



ALASKAN HALIBUT

The Alaskan halibut fishery is entering its final week. Catch to date stands at 46.5 million pounds, or roughly 97% of the quota. There is still a small catch quota remaining in the major catch areas (Southeast Alaska and the Central and Western Gulf of Alaska. These remaining pounds will most likely be taken by season-end. The largest uncaught quota is out west, where it will likely be left on the bottom. Fishing at this time of year is weather-related, which means spotty availability of fresh halibut. This has driven the market price up. The exact opposite is true, however, for frozen halibut. Inventories are stacking up like cordwood and are simply not moving with any degree of rapidity. With a weak economy and high prices, don't expect things to change in the near future. All sizes of frozen halibut are available- even "whales", which are typically very scarce going into the winter. With high costs into frozen halibut, sellers will be reluctant to discount inventories. Instead, many will hope that the disappearance of fresh halibut from the market will spur customers to go with "re-fresh" programs. Time will tell. In the meantime, savvy halibut buyers will purchase product hand-to-mouth and watch the market continue to soften.

The Alaska halibut season will end at 12-noon on November 15th.

FROZEN WILD SALMON

CHUM SALMON:

The 2008 Alaska chum fisheries are over. It has been an above-average year so far catch-wise, and frozen inventories are generous in a variety of sizes and grades. The Canadian chum fishery (Johnstone Straits) has also come and gone, but did not kick any significant fresh or frozen volumes into the picture. The Puget Sound chum run as been a disappointment thus far, and the run size has been downgraded. Even Hokkaido has come up short thus far, and is running about 30% behind last year's catch levels. Russian chum fishing has also been less than stellar.

With four of the five major fisheries performing poorly, conventional wisdom would expect a bullish market. This has not proven to be the case.....yet. Many chum customers have held off on buying, until the overall production picture is known. Those buyers are now starting to arrive at the table. A lack of pink salmon may bring other buyers to the table, as they look for value-priced salmon for reprocessing. Both bode well for sales- with one fly in the ointment. As Bill Clinton said: "It's the economy, stupid". Sagging currencies have made Alaska chum more expensive in virtually every world market. While this will hopefully change in time, it's a major concern right now. As a result, movement is slow with an undercurrent of optimism. All sizes and grades of chum are available, at prices a tad higher than last year at this time.

COHO SALMON

The 2008 Alaska coho is over. Catch this year has been equal to or better than preseason projections, and fish size has been larger than in years past. Even though a hungry fresh market gobbled up a lot of product, the size of the catch was large enough for fish to go to the freezer for the first time in years. Frozen inventories are decent, but not overly burdensome, and the market is slow and quiet. Coho sellers are looking at two variables that will affect the market in the coming months. First, a weak economy could affect sales adversely. Secondly, poor sockeye inventories could jump-start sales. While things sort themselves out, inventories of troll and net coho are good, for most sizes and grades.

FRESH WILD SALMON

For all intents and purposes, the wild salmon season is over for this year. Some cohos and kings are dribbling in from Native Fisheries in Northwest Washington. With some rain, the last of the run should move into the river systems. Buyers should exercise caution as many of the fish are past prime condition. A few late season Puget Sound chums are still available as well.

FRESH FARMED SALMON

ATLANTICS: The continuing issues of the ISA outbreak remains tough on the Chilean growers as the past several months have seen a steady harvest of all pens regardless of size to minimize farm losses. It is now expected volume for 2009 production will be 90% less than targeted and 2010 expected to be 80% less than originally planned for before a full production schedule is expected for 2011. Expect good value for fresh 1/3 size fillets at least thru the end of '08 and first quarter of '09.

Western Canada production is strong in u/10 lb fish volume providing stable pricing for the month of November. Most farms growth is on track to be hitting a 12 lb average by years end and production volume appears to be in good supply to account for shortages expected out of Chile. Most Western Canadian farms are anticipating handling additional market needs the later part of '09 and have increased their seed stock.

