



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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One of the nation's most important and yet most anonymous fishes, the menhaden, will contribute materially this year to the job of providing eggs and bacon to the nation's civilian and armed services, according to Harold L. Ickes, Coordinator of Fisheries.

Few people know the menhaden's name--some of them call it "pogy" or "fatback" --but in weight landed it ranks as the second most important fish in the United States, exceeded only by the pilchard, or California sardine, and in a few big years by the Pacific salmon.

Menhaden is now being canned successfully in Florida for food, but on a limited scale. Its foremost use is for reduction into meal and oil.

Almost the total yield of menhaden is converted to meal for stock feeding purposes and into oil, important quantities of which are used as a base in the production of fortified vitamin feeding oils. The vitamin oils are fed mostly to poultry and hogs, and are necessary for the economical production of pork and eggs.

The critical significance of fish meal in the stock raising program this year is due in part to the scarcity of other animal proteins, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Deputy Coordinator, declared. Dried skim milk, formerly used extensively by the poultry and livestock farmers, now is largely diverted to human consumption and fish meal and meat-meal tankage will be in greater demand to make up the difference. Total fish meal requirements for 1943 were estimated early in the year at 265,000 tons.

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. In cooperation with the industry, the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries is attempting to adapt small vessels from other fisheries to menhaden fishing in an effort to supplement the catch of the regular fleet.

Closing of numerous areas that formerly were good menhaden fishing grounds will also have an adverse effect on production. Normally about half a billion pounds of this fish is landed.

Menhaden fishing is carried on from Long Island to Mississippi, with the most important centers of the industry located in Reedville, Va., on the Chesapeake Bay, and in Carteret County, North Carolina.

Dr. Gabrielson pointed out that the menhaden supports the oldest fishery by-product industry in the United States. Its oil was first utilized in 1812 and a crude form of meal was prepared a little later. One third of all fish meals and a quarter of the marine animal oils produced in the United States are products of the menhaden fishery.

Menhaden oil has long been used widely in the manufacture of soap, linoleum, paint, and varnish. An important new use is to provide a base for the fish feeding oils used by growers of poultry and hogs. To menhaden oil as a carrier, vitamin D and fish-liver oils rich in vitamin A are added. Lack of vitamins A and D, poultry growers find, cuts egg production and lowers the percentage of eggs that hatch.

Growers of hogs and poultry also depend on the menhaden industry for a large proportion of their feeding meals. Hogs fed rations balanced with high-protein meals like that of menhaden reach market size more quickly than those not receiving these feeds. Unlike cattle which thrive on plant foods, hogs and poultry require animal proteins. For maximum efficiency of feed utilization, about one third of the total proteins in the diet of hogs, chickens, and turkeys should come from animal sources, nutritionists report. Due to the present short supply, the Department of Agriculture and the Feed Industry Council have developed a voluntary protein conservation program which necessarily calls for a much smaller percentage of animal proteins in these feeds than is desired under normal conditions—with percentages varying from 5 to 10 percent.