



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

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Warnings that the Nation faces a Vitamin A deficit and that the soupfin shark fishery, chief U. S. source of Vitamin A, apparently is being rapidly depleted, were issued today by the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior.

Service scientists pointed out that landings in February were 70 percent below those of February 1943 although apparently fishermen had intensified their efforts and were using more gear. February landings of domestic soupfin shark livers at Seattle, center of the fishery, were 83,960 pounds, down from 280,781 pounds in the same month of 1943.

The Service also announced that Vitamin A stocks held by producers and pharmaceutical houses as of February 29 in the form of livers, liver oils, and concentrates totaled approximately 51 trillion units. As of the end of February 1943, holdings amounted to 88 trillion units. It is indicated that the consumption of Vitamin A in this country now exceeds production.

Landings of soupfin shark livers during January and December also showed marked declines from totals of the same month in the previous year. January 1944 showed 148,460 pounds as against 185,239 pounds, and December showed 116,681 pounds, compared with 317,444.

The soupfin shark has an exceptionally large liver which is pressed for oil. The oil contains the highest known natural concentration of Vitamin A of any species taken in the U. S. fisheries. Other shark livers are also of some importance to processors but Vitamin A concentrations in their livers are considerably lower.

Two years ago the Fish and Wildlife Service warned the States of Oregon, Washington, and California that intensification of the soupfin shark fishery would probably result in early depletion of the shark population of the West Coast waters and a joint meeting was held to discuss the problem.

The soupfin shark, like most other sharks, produces living young and the optimum rate of increase is much lower than in the case of true fishes. In addition, the shark lives over the continental shelf which on the West Coast is much more narrow than the shelf on the other side of the continent. There is a definite limit, therefore, to the area in which the soupfin shark can live.

No fishery in America has ever increased with such rapidity as that for the soupfin shark. Only a few years ago the value to fishermen of all sharks taken

was about \$500,000 a year. It is estimated that sharks were worth more than \$8,500,000 to fishermen in 1943. Most of this sum went for livers although several hundred thousand dollars was paid for the carcasses which are now widely used for food. By far the largest portion of the shark industry channels through Seattle although California, Florida, and a few other States also share in it.

The soupfin shark fishery was increasing before the war due to the generally rising use of vitamin products. With the advent of war, which cut off foreign sources of supply, the price of soupfin shark livers rose to a high point of \$9.25 a pound at one time. The current price runs from \$6 to \$7 a pound.