

Problems Of The Commercial Fishing Industry

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IN HIS PAPER, "The Outlook for the Red Snapper Fishery," Mr. Taylor stated that the more serious problems confronting the red snapper industry were:

1. Maintenance of quality
2. Reduction of production costs
3. Stabilization of market conditions

In the paper and during the discussion it was brought out that education of fishermen and dealers was closely linked to maintaining quality. Education of fishermen by dealers and of both through short courses in schools and universities was deemed desirable. Fishery booklets on the Canadian pattern were spoken of favorably as an aid in this. Antiseptic ice appears to hold possibilities in maintaining quality but mechanical refrigeration currently appears too costly in the red snapper fishery. Freezing of the catch at sea results in a fish without the desirable red color and the frozen product consequently does not have a good market.

Production costs might be lowered by use of depth finders which are sensitive enough to indicate red snappers as small dots just above the bottom. In addition one company is making equipment which actually "sees" the bottom but the equipment is on the Navy's restricted list. Another approach is a plan whereby the company-owned vessels would eventually become the property of the captain through operation of a bonus program. The objectives would be greater production, lower costs, and improved quality.

Stabilized market conditions represent problems which must be worked out by cooperation within the producing and distributing industry.

In his paper, "Problems of Transportation and Administration in the Wholesale Fish Industry," Mr. Wegmann stressed transportation costs as the prime problem. Administration is a problem for solution within the industry itself. Transportation costs, which may mount up to as much as twice the original cost of the fish, are a more serious problem.

Suggestions offered during the discussion included research studies by universities and by government on transportation costs and means of keeping transportation agencies competitive. Container development as pursued by other food industries was offered as one solution, as was the use of dry ice. The latter was not recommended for fresh fish, however. Pooling of shipments may be feasible and profitable. Freezing the fishery products would solve many of the problems but would eliminate fresh fish as a desirable item of diet.

Mr. Meyer, in the paper "The Outlook for Breaded Shrimp and Similar Products," stated that breaded shrimp is a stabilizing factor in the shrimp market, and has not reached the saturation point. However, stronger competition is expected in the spring of 1951. Prime needs are uniform minimum standards, better packaging, improved retail handling, better transportation of small lots, and advertising. Smoked mullet, Spanish mackerel and shrimp are possibilities, but held up in part by packaging problems.

The discussion indicated that Federal standards and regulation for breaded shrimp would be preferred, as being more effective than industry regulations. Air shipments are being used for breaded shrimp and parcel post would be satisfactory if delivery was prompt. Instances of excessive retail markup are a deterring factor. A 10 oz. package is currently the smallest successful size.

The market for shrimp is down somewhat at present, according to Mr. Swartz, who discussed the problem of "The Outlook for Shrimp Production." At present there are relatively large cold storage inventories. Prices should improve after the end of the Florida season in February, but should not skyrocket in view of probable steady production from other areas. Shrimp should, however, follow upward trend of other food commodities if these prices increase.

The discussion brought out that a new devicing machine handling 1,650 pounds per hour may have some effects on processing costs. It was also evident that there probably are large inventories of shrimp in private cold storages, for which no good records are available.

"What does the future hold for the individual boat owner?" was the problem posed by John S. Robas. Mr. Robas stated that the individual owner was faced with problems in assembling and keeping efficient crews, with financing and credit, and with reducing production costs. He also stated that assistance was needed from the Government in the way of biological research and exploratory fishing. The discussion indicated that individual boat owners produced fish more efficiently than company owned boats, and at a lower cost. Higher costs and lower returns were a problem for both vessel owner and processor. RFC loans are time-consuming to obtain. Annual crew wages in the menhaden industry are relatively low and possibly a bar to more effective work. Sometimes it is difficult to sell catches in some areas because processors utilize catches from company-owned vessels only. State regulations in at least one area prevent free movement along the coasts.

In "The Outlook for Continued Shrimp Production in Louisiana." Mr. Chauvin stated that he believed the outlook was as good now as it had been in the past. There was no serious damage to the nursery grounds and no evidence of overfishing.

Discussion brought out the fact that imports are beginning to be of some concern. The price of shrimp is high to the consumer but production costs are high too. Individually owned boats are the best producers.

What Are The Most Pressing Requirements In Research In Inshore And Shell Fisheries?

Summary by W. W. ANDERSON, Chief, Gulf Fisheries Investigations, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and WALDO L. SCHMITT, Head Curator, Department of Biology, U. S. National Museum, Washington, D. C.

IN DISCUSSING the most pressing requirements in research in the inshore and shell fisheries, almost without exception all speakers in the Inshore and Shell Fisheries Session stressed the need for more comprehensive, long-time, continuous records of salinity and temperature. In more than one paper it was rather effectively demonstrated that temperature and salinity have a profound influence on the spawning and feeding of oysters, their health and well-being.