Sater - Int. 2879

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 1952

HADDOCK CATCH TO DECREASE ON GEORGES BANK IN 1952

The 1952 catch of haddock on Georges Bank will be 89.0 million pounds if the fishing effort is the same this year as last, it was announced today by the Fish and Wildlife Service. This is a reduction of 2.3 million pounds or 2.5 per cent of last year's catch of 91.3 million pounds.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has been studying the haddock populations on Georges Bank for many years and has now accumulated enough information on the life history of the fish to make predictions of catch possible.

The first prediction was made in April 1951 for the catch of that year, and proved to be 98.4 per cent accurate. The 1952 prediction is made on the assumption that the haddock fleet will be fishing the same number of days as last year. If fishing is less intense, landings will be correspondingly less.

The degree to which Georges Bank is fished depends in part on the abundance of fish on the nearby Nova Scotian Banks. During the early months of 1952 large catches have been taken from these banks by the larger trawlers sailing out of Boston. If the great abundance of fish on Nova Scotian Banks continues, Georges Bank will be fished less this year than last.

The catch of haddock from Georges Bank has fluctuated from 223 million pounds in 1929 to 50 million pounds in 1934. Since 1934 it has fluctuated between 78 and 122 million pounds.

Service biologists at the Woods Hole, Mass., Laboratory are studying the causes of these fluctuations. Some of the variations in catch are due to economic conditions, but the greatest fluctuations are brought about by changes in the abundance of fish due to natural causes. The reasons for these natural fluctuations are still not clearly understood.

The ages of the fish that support the Georges Bank fishery range from one to nine years. The number of fish in each age group varies tremendously. In some years there are very successful broods; in others there are virtual failures. The causes of these variations in brood strengths are being studied.

The 1948 brood was unusually large and has been the main support of the Georges Bank fishery for two years. It will continue to contribute a large share of the haddock this year, but in smaller numbers in succeeding years. The future of the Georges Bank haddock depends upon the strengths of the oncoming broods of fish.

About 130 million pounds of haddock are landed at New England ports annually. In 1950 the value of the catch was $12,000,000. About 70 per cent of the haddock landed normally come from Georges Bank.

The catch of haddock surpasses that of the famous codfish by over 50 million pounds annually.

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