A D V A N C E R E L E A S E ---- A D V A N C E R E L E A S E

OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION

This Report

on

UNITED STATES FISHERIES

is

ADVANCE RELEASE: For FRIDAY AFTERNOON Papers, September 3, 1943.

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F A C T S A B O U T F I S H

FISH PROTEINS ARE COMPLETE--a meal of fish contains all the ingredients necessary to build body tissues. You don't have to supplement a platter of fish with other tissue-building foods. Ocean-caught fish also bring you minerals from the sea--copper, iron, calcium, phosphorous, and others.

SIX BILLION POUNDS of fish and shellfish will be needed this year to supply our men in uniform, our Allies, and ourselves. This is a billion pounds more than we produced in our biggest pre-war year. You can help. Save canned salmon, sardines, and mackerel for Army and Navy use by:

Canning or salting fish at home;
Eating unfamiliar varieties which may be available in your part of the country.

HAVE YOU TRIED squid with tomato sauce? Steamed mussels? Skate with mayonnaise? Shark steak? Carp, burbot, sheepshead? How about canning surplus fish, just as you can surplus vegetables from your victory garden?

HERE'S A LIST of government publications on the cooking and home canning of fish:

"Home Preservation of Fishery Products" by Norman D. Jarvis. (Fishery Leaflet 18)
"Cooking Carp" by Edith E. Hopkins and Catherine M. Ritchie. (Fishery Leaflet 19)
"How to Cook the Burbot" by the same authors. (Fishery Leaflet 21)
"Wartime Fish Cookery" by Elizabeth Whiteman. (Conservation Bulletin 27)

For Fishery Leaflets, write: Publications Office
Fish and Wildlife Service
Merchandise Mart,
Chicago, Illinois

For Conservation Bulletins, write:
Superintendent of Documents
Government Printing Office
Washington, D. C.

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The United States fishing fleet, handicapped by the requisitioning of craft by the armed services, the loss of manpower, and a limitation on materials, would have to provide in 1943 a billion more pounds of fish and shellfish than in any other year in history to meet the demand for its food production, the Office of War Information said today.

In a report based on information supplied by the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries, the OWI said that the industry in 1941, its biggest pre-war year, when there were plenty of boats and equipment and all the manpower needed, produced a little less than five billion pounds of fish and shellfish. To meet the total demand of our armed forces, our allies, and civilian consumers this year, it would have to produce about six billion pounds.

Ordinarily, American fishermen, working in coastal waters, the high seas, and lakes and rivers, catch about 4½ billion pounds. Last year, because of war handicaps, the catch fell to about 3-3/4 billion.

By July 1, 1943, most of the major fisheries of the country were registering measurable gains over last year. However, 75 percent of the year's production is normally made during the last six months of the year, the period of heaviest production in all the major fisheries. Consequently, the total 1943 yield cannot yet be determined.

To help the industry cope with the demand and alleviate its difficulties, Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes has taken two important steps:

(1) He has ordered early completion of an inventory of the fishing fleet, the first to be made since the war started, and will use the survey as a basis for further requests to the Army and Navy for the return of enough vessels to boost U.S. production by a billion pounds. Within recent weeks the Navy has returned a substantial number of purse seiners, the most productive of fishing vessels, to the Pacific Coast sardine fishery at Mr. Ickes' request, but the boats immediately were requisitioned by the Army.

(2) Since the armed services, because of the military situation, can return only a portion of the boats they have requisitioned from the fleet, Mr. Ickes is also requesting the War Production Board to allocate materials for the construction of additional fishing vessels of the most efficient types.

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The fishing industry entered its 1943 season with more hindrances to production than most war enterprises. Some of the more important were:

Fishing boats were requisitioned in large numbers for use by the Army and Navy in transporting supplies and food, for patrol boats, and for mine sweepers. The exact number taken cannot be told, but some of our most productive fisheries have lost up to 40 or 50 percent of their boats. Taking a single vessel out of active fishing may mean the loss of five or six million pounds of fish if the boat is a large trawler or a sardine or menhaden purse-seiner.

Ordinarily the fishing industry builds several hundred new boats each year to replace the old vessels or to expand operations. Because of shortages of materials comparatively few new boats have entered the fisheries during the past two years. At present the lack of Diesel engines is the chief bottleneck of the construction program for new fishing boats.

About 125,000 men are normally engaged in catching the nation's fish. Many additional thousands usually work at processing the catch in filleting houses and in freezing, smoking, canning and by-products establishments. After Pearl Harbor, many of these men enlisted in the Navy and Merchant Marine, and large numbers have been called into active service by their draft boards. The problem of replacement is difficult.

