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An Importer's View of World Shrimp Production

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AS THE WORLD DEMAND for food increases yearly, almost every progressive nation in the world has begun to turn more and more to the seas as a prime source of high quality animal protein at relatively low cost. In the last 20 years we have seen war-ravaged foreign nations devote energies and resources to the restoration of their fishing capacities and capabilities. This zealous activity has led to new designs in fishing vessels and gear. Within this decade we have perhaps witnessed the greatest demand for modern fishing trawlers equipped to do tasks which were never before contemplated being done at sea. We are now seeing more sophisticated second and third generation vessels being launched with the earlier ones still remaining in service within the lesser developed nations. These newest trawlers have given fishermen a mobility which they never before had and have led them away from traditional fishing grounds to find more productive and profitable areas.

With the number of modern fishing vessels and kinds of gear constantly increasing, the production of animal protein from the sea throughout the world is increasing, and nations which were hard put to feed their own populace are now beginning to look to other countries as markets for their excess production. Not only are these foreign markets being sought as outlets for excess production, but as the number of vessels increases and the native population is fed, they are now beginning to devote their efforts exclusively for export markets. The export of fishery products has in many countries become a major source of foreign exchange, and governments eager for hard currencies are doing everything within their power to promote the construction of modern vessels and the export of first quality seafood products. Many countries in order to maintain first-rate ship-building yards have affected subsidies to the yards which build vessels for export.

The energetic actions of these foreign nations have resulted in imports by United States companies of some 7.8 billion pounds of fishery products in 1966. The major item, as we all know, is shrimp, valued in excess of \$113 million. This sum represents 163 million pounds of shrimp coming from 62 countries. The United States market with its relatively high prices and growing

demand for shrimp has not gone unnoticed by the shrimp fisheries of these other countries. Since the consumption of shrimp has outpaced production within the United States, imports have risen well over 160 million pounds to fill the vacuum left by United States producers. Mexico alone supplied almost 70 million pounds of shrimp to the United States last year.

In recent years the areas that have developed into major producers of shrimp are: 1) the Persian Gulf, which is bound by Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia; 2) the countries of the Middle and Far East, Borneo, Ceylon, India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand, which border on the Indian Ocean; and 3) British and French Guiana together with Barbados and Trinidad, which have begun to produce significant amounts of shrimp.

The exploitation of new shrimp grounds, particularly in South America, has been the direct result of United States boat interests wishing to develop more sources of supply. Looking into our crystal ball we cannot see any new producing areas arising in the near future that would change the present state of the market. This statement is based upon the following:

a) Shrimp is an animal found mostly in territorial waters, therefore, the major fishing nations of the world, Japan and Russia, cannot utilize the major portions of their fleets.

b) New shrimping grounds cannot be fully exploited due to lack of experienced boat personnel, lack of mechanized boats in the lesser developed nations, and lack of adequate port and repair facilities in the developing areas.