Norway/Scotland continues to provide normal volumes at firm prices.

STEELHEAD: Chilean steelhead production is expected to trend up as more farms investigate switching a few sites to growth this fish. So far they have been immune to the ISA/Kudoa issues that plague the Atlantic specie.

The two farms with steelhead production in Washington are at full capacity with demand strong on both H/on production and PBO or PBI fillets. Both locations have shifted into new generation production with sizes staying firm on 1-3 lb fillets. Due to stronger interest domestically, mostly due to cheaper prices versus the Atlantics and Pen disease issues in Chile, each farm expects to offer increased availability starting next fall.

KINGS: Steady supply continues out of NZ in the 6/8, 8/10 and 10/12 size with prices remaining firm due to stronger currency value with other countries. Western Canada production is done until next February.

FROZEN FARMED SALMON

ATLANTICS:

Chile: Many companies in Chile are struggling to survive; companies are devastated with problem after problem. ISA continues to be the largest problem in the industry. Newest problem is with sizing, all fish are small and they are trying to generate immediate cash flow so they need to sell off small fish for money. However; the forecast for next year is optimistic for, many producers are expecting double the growth from 2008, as long as fish remains healthy. If ISA continues, many companies risk going out of business.

Norway: A sagging Kroner has made Norwegian atlantics available at prices very comparable to Chilean fish (if you are buying frozen).

COHO AND STEELHEAD:

Harvest of Chilean coho and steelhead has started, and the harvest season will last until year-end. Most of the product is slated for Japan, but there is extra inventory to come to the US if niches exist. Then Japanese market is weaker than normal, due to world economic issues, and Chileans are eager to broaden their homes for these species.

GROUND FISH

ALASKAN POLLOCK

The pollock fishery in the Gulf of Alaska is all done for the year following the closure on November 1st. With so much of the pollock going H&G to Portugal and China, the fillet market has come up short as prices start firming. However there is a dark cloud brewing on pollock as the U.S. dollar is so strong now against the Euro, customers are not so excited to buy pollock and will only buy if the price is cheaper. Inventories are backed up in Portugal on collar bone-on pollock so don't look for Portugal to be a player in 2009 unless the price is substantially lower than last year. The Surimi market continues to climb as supplies are low.



ALASKAN COD

The fixed gear fleet will continue to fish from Kodiak until the end of December. This fishery is under the State-Water guidelines and quotas. In the last 2 months the Euro dollar has fallen against the U.S. dollar. In addition there have also been some European bank failures. This has made the market for U.S. Cod in the H/G form (which is headed toward European ports) to drop. Current U.S. shatterpack Cod inventories are adequate but movement has been slower than normal pace. The best advice on Cod shatterpacks is to buy hand to mouth until we see what happens in the New Year.

WASHINGTON/OREGON/CANADA

Weather issues are now playing a big part in groundfish availability as we move deeper into the fall. Buyers are experiencing increased difficulty finding supplies of fish. Rockfish landings in British Columbia have tightened considerably and prices have moved up. Ling has been almost non-existent as has true cod. Some petrale and rock sole are occasionally in the mix. Some dover and assorted other flats are available from Oregon ports. Look for this trend to continue as weather is always the big factor this time of the year in West Coast groundfish landings.

IMPORTS

YELLOWFIN TUNA

Longline tuna prices remain high. Not many fish coming in are suitable for CO treated so price for CO-treated tuna products will be higher within the next month. The supply of natural (i.e. chocolate) tuna is slightly better than last month. Purse Seine tuna prices have dropped and the supply remains stable. The canning factories will be slowing down production for November and December, so more product will be available for frozen market.

ALBACORE TUNA

Most of the Albacore catch is currently going to the can. Landings and pricing of Albacore remain the same this month. No significant change. Demand and supply are equal.

