



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES.

For Immediate Release to PMs OF JUNE 29, 1943 W

Normal reserves of protein food represented by holdings of frozen fish have declined to only 54 percent of the 1942 level, indicating a probable shortage of fish during the winter months when catches are comparatively light and cold storage reserves are heavily drawn upon, Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes declared today.

According to figures reported to the Coordinator's office, holdings of all salt-water fish on June 1 were 54 percent of last year's level, while fresh-water fish stood at 62 percent and shellfish at 47 percent of the 1942 reserves. The total amount of frozen fish and shellfish in storage on June 1 was 34,388,272 pounds.

Contributing to the present depleted state of the Nation's freezers are the heavy demands for fresh fish to ease meat shortages, withdrawals from frozen stocks for current use, and the effect of price ceilings which have been imposed on frozen fish but not, except in a few instances, on fresh fish. Operators of freezing plants, unable to compete with the prices fishermen can obtain in the fresh fish markets, have found it difficult to secure an adequate supply for freezing.

Fish and shellfish frozen during the month of May totaled 21,914,359 pounds, which was about 85 percent of the movement into storage at the comparable season last year. Moreover, much of the fish is remaining in the freezers for only a short period this year, preventing the accumulation of the usual reserves.

Among the staple food fishes, sharpest declines have occurred in the holdings of haddock and rosefish fillets, both of which are shipped in large quantity to inland cities as well as to areas nearer the New England ports. On June 1 only 711,786 pounds of frozen haddock fillets were on hand compared with 6,554,924 pounds in 1942 -- a drop of 90 percent. The decline in rosefish holdings was almost as great. Cold storage warehouses on June 1 had 461,426 pounds of rosefish fillets, a decline of 85 percent from the previous year's level of 2,990,452 pounds.

Serious depletion of the reserve supply of many other fishes is indicated in the figures. Compared with June 15, 1942, present holdings of frozen halibut are 57 percent of last year's; mackerel (except Spanish) 55 percent; whiting, 48 percent; king salmon, 23 percent; silver salmon, 18 percent; swordfish, 36 percent; lake herring, 22 percent; lake trout, 23 percent; scallops, 15 percent; and shrimp, 43 percent.

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Herring, including both sea herring and the related river herrings or alewives were an outstanding exception to the general trend, with holdings amounting to 3,148,799 pounds, compared with 1,242,264 pounds in 1942. Catches of both species were large this year, and quantities were placed in temporary cold storage because the supply was too great to handle through the ordinary market channels.

Similarly, the exceptionally heavy run of shad in the Hudson River led to the freezing of more than 600,000 pounds in the New York area by June 1, but reports during the month of June indicate that the frozen shad were being withdrawn rapidly after the peak of the fishing season.