000,000 or \$10,000,000 below that of 1954. The catch in 1955 was 286,000,000 pounds compared with 323,000,000 in 1954.

Halibut landings of 37,000,000 pounds were down six million pounds from the 1954 catch. The decline was probably due to happen-chance. The International Pacific Halibut Convention which has authority over halibut fisheries sets annual quotas. As the season progresses and the catches are noted a cut-off date is established. In 1954 the last few days of the fishing season proved especially productive and the quota was exceeded. In 1955 the reverse happened and the last few days were unproductive because of weather and the quota was missed. This, added to a decline in price, accounts for the drop in value from \$8 million in 1954 to \$5.4 million in 1955.

The catch of tuna was about 20 percent less than the 323,000,000 pounds taken in 1954. The value of the tuna catch, based upon incomplete data, is estimated at \$35,000,000 compared with \$52,000,000 in 1954. During the first 10 months of 1955, about 129,000,000 pounds of frozen tuna and nearly 42,000,000 pounds of canned tuna and tunalike fishes were imported into the United States. In the same period in 1954, there were 111,000,000 pounds of frozen tuna and 41,000,000 pounds of canned tuna and tunalike fishes imported.

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