



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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TREND IN FOOD FISH HARVEST IS DOWNWARD FWS RECORDS SHOW

Although the food fish catch last year was 100 million pounds more than in 1955, it was still about 12 percent below the 1947-1950 average, the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior reported today.

Food fish taken in 1956 totaled 2.8 billion pounds. This is 400 million pounds below the average of 1947-1950.

Since 1950 the population of the United States increased about 20,000,000. Had the 1947-1950 rate of food fish production been maintained in 1956, the catch would have totaled 3,650,000,000 or 30 percent more than the actual production, the Fish and Wildlife Service estimated.

Despite the decline in the catch of food fish during recent years the per capita consumption of fish has remained fairly constant at 10 to 11 pounds edible weight. Large increases in imports made this possible.

During the years 1947-1950 imports of edible fish and shellfish averaged 860 million pounds, round weight basis. In 1956 these imports totaled about 1,500,000,000 pounds. Imports supplied about 35 percent of the domestic supply of edible fishery products in 1956 compared with an average of 21 percent during the years from 1947 to 1950.

Items received in considerably greater volume in 1956 were frozen groundfish fillets, canned salmon and fresh and frozen shrimp. Receipts of fresh and frozen tuna were below the record 145,246,000 pounds received in 1955.

The big catch of menhaden in the Atlantic ocean and in the Gulf of Mexico was a principal factor in the 1956 record harvest. The catch totaled 2,058,000,000 pounds, the first two billion pound catch of any one variety ever made by American fishermen. This was an increase of 200,000,000 pounds over the 1955 menhaden harvest and marked the sixth consecutive year that the menhaden catch has broken the record set the previous year.

Other species taken in considerably greater volume in 1956 than in the previous year were tuna, 330,000,000 pounds (271,000,000 pounds in 1955); Pacific and jack mackerel 123,600,000 pounds (59,000,000 pounds in 1955); Alaska herring 103,000,000 pounds (64,000,000 in 1955); and Maine herring 133,000,000 pounds (99,000,000 pounds in 1955). The catch of salmon amounted to 311,000,000 pounds, up 21,000,000 pounds from the low 1955 catch. The catch of haddock likewise increased, amounting to 150,000,000 pounds compared with 135,000,000 pounds in 1955.

Catches of a number of important species were down sharply in 1956. The catch of Pacific sardines amounted to only 66,500,000 pounds compared with 146,000,000 pounds the previous year. Preliminary data indicated that the catch of shrimp amounted to only about 220,000,000 pounds compared with 236,000,000 pounds the previous year. The catch of ocean perch totaled 151,000,000 pounds, down 6,000,000 pounds compared with 1955.

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