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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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Frequently expressed opinions to the contrary notwithstanding, most U. S. civilians have been recently eating less fish, even during periods of strict meat rationing, than they have in normal times when plenty of meat was always available, according to the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries.

The per capita consumption of fish and fish products by civilians in the United States, which has always been comparatively low, has now dropped to 8.9 pounds per year, including fresh, canned, and cured varieties. Men and women in the armed services, however, have been getting nearly twice as much.

Before the war the average U. S. citizen ate 13.3 pounds of fish a year. In so doing he ate a little more than the average Australian, and a little less than the average Frenchman. The average Japanese got 55 pounds in a year, the Swede 52 pounds, the Englishman, 35. Neighboring Canadians ate more than twice as much as U. S. citizens--29 pounds each on the average.

When the war came the production of U. S. fisheries dropped sharply, from five billion pounds in 1941 to less than three and three quarter billion pounds in 1942, mainly because hundreds of fishing vessels have been requisitioned for war service. Production climbed to about four billion pounds in 1943 and will probably go still higher this year, but it will still be below normal, due to manpower shortage.

Not only has total U. S. and Alaska fish production gone down, but a considerable portion of the production has been reserved for use of the armed services and for lend-lease requirements. More than half the canned salmon and about the same percentage of sardines, for instance, has gone for such purposes.

In addition, imported fishery products have almost stopped coming into the United States. Before the war we ate 25,000,000 pounds a year of imported sardines which came chiefly from Norway. Most canned crab sold here came from Japan--in one year nearly \$5,000,000 worth.

While the average consumption of fish is less in this country than before the war, the fishing industry is pleased because apparently more people are eating some

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fish. Heaviest per capita fish consumption has always been on the coast--the New Yorker as an example normally consumes 32 pounds as against only six for the resident of Louisville. The industry has always hoped for an increased market in the interior of the country and apparently there has been an increase in that area. Chicago, greatest inland wholesale fish market, handled 48,000,000 pounds in 1939; last year 84,000,000 pounds were received there.

Failing to obtain traditionally popular varieties of fish, U. S. citizens have also shown little reluctance in trying new kinds. Shark steaks have sold well for more than a year, as have such fresh water fish as carp, buffalofish, and bowfin. Housewives in the East and Middle West have also been investigating such varieties as the mullet, a delicious salt water fish little known outside the South until last year.