The hard-fiber ropes and twines which the industry uses to operate its boats and gear are hard to get. Primary sources of manila and sisal are in Japanese hands, and for the limited amount still available the fishermen must compete with the Army and Navy which need high quality rope on warships, troop ships, and cargo vessels. Available netting must also be shared with the military services, for fish nets are useful in camouflage, and large numbers are so used.

Unlike most of the nation's important commercial enterprises, the fishing industry lacks the organization and the unified leadership to solve war created problems for itself. The larger units are so separated by tradition and geography that none is sufficiently representative of the industry as a whole to speak for it. Fishermen, always individualistic, belong to many different labor unions or to none, so that labor in the fisheries lacks a unified voice.

To meet war created problems, President Roosevelt in July, 1942, established the office of Coordinator of Fisheries to serve as a liaison organization between the industry and the numerous government agencies involved. Secretary of the Interior Ickes was appointed Coordinator of Fisheries; and Director Ira N. Gabrielson and Assistant Director Charles E. Jackson of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service became Deputy Coordinator and Assistant Deputy Coordinator of the new agency. Field representatives were placed in each of the major fishing areas, and industry committees were established.

Here are some of the results of a year's joint efforts of the fishing industry and the OCF:

Early in 1943, most of the floating equipment--scows, fishing vessels, and cannery tenders--which the Army had taken from the salmon fishery the year before was returned. Both men and boats were on the scene when the salmon runs arrived in Bristol Bay, and the season's operations were conducted on a nearly normal scale. More than a million and one quarter cases of choice red salmon had been packed before the season closed, as compared with less than a half million last season.

A small number of the requisitioned sardine seiners--each capable of catching about 6,000,000 pounds of fish a season--has been returned to active fishing in the Pacific this season. Several of the menhaden seiners (potential catch 5,000,000 to 6,000,000 pounds) and New England otter trawlers are again fishing on the Atlantic coast. The ODF hopes that more boats will be returned in time for the fall season, when the largest catches can be made. Addition of 300 boats to the present fleet would boost production by an estimated one billion pounds.

The manpower problem, still pressing, is less acute than a year ago. With fishermen and certain workers in food-processing industries now classified as essential, many deferments have been obtained. In this the OCF has assisted by explaining to local draft boards the vital importance of fishermen in food production. Recruitment programs are being carried on in some areas.

Maintenance, repair, and operation of vessels and equipment are giving the fishermen fewer worries now that a preference rating of AA-1 has been obtained for the fishing industry. For construction of new vessels, however, the fishing industry, along with other food industries, rates AA-3. This rating is considered high enough for most purposes but does not provide enough Diesel engines. Representatives of the OCF are working on this problem and predict that the engines will be available to power the new boats.

About a dozen fisheries provide three-fourths of the nation's total catch. Geared to mass-production methods and equipped to do a mass-production job, these are the fisheries that provide the bulk of the seafood to be consumed by fighting men and civilians. Salmon, sardines, tuna and mackerel are the big four of the canned fish trade; menhaden, herring and pilchard of the byproducts industry; haddock, salmon, rosefish, cod, flounders, and whiting are among the vitally important fresh fish supplies together with shrimp and oysters.

The largest poundage of any American fishery is taken by pilchard fishermen, who work chiefly at night to catch the schooling pilchards or California sardines in their nets. Restrictions on night fishing imposed in the early days of the war have been relaxed somewhat, allowing fishermen to bring in tons of fish that find their way to American dinner tables as canned sardines, or when ground up into concentrated animal feeding meals, indirectly provide pork chops, bacon and eggs. Sardine boats now assemble, convoy fashion, about sunset and are escorted out of the harbors by Coast Guard vessels. After the night's fishing, the loaded seiners reassemble outside the harbor and again are conducted by patrol vessels into inside waters, where they line

up at the docks of canneries and reduction plants to unload their catch.

This year, need for the products of the pilchard fishery is greater than ever. About four and one half million cases of sardines are expected to be produced, only about 45 percent of which will reach U.S. civilians. The rest will go to military training camps at home, overseas to the armed forces, or on Lend-Lease to our Allies.

To insure the most efficient prosecution of the pilchard fishery, the government has taken a hand in the operations which began at San Francisco and Monterey on August 1st. The delivery of pilchards will be closely regulated to insure a steady flow of raw materials to canneries and reduction plants, eliminating local gluts and famines which cut down the output of the fishery. The goal of industry and government for the coming season is one billion pounds--better than last year's yield but below the fishery's peak production of 1,502,000,000 pounds attained in 1936.

