



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### INTERIOR ISSUES REPORT ON TUNA PRODUCTION AND IMPORTS

A report on the trends in the domestic yellowfin, skipjack, and bigeye tuna fisheries was submitted to the President and the Congress today by Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton.

The report was made under provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956. Section 9(b) of that Act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior, upon certain specific request, to determine whether or not there has been an adverse trend in a domestic fishery, and whether or not there has been an increase in imports of a directly competitive product.

The tuna industry, the report points out, is composed of many segments--large canners, small canners, importers, fishermen, and operators of such large vessels as bait boats and purse seiners and of such smaller craft as albacore trollers. Each group is confronted with different problems, mainly associated with the species involved or the stage at which it handles the tuna.

The report, which presents findings and not recommendations, shows that:

The United States landings of yellowfin and skipjack in 1957 were 237,113,000 pounds, 27 percent below the 1950 peak of 324,711,000 pounds;

The number of bait boats over 50 gross tons participating in this fishery, declined from 210 in 1951 to 146 in 1957, and the carrying capacity dropped from 44,300 tons to 33,875 tons;

The average ex-vessel price for yellowfin declined 25 percent from \$345 per ton in 1954 to a low of \$258 per ton in 1957; that the skipjack price declined 28 percent from \$304 to \$220 in the same period;

The number of employees on bait boats dropped from 2,730 in 1951 to 1,989 in 1956; on purse seiners from 1,661 in 1949 to 827 in 1956;

Imports of all types of tuna (adjusted to whole-weight equivalents) accounted for 6 percent of the available supply of tuna in the United States in 1948; 39 percent in 1956 and 46 percent in 1957;

Imports of all tuna (adjusted to whole-weight equivalents) averaged less than 20 million pounds annually in the 1940's, jumped to 117,100,000 pounds in 1950 and to an estimated 259,600,000 in 1957;

According to the report, such adverse trends as declining landings and lower prices for domestic tuna have been intensified by the general upturn in costs, which has increased the cost of operations for the United States tuna producers. The American fishery must compete with foreign fisheries having lower vessel construction costs, long-term loans at low interest rates, and government subsidies which have facilitated the construction, rebuilding, and insuring of vessels.

While the Japanese high-seas tuna fleet has practically doubled its capacity since 1951, vessel construction in the California yellowfin and skipjack fishery has stagnated and only nine new large vessels have been added to the bait-boat fleet since 1951. As of November 1957, most of the 146 vessels in that fleet were about 13 years old, and owners have had little incentive to make replacements or additions to the fleet.

The tariff rates established by the Tariff Act of 1930 and since modified by trade agreement, are based mainly on the import pattern at that time. The present duty on canned tuna in oil is 35 percent ad valorem; on canned tuna in brine, 12½ percent; on frozen cooked loins and discs, one cent a pound; fresh or frozen raw tuna, no duty. The duty on cooked tuna is equivalent to about 3.3 percent ad valorem.

The report, including several pages of tables and charts, covers such items as the world tuna fisheries, United States tuna fisheries, the Eastern Pacific fishery for yellowfin and skipjack, trends in vessel operations, trends in employment in the tuna fisheries, price trends, effect of imports on domestic prices and operating costs, Japanese production and the import situation.

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