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NEW DEVELOPMENTS FOR  
OFFSHORE FISHERY RESOURCES  
(Draft: For Discussion Purposes Only)

by

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Offshore Fishery Resources

Introduction

The offshore fishing fleet of Virginia has undergone significant changes during the past several years. Prior to 1976 approximately 90 vessels were landing in Virginia with the majority (84) operating as trawlers for finfish and the remainder operating sea scallop dredges. By 1980, this number had increased to over 200 vessels with the majority (115) operating primarily as scallop vessels rather than finfish trawlers. The growth in the number of vessels and shoreside facilities was prompted by an unusually large crop of sea scallops from Virginia to New England with the 1980 value of sea scallops landed in Virginia exceeding \$24,000,000. Other factors involved in the growth of the offshore fishing industry included the implementation of the Fisheries Management and Conservation Act of 1976; a decrease in the level of foreign fishing and the availability of capital through lending programs sponsored by the U.S. Government.

The decline of sea scallops stocks became evident with decreased landings and economic instability for the financing of vessels and shoreside facilities. By 1982, less than 90 offshore vessels were landing in Virginia and the value of sea scallop landings dropped to \$8,400,000. Recently, due to a moderation in vessel operating costs, increasing ex-vessel prices of finfish and scallops and new opportunities with joint foreign fishing ventures

for squid, mackerel and butterfish, a time frame of stability has allowed the fishing industry to look for new opportunities for growth and development.

### Overview

Since 1981, local interest in joint foreign fishing ventures has increased to the point where several Virginia firms have actively pursued "over the side sale" arrangements with U.S. and foreign flag processing vessels. Joint fishing ventures have long been identified as a means by which the U.S. fishing industry could garner harvesting, processing and marketing technology for underutilized fishery resources such as squid and mackerel. The eventual goal for joint venture participation is the full utilization of these fishery resources by the U.S. fishing industry. Since "over the side sales" of squid and mackerel to foreign flag processors tend not to promote shoreside development of the processing and marketing sectors of the industry, the Fishery Management Councils are taking a hard look at current joint venture applications to insure that the objective of full U.S. utilization of underutilized resources are realized. Past joint foreign fishing ventures have had low to moderate success in their operations.

Allocations for joint venture participation and domestic harvesting of squid and mackerel have been increased for the 1983-84 fishing year to 82,000 MT of squid and 50,000 MT of mackerel. Both the squid and mackerel resources are well within the

geographic range and the technical capability of Virginia's offshore fishing fleet.

### New Opportunities

New opportunities exist in the expansion or development of processing facilities to adequately process and market squid, mackerel and other underutilized species such as shark (dogfish) for delivery to both domestic and export markets. Processing capabilities should include both primary processing (heading, gutting, filleting, etc.) and secondary processing (breeding, canning, protein extraction and product formulation). Currently there are two processing operations in the Hampton Roads area that could accommodate such expansion or develop the necessary capabilities.

In addition, Hampton Roads should become the home port of several processor vessels or harvest/processor vessels that would be capable of a variety of functions. Sea-frozen squid or finfish could be off-loaded at Hampton Roads ports for further processing or direct export. In addition, such vessels could actively employ Virginia based harvester vessels that would have the option to transfer product to the processor vessels or return to port with their catch.

Currently, one freezer processor vessel is operating from Hampton Roads and a similar processor vessel may become operational in the area in the spring of 1984. It is not unrealistic to think of a fleet of 4-6 processor vessels operating from Hampton Roads.

## Summary

1. Expansion of improvement of existing shoreside processing facilities to engage in primary and secondary processing of squid, mackerel and other underutilized fishery resources.

2. Design and construction of a new multiple capability processing facility for the processing of squid, mackerel and other underutilized fishery resources.

3. Establish an advanced seafood processing laboratory to develop processing technology for offshore and Bay fishery resources.

4. Serve as the home port for six freezer-processor/catch-processor vessels.