Another of the nation's most important fishes is the menhaden, which will contribute to the job of providing eggs and bacon for the nation's civilians and the armed services. This fish, sometimes called "pogy" or "fatback", ranks as the second most important fish in the United States in weight landed, being exceeded only by the pilchard, and in a few big years by the Pacific salmon. Normally about a half billion pounds a year are landed.

Almost the total yield of menhaden is converted to meal for stock feeding purposes and into oil, quantities of which are used as a base in the production of fortified vitamin feeding oils for poultry and hogs. In Florida, menhaden is now being canned successfully, although as yet on a limited scale. Because of the requisitioning of menhaden vessels for war service, the industry is operating with an abnormally small fleet and production may be affected accordingly. An attempt is being made to adapt small vessels from other fisheries to menhaden fishing. Closing of numerous areas that formerly were good menhaden fishing grounds has also had an adverse affect on production.

Alaska salmon fisheries have yielded a considerably larger pack than last year. Salmon is our most important food fish, for the entire catch of a half billion pounds is used as food, whereas a large part of the pilchard and virtually all the menhaden catch becomes meal and oil. Of the total salmon pack, about 90 percent comes from Alaska. Canning of Alaska salmon ordinarily involves about 120 plants of various sizes and degrees of efficiency, widely scattered along the territory's extensive shore line. This year, to conserve boats, men, and equipment and at the same time increase the output of fish, canning operations are being confined to about 75 of the most modern and efficient plants.

Tunas provide an annual catch of about 160,000,000 pounds, all but one percent of which comes from the Pacific Coast. When the military services took over a large proportion of the fleet of fast refrigerated tuna clippers, the industry was left without means to reach the distant, most productive grounds near the Equator. As a result, the 1942 catch dropped well below

the average. By straining its resources to the utmost the industry has caught more tuna this year than last. Good news for civilians came recently when the War Food Administration announced that the entire pack made during the remainder of the year will be released through ordinary trade channels.

Ranking fifth among U.S. fish are mackerel, most of which come from the Pacific. Pacific mackerel are canned, furnishing an annual pack of one million cases in a good year. Most of the pack is reserved by the Government for Lend-Lease and military requirements. The mackerel fishery suffers, on a reduced scale, the same difficulties of lack of boats, men and gear that hamper the pilchard fishery.

Harder hit by loss of boats than any other fishery, the New England ottertrawl fleet has seen its landings drop to only about two-thirds of last year's level. Potential catch of a large otter trawler is 5,000,000 pounds; of a medium trawler, 2,000,000 pounds; of a small trawler, 1,500,000 pounds. The principal species taken by the trawlers, which drag nets on the bottom of the offshore banks, are cod, haddock, rosefish, flounders, hake, whiting, and pollock--all staple varieties of first-rank importance in the fresh fish trade. Most of these varieties are filleted, and large quantities are frozen for shipment to the interior of the country or for sale in seasons when fresh fish are scarce.

Unprecedented demands for fresh fish, plus price difficulties caused by the placing of a ceiling on frozen fish but none on fresh fish until July, 1943, have resulted in some reduction in the amount of fish frozen, and in the unusually rapid withdrawal of frozen stocks. As a result, food reserves represented by frozen fish of all kinds stood on June 1 of this year at only 54 percent of lastyear's level.

Fish is a food peculiarly suited to wartime demands. Fish proteins belong to the class known as "complete", providing all the essential components required in building body tissues. Besides, fish proteins are highly digestible and are efficiently used in the body. Most of them are considered equal or superior to those provided by beef round. Fish also bring to the human consumer a variety of minerals from the sea--copper, iron, calcium, phosphorus and others--which the body requires to function at peak efficiency. Army procurement officers turn to canned fish because it will keep under the most difficult conditions of Arctic cold and tropical heat, and because it is a concentrated food easily transported.

Latest figures from the Coordinator of Fisheries show that fighting men in U.S. training camps now eat about 18 pounds of fresh and frozen fish a year, as compared with the general U.S. civilian average of about 4½ pounds. These figures do not include canned or cured fish. Per capita consumption by civilians varies widely, ranging from as much as 30 pounds in some sea-coast towns to a negligible amount in sections of the interior.

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Vitamin A, of which the chief commercial source is fish liver oils, is sharpening the eyesight of bombing crews and of troops on night maneuvers, as well as helping troops and civilians build up resistance to colds and other respiratory infections. Formerly a large share of our medicinal codliver oil was imported from Norway; when war cut off these imports new and rich sources were discovered in our own fisheries. Besides the standard cod and halibut liver oils, we now draw heavily on oil from the livers of soupfin sharks (from which the yield runs to 200,000 United States Pharmacopoeia units per gram, compared with 3,000 from cod), dogfish sharks, and ling cod. We also get quantities of vitamin D from tuna, mackerel, and sardines.

