



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF FISHERIES COORDINATION

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The fishing industry is faced with a crucial manpower problem that must be promptly solved if production of this type of food--which declined a billion and a quarter pounds last year--is not to sink to even lower levels, Fishery Coordinator Harold L. Ickes warned today. The War Manpower Commission's aid is being sought to help solve the problem.

Acting under the powers derived from Food Administrator Wickard which places upon him responsibility for a fish production program, Coordinator Ickes is mobilizing the fishing industry to make every effort to maintain and to increase production. Such a program will not be possible, however, Coordinator Ickes said, unless the drain upon the industry's manpower is halted and additional men can be found to man the operations.

"American fisheries offer a real source of increased food production to meet the war food program if means can be found to provide the industry with what it needs," Coordinator Ickes said. "The chief need is to stop the loss of manpower and to get more men on the working end of the food job. Equipment offers another difficult problem, but even if that should be solved, insufficient manpower could cancel the equipment gains we might effect."

Studies made by the Office of Fisheries Coordination indicate that the Nation's domestic fisheries can produce a yield of approximately six billion pounds of valuable protein food if men, vessels, and equipment are made available, Coordinator Ickes stated. This production, it is felt, could be attained under optimum conditions. Production in 1942 fell off a billion and a quarter pounds principally because a large part of the fishing fleet was needed for other purposes by the armed services. Toward the end of the season, however, a shortage of manpower began to cut further into the volume of production.

The Office of Fisheries Coordination has undertaken a program to increase production. A goal of five billion pounds has been set. Studies of the situation indicate, however, Coordinator Ickes said, that many difficult problems facing the industry must be solved immediately, with manpower the most critical of all, if even the present fish production is to be maintained.

The Food Administrator, under his powers to administer the national war food program, has vested in the Fishery Coordinator responsibility for catching and processing of fish. The latter was also empowered to determine requirements of critical materials for the industry in producing fishery products and authorized to

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make recommendations to the Food Administrator concerning any phase of the fishery program.

The current plans of the Office of Fisheries Coordination, involving a goal of five billion pounds, could make that contribution to the Nation's food supply, Coordinator Ickes said, under a program that would include factors such as:

1. Obtaining, with the cooperation of fishermen and the fishing industry, more fish from big producing groups--such as salmon, sardines, mackerel, tuna, halibut--with existing facilities.
2. Arranging for the return of more fishing vessels taken over for military purposes.
3. Assuring adequate manpower for the industry.
4. Encouraging consumers to use species of fish not now popular nor widely used so that fishermen can find a market for species that can be caught in commercial quantity.
5. Adjusting conservation controls where this can be done without endangering the resource.

Developments in technical processes are looked to by the Office of Fishery Coordination as an additional means of increase. Fish and wildlife specialists, for example, helped to develop an industrial method for successfully packing the large Maine sea-herring. Menhaden, once used only for commercial oil and meal, may now be canned for food. Salted mullet, fresh frozen and salted shark fillets, canned smelt and burbot, and fresh-water herring fillets are new food products made possible as the result of laboratory researches of the Fish and Wildlife Service.