

One factor which prevents the production of better quality fish or shrimp products is resistance from the fisherman and his union. It is almost impossible for any fish dealer to tell his fishermen to dump a load of fish that hasn't been properly handled. That could only be done with a strong organization and rigid quality control. It must be preceded by a great deal of research on the proper handling of fish and shrimp.

The work done by Mr. Punchochar and others of the Fish & Wildlife Service in the freezing of cod and haddock in the round at sea, has been very useful. The freezing of shrimp at sea has also shown how a high quality product can be handled. However, these advances are bound to come slowly and until the public has learned to differentiate between qualities and to pay more for fine quality, they will continue to be slow.

In the past half century there have been remarkable advancements in food quality and plant sanitation. But while the public still believes all foods to be adequately policed by the Food & Drug Administration advances cannot be made as fast as they should. Research and institutions are giving us much valuable information that many of the food processors should use. By far the largest part of our food comes from fine, clean plants and materials, but much improvement is possible. The fish industry will be forced to establish standards of quality and quality control and, that by far the best way to have these will be through voluntary controls *within the industry itself*.

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## **The Economic Effect of the Importation of Fishery Products on American Standards**

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The importation of seafoods, and particularly of shrimp, has been a controversial subject since the closing days of the last war. Many ideas have been advanced and many arguments have ensued, but none have solved the problem. Greater imports of shrimp, year after year, have aggravated the issue. Mexico has been the chief exporter of shrimp to the United States, but other foreign countries, particularly those of South America, are now entering the picture. India will no doubt also enter into the picture in the near future. Some solution must be sought for this situation. Any problem on controversial subject can be satisfactorily solved, if the will to do so exists.

Until recent years almost 100 per cent of the shrimp handled and sold commercially, came from these Gulf of Mexico waters. Let us recall the geography of the Gulf of Mexico, since it is from this body of water that about 90 per cent of the present supply of commercial shrimp is taken. In the U.S.A. the State of Texas on the western side; on the east is Florida. Between these lie Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. At the present time, Texas and Florida are the two largest producing states from grounds of the Mexican coast. Texas and Florida boats also do considerable fishing of shrimp off their own shores and Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana boats do practically all of their fishing off their own shores. Much of it is in "inland" waters. Louisiana is the principal producer of domestic shrimp in the United States.

The development of the shrimp industry—boats, trawls, and other equipment

—is entirely American. United States capital, American labor and American ingenuity have developed this great industry. Many millions of dollars have been invested and standards of quality and living standards have risen as a result of this investment and effort. Fishing villages have gained new homes, new commercial buildings, new parks and recreational centers. "Poor" fishermen have become substantial and respected citizens. Many former fishermen today are owners of shrimp processing plants. Many of them own their own fleet of boats. All of them are enjoying far higher standards of living as a result of the growth of the shrimp industry. In considering the problem of imports we must always bear these facts in mind.

The following figures represent imports of shrimp from foreign countries, beginning with 1945. The figures given are in pounds of headless shrimp.

Year	From Mexico	Other Countries	Total
1945	7,873,888	1,901	7,875,789
1946	12,056,001	46,460	13,274,965
1947	13,228,505	187,974	12,243,975
1948	21,477,390	85,633	21,563,023
1949	29,382,193	291,012	29,673,205
1950	39,652,640	545,423	40,198,063
1951	39,575,128	2,248,785	41,923,913

From 1935, through 1944, the total importation of shrimp from all foreign countries was 36,972,073 pounds. This ten-year total is about four million pounds less than the amount imported in 1951 alone. Imports for the year 1952, will probably be far greater than the 1951 total. From these figures the magnitude of the problem can be grasped. All of these shrimp are consumed in America, in competition with American-produced shrimp. It is important to remember, in this connection that Americans, with American capital, have organized the shrimp industry in Mexico and other countries. Americans are thus competing with American producers. It is likewise important to remember, of course, that competition is the heart of every business. From this competition there comes the incentive to improve the standards of quality and the efficiency of operation; standardization follows. But *this competition creates the problem* that faces the industry today. The domestic industry should not be placed at a disadvantage in relation to the foreign industry. Several ideas have been advanced to solve the problem. Some have advocated the placing of tariffs on imports; others have advanced the theory of establishing an import quota. Some have advocated government prohibition of financial aid to foreign countries in the building and equipping of shrimp boats. All of these ideas have merit; none of them will solve the problem. There is another idea which has been advanced, which the writer favors, which will place all producers, foreign and domestic, on an equal basis. It should not be difficult to implement if it is carefully planned. In the United States shrimp boat owners pay their crews by a standard method of shares. The owner provides the boat and equipment to the crew and takes one half of the catch. The other half of the catch is divided among the crew. Sometimes the boat owner takes one share for the boat, another share for the gear (until the gear is paid for) and the remainder is divided among the crew. Food and fuel are paid for before the catch is

divided. When the owner takes a half share he provides the gear and rigging. If the crew heads the shrimp at sea they are paid for this labor at a fixed price. The plant operator has established minimum labor costs which are, for the most part, established by law. Other labor costs are agreed upon, between labor and management, based upon American standards of living. Thus the operators' costs are standardized, either by law or by practice. To sell to the government an operator must certify that he has conformed with all requirements relative to minimum wage and other laws. Furthermore, the minimum wage and hour laws also apply to shipments of products in interstate commerce. It is suggested that this same principle can be applied to imported fishery products. It could be specified, that before imports are allowed to come into this country that the country of origin be required to certify that fair labor practices were adhered to in their production. This would apply to fishermen, plant employees or any other labor involved. The minimum wages and hours could be set for each country by mutual agreement of representatives of industry and government in the foreign country and in the United States. In this manner the higher standards of living would result and these standards would become more uniform. Competition would then develop from which could come the survival of the fittest. Equalization of standards would eliminate unfair competition.