Animal feeding meals and oils derived chiefly from Pacific pilchards, menhaden, and herring, are regarded as essentials by growers of livestock and poultry. Hogs fed rations balanced with high-protein fish meals reach market size more quickly than those not receiving such feeds. Lack of vitamins A and D supplied by fish feeding oils cuts egg production and lowers the percentage of eggs that hatch, poultry growers find. Because of greatly increased demands for livestock, the amount of fish meal needed in 1943 has been estimated at 265,000 tons, which is almost 50 percent more than that produced in 1940, a fairly normal pre-war year.

Fish oils, produced in connection with meal, have a variety of important uses ranging from glycerine for explosives to the manufacture of soap, paints, varnishes, and linoleums. To conserve fish oils for their most essential uses such as medicinal and feeding oils for human and animal consumption, lubricating oils and greases, leather processing, and core oils for aluminum and magnesium castings, the government recently restricted most other users to 40 percent of the average amount they had used during 1940 and 1941.

Americans are urged by the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries to make the best and most complete use of available fish supplies, and to try some of the unfamiliar varieties now on the market. Commercial fishermen take about 160 species, ranging from alewives to yellowtail, from the two oceans and the lakes and rivers of the United States. Of the 160, not more than 25 are utilized in any great quantity.

Here are some hints on the use of unfamiliar varieties:

INLAND FISH. The neglected carp is so abundant throughout the Middle West that sportsmen regard it as a nuisance. Properly prepared, it is an excellent food, considered a delicacy by Europeans. The related buffalo fishes are also available in quantity as are the sweet-meated, though bony, suckers. The burbot, a wholesome food fish closely related to the familiar cod, is present in some quantity in the Great Lakes; sheepshead, bowfin, and gar represent virtually untapped food resources easily available to the interior of the country.

The Mississippi River and the Great Lakes ordinarily furnish only about four percent of the nation's fish. Although species like the prized whitefish and lake trout are being fished to capacity, the less familiar kinds

could furnish many millions of pounds of food.

OCEAN SPECIES. Skates, sharks, sea robins, mussels, and squids probably will be seen more often in the markets. Ocean-going trawlers bring up numbers of such fish in their nets when they fish for haddock, cod, flounders, and other staple varieties. In the past, the crews tossed most of them overboard because of the lack of profitable market. Now the public, faced with a meat shortage and scarcity of familiar fishes, is more willing to try the new species seen in seafood markets.

Skates, long popular in Europe, have been little used here. A skate is a much flattened fish with broad, winglike flaps along the sides of the body. The "wings" are the edible portions from which a white meat, excellent as a salad or casserole dish, is taken.

Shark steaks, chiefly from Pacific coast sharks, appeared in a number of markets last winter. Great quantities of sharks have been taken for their livers, which are rich in vitamins, but for the most part the flesh has been wasted. Kippered or lightly smoked shark resembles smoked salmon; fresh steaks are sometimes compared to halibut. The principal differences between sharks and such true fishes as cod or salmon, zoologists explain, is that the skeleton of sharks is not calcified.

The sea mussel, highly esteemed as food almost everywhere in the world except the United States, seems destined to become popular here. The mussel is closely related to the oyster and the clam and it can be used and cooked in almost the same way. A relatively small market for mussels has always existed in such cities as Boston and New York, and these seem certain to be expanded.

The mussel is at its peak of flavor from September to June. It has a black shell and the meat is golden or cream-colored and is smaller in size than the oyster. Its flavor is something like that of the longneck or soft clam.

Maine, Massachusetts and Rhode Island have considerable resources of this excellent seafood and it is probable that a million bushels will be taken this year. Experts are interested in the mussel not only as a source of wartime food, but as the basis of a peacetime industry.

Still more or less in the field of marine curiosities as far as the general public is concerned are squids, periwinkles, conches--all related to oysters and clams--and sea urchins, relatives of the familiar starfish. Americans of recent European or Asiatic origin regard these creatures as delicacies. Squids are now relatively high priced items. Gourmets recommend

that they be skinned, dressed (they contain only a small amount of inedible matter), gently stewed, and served with tomato sauce. Baskets of periwinkles and conches are to be seen in New York's Fulton Fish Market and other seafood centers. Sea urchins, somewhat resembling chestnut burrs, are also appearing in some markets. The only edible portion is the orange-colored roe, found by breaking open the shell.

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