

*Oral Questions*

the capelin allocations? Canadian fishermen want to know why.

**Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question. It is a fact that the size of Atlantic codfish has been declining at a particular age of their maturity for the past 10 years. Scientists are examining this question very carefully because it appears there are more older fish of too small a size. We do not know what the total reason is for this. We believe it is partly due to fishing practices, perhaps involving domestic fisheries, on younger fish earlier in the year and partly due to environmental factors.

There is no evidence to suggest that the surplus stocks of capelin and squid are a primary cause of this matter, although it is one of the factors that is being examined.

• (1450)

**Mr. Baker:** Mr. Speaker, the depletion of the food supply is not responsible for the decrease in size of the codfish. Is the minister suggesting that codfish have been on a diet for the past 10 years, that they switched from squid to oat bran? Fish eat fish—that's brain food, something which is drastically needed by this government.

I want to ask the minister this. Why does this government agree to these enormous quotas for foreign countries on the east coast of Canada and an increase in the capelin quota when Canadian fishermen are under restrictions in the capelin fishery, restricted to their bay, restricted to their boats? Why restrict Canadian fishermen and open the door to foreigners? Or is the Department of External Affairs operating fisheries policy in this country?

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Siddon:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member were himself interested in consuming a little more capelin and squid we would perhaps not have to make this surplus stock available under international law to foreign fleets, which is our obligation under the law of the sea.

There is no scientific evidence to prove the fact that the hon. member has just alleged in this House, that there is a linkage between the quotas of capelin and squid and the growth factors of our northern cod stocks.

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**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. The minister knows that the figures released last Friday are the most devastating that have ever been put forward as to the net farm income for farmers in western Canada, especially Saskatchewan where farm incomes will be less than zero next year—the first time since 1933 and 1932.

Dairy farmers are threatened because the free trade deal did not protect their markets in Canada.

Pork producers are spending \$2 for every hog marketed to buy access to the U.S. market.

I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Agriculture, with all of these uncertainties in every sector of the Canadian agriculture industry—a drastic drop of 50 per cent from last year to this year in net farm income—why the government is cutting support programs by \$2 billion in 1990.

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is totally wrong. The income for 1989 has dropped by about 6 per cent from 1988, which was indeed a record year.

He talks about devastation. The devastation was in place when the Liberals were in office. In 1984, 550 bankruptcies occurred on the farm, plus all the foreclosures and the voluntary retirement of farmers. That has been reduced by more than 50 per cent.

While there are still problems, which we are addressing, I can assure the hon. member and the agriculture community, as we discussed throughout the course of the last two-day meeting, there certainly is an air of confidence about our ability to deal with the challenges of the future.

There is a clear indication that farmers know that this government has stood with them in the past. They know that we will stand with them again. That is the best confidence that they can have.