

DOMESTIC FISHERY

At present, Russian fish resources are in a critical state. As a result of excessive pollution in the Azov, Black and Caspian Seas by oil products, heavy metals, pesticides, phenols and other poisonous chemicals; massive declines of valuable species in these areas have been observed. It is feared that if this pollution is not ended, fish resources in southern Russia could disappear completely. Pollution is also a characteristic of seas in the Russian Far East, notably on the South Coast, for the regions of Sakhalin and Eastern Kamchatka. In particular, the extraction of oil and gas deposits underway near North-Eastern Sakhalin is threatening fish resources in the Okhotsk Sea. This sea accounts for more than 50 percent of all the Far East fish resources. More than 60 percent of the total catch of fish and sea products of the Russian Federation comes from the Far East Basin.

Uncontrolled fishing in the Caspian and Azov Seas is having negative effects on resources. Intensive sturgeon fishing in the Caspian Sea, particularly in the regions of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, could result in the undermining of sturgeon stocks. Similarly, the problems associated with sturgeon fishing in the Azov Sea has yet to be resolved with the Ukraine. Russia ranks fourth in the world for catches of fish and other marine products. The fisheries industry employed more than 500,000 specialists before privatisation, and the Russian fleet included 3,200 vessels with main engine capacity exceeding 75 H.P.. Russian vessels generally have large crews, a lower rate of efficiency, and much lower technical levels for most on-board apparatus, including fish processing equipment. Recently, the trend has been to increase the use of more modern equipment through joint ventures etc.

The general line of development of the Russian fishing industry in 1994 will be concentrated on the exploitation and development of marine resources in the territorial waters and in the economic zone of Russia. Fishing in the inner reservoirs is not going to be developed significantly due to the unsatisfactory ecological situation, an insufficient volume of fish resources, and the high level of investment required for the breeding of freshwater fish. Increases in production in freshwater reservoirs could only be achieved by developing various types of aquaculture operations.

The decrease in marine catches and stepped up exports to earn hard currency resulted in reduced fish supplies to the domestic market. The Russian government has realized that a strategy should be directed to the intensive development of aquaculture. Farmed fish production and distribution of products to consumers-because of the closer location to markets-require much less energy than in the marine fishery. Significant fuel cost savings and the opportunity to create employment should act as stimulants in the development of aquaculture.

The forecast on fish and marine products catch by fishing companies of the Russian Fisheries Committee in the first-quarter of 1994 is estimated at 1,844,000 tons or 111.5 percent of the 1993 level. This forecast is based on anticipated increases of the pollock catch at Dalryba enterprises. For the first-quarter of 1994, the total Russian output for "finished products" is expected to increase to 110.5 percent of the 1993 level. In 1992, average profitability of operations in the fisheries industry decreased by 12.3 percent due to increases in fuel costs and operating expenses. Since then, a tendency of structural changes in manufacturing of fish products towards lower quality has been observed. The proportion of non-dressed frozen fish products has increased, while that of "improved assortments" has decreased.