MAHI MAHI

The majority of the South America mahi landings today are in Costa Rica where landings have been steady. However, the size of fish is small and quality of fish is still soft. Peru and Ecuador harvest and production has been steadily producing for the fresh market only, due to the same reason, soft and small fish. Early pricing is expected to start out about same level as last years prices. Predictions are that plants in Peru will start buying and processing larger fish within the last week of November.

Asia: Little to no catch or production taking place in Asia at this time.

SWORDFISH

Most of Taiwan's flagged sashimi vessels are starting to fish now. Therefore, more sashimi-grade swordfish will be available early next year. For sashimi grade swordfish, ex-vessel price has dropped slightly and is expected to drop even more ex-vessel, making price levels for importers better. Sea-frozen grade remains strong, landings are fair and price levels remain the same. Demand for sea-frozen swordfish increases during winter months, so price is expected to slightly increase by December.

ORANGE ROUGHY

Orange roughy inventories are good inventories based on current demand, and prices have leveled off. If you need a large quantity of one size, you may need to use more than one importer. All sizes of fillets are available, but 8/Ups are your best value. Production overseas remains limited.

TILAPIA

The Chinese equivalent of FDA has greatly increased surveillance of tilapia factories and outbound shipments, new requirements went into effect last month on sampling plans and testing requirements, this making shipment times longer to the United States.

Production has increased and raw material prices have come down slightly. Price of fillets to the export market will likely come down as well within this month.

SHELLFISH

DUNGENESS CRAB

Next dungeness fishery will be the West Coast season with most areas opening around Dec 1. Currently there are several field fisheries taking place to determine meat infill (must be 25%) to determine exact opening date. No quota is set and early talk was speculating around a weaker year. Below are the last two year's catch comparisons (numbers in million lbs):



	07/08	06/07	%Diff
WA	15.4	14.3	108%
OR	12.7	15.2	83%
CA	6.8	13.9	49%

KING CRAB

The quest for the 18,327,600 lb quota of Bering Sea king crab kicked off on October 15th. Initially there were rumors of a strike but those thoughts vanished once a \$5/lb grounds price was posted the evening prior to kickoff by most of the "A" share packers. Fishing has been going well with approximately 53% of the quota landed (108 vessel landings, 8,592,199 lbs). Historically most of the AK king crab is sold to Japan where early reports are that CNF sales have been reached at \$10.25/lb. King crab imports are down nearly 52% from this time last year which is attributed more so to the crackdown on illegally caught Russian product than anything else. Fishing is currently ongoing in the Barents Sea where they have caught 50% of the posted 12,500 MT quota. Additionally, fishing for red king crab in the Sea of Okhotsk continues to have efforts made towards the 3600 MT quota.

Since opening August 15th the brown king crab fishery efforts in the Eastern district has yielded 22 landings accounting for 2,104,141lb (74%) of that quota. As for the Western district there has been minimal effort directed so far. The first deliveries from this fishery are currently arriving in Seattle and expect to be available for sales within beginning of November. Historically this catch fills the 16/20 and smaller size ranges but early reports are these crab might be a little bigger and find more 12/14 average available than normal

SNOW CRAB

The 2008/09 Alaska opilio quota has been announced with a slight decrease for next season. Next years catch will be 52,695,000 down 7% from '08 TAC total yet still 34% higher than the 5 year average. Current frozen offers for 2008 inventory have been slowly winding down with minimal changes for offers of inventory available in Seattle. The Alaska opilio season officially opens October 15th but no concentrated effort is expected prior to January 15th, 2009. The bairdi fishery also saw a drop in the new season quota, down collectively 23% from the previous year, but up versus the 5 year average by 37% in the Eastern district and 27% in the Western district. This fishery opens Oct 15th and a concentrated fleet will focus efforts after the closure of the Red King crab fishery.

Both areas in Eastern Canada are now closed with 99% of the announced quotas being caught. Prices soften with most inventory available on the East Coast priced \