

consumption of fresh and frozen products. In 1985, per capita consumption of fresh and frozen products reached 4.1 kg (9.0 lb.) compared to 3.5 kg (7.7 lb.) in 1982.

As a nation, the United States can be described as a moderate demand market (on a per capita basis), ranking 37th out of a total of 125 fish-eating nations listed in statistics of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. The United States' consumption rate is less than 20% of that of Japan, the heaviest user-nation. However, on a range of per capita consumption figures going from 0.1 kg (0.22 lb. — round weight) to 86 kg (189 lb.), the United States' consumption rate of 16.6 kg (36.6 lb.) is slightly above the average, which stood at 14 kg (31 lb.) between 1980 and 1982.⁽¹⁾

It must be remembered that this level of consumption occurs in a country with one of the highest standards of living in the world. Americans generally are not limited in their choice of what to consume by lack of disposable income or by the lack of availability of fish products. In other words, they are consumers who have the money to pay for any one of the many product alternatives in the marketplace.

Consumer behaviour is usually greatly influenced by relative pricing. The price index for fish, as reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce, has risen since 1977 at a faster rate than that of meat or poultry. Using 1977 as the base year, fish escalated in price by 56.6% by December of 1984, as compared to the rise of 46.6% for red meat and 32.2% for poultry.

It appears that prices for fish have risen more rapidly mainly as a result of relatively higher growth in production cost in the fishing industry and to some extent the demand trend for fish. Although the price of fish has risen at a greater degree relative to that of other protein foods, this rise has not yet been steep enough to cause product switching (see Table 6 below). Certainly, the emphasis on fish as an important component of a healthy diet (with its beneficial effects on the cardio-vascular system) has contributed to the increasing demand over the last few years. However, this demand would probably have grown even faster had fish prices not increased so rapidly since the mid-seventies.

Table 6

**U.S. PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION OF ANIMAL PROTEIN PRODUCTS
(edible weight in kilograms)**

| | 1965 | 1970 | 1975 | 1980 | 1983 | 1985 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <i>Red Meat</i> | 67.4 | 74.4 | 70.5 | 72.0 | 65.5 | 65.7 |
| <i>Poultry</i> | 18.7 | 22.2 | 22.3 | 27.7 | 29.8 | 31.9 |
| <i>Fish</i> | 4.9 | 5.4 | 5.5 | 5.8 | 6.0 | 6.6 |

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Economic Data Research Service

⁽¹⁾ United States Department of Commerce, *Fisheries of the United States*, April 1985.