



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Mackerel price disagreements may eliminate the possibility of a boom year for canners of this product, according to reports submitted to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes by Fish and Wildlife Service.

"So far this season," F. E. Firth, biological collector of the Service explained, "the seining fleet has made good catches. [Mackerel output for May, for example, was 657 percent over the same month last year.] It is unfortunate that the market lacks interest in the present high availability of mackerel except at prices below which the fishermen feel they can operate. Every evidence so far points to prospects for a good fishing season; it would be a splendid year for canners to build up their stocks, but this will hardly be possible for them with the present minimum price for mackerel demanded by fishermen."

On May 29, ex-vessel prices for mackerel at the Boston market dropped to \$1.25 per hundredweight. On May 21, the purse-seine fishermen met at Gloucester and voluntarily agreed upon two courses in an effort to keep mackerel prices higher: first to maintain a 40,000-pound maximum trip limit; second, to demand a \$2.00 per hundredweight minimum market selling price.

The amount of increase in mackerel availability this year is not yet known. In Cambridge (Mass.) office of the Service, J. R. Webster, biologist, recently has determined that in 1940, mackerel availability increased 300 percent or more relative to 1939.

Since the start of the offshore mackerel fishery this spring, fish from the spawning of 1937-38 have constituted the greater part of the catch. Seiners have landed more than 8,000,000 pounds, about 5,400,000 pounds being caught during the month ending June 15. The 1937 and 1938 year classes have produced a greater poundage so far in 1941 than they did over a comparable period in 1940 when more vessels were fishing. This is interpreted to mean that these classes, which now constitute one size group, will be important to the fishery for several years to come.

The offshore fishery has now moved to the waters off Cape Cod.

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