



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### IT TAKES A LOT OF GEAR TO CATCH 5 BILLION POUNDS OF FISH

Nearly 14 million fish hooks of assorted sizes, and more than one million crab, lobster, and crawfish pots of sundry design and description, are part of the fishing gear used to bring the delicacies of the seas to the American table.

But despite these imposing numbers only about 11 percent of the annual fish harvest is taken by these types of gear, Department of Interior records show. It is the purse seine and the otter trawl which not only bring in the poundage of food fish but of industrial fish as well.

The 14 million hooks may be utilized at the rate of a fourth of a hook to a line, as in the case of some tuna fishing when it takes four lines, four poles, four men--and one hook--to bring in the big ones; or there may be as many as a thousand hooks on a single line in those scarce instances when the Americans used the "long line" gear. In many more instances the practice of one line, one fisherman and one hook does the work satisfactorily in some of the grouper, snapper and tuna fishing.

Records of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, United States Fish and Wildlife Service show that the various hook and line combinations in recent years caught more than 450 million pounds of fish per year. The take with the lobster pot and kindred gear has been averaging about 120 to 130 million pounds a year. The total annual harvest of all fishes for the last few years has approximated 5 billion pounds, sometimes a bit higher, sometimes lower.

The purse seine, which is used to encircle the schools of fish, brings in about 2.4 billion pounds of fish annually, or nearly half the total harvest. Much of this poundage is menhaden but there is included in the total large amounts of salmon, tuna, mackerel and Pacific sardines. Nearly 2,400 such seines are used.

The otter trawl, a name applied to several types of trawl, is dragged over the bottom to get the fish whose normal habitat is there. It accounts for about 1 billion pounds annually or 20 percent of the catch. The otter trawl brings in the bottom fish--cod, haddock, ocean perch, whiting--and shrimp. There were more than 9,000 trawls in operation last year.

An average of 28,000 gill nets are responsible for 4 percent of the catch; 8,300 pound nets, which include fish traps, take three to four percent. Shellfish dredges bring in an average of about 100 million pounds of clams, crabs, oysters and scallops; the balance is divided between "stop" seines, which are used to cut off the retreat of fish entering coves, haul seines and miscellaneous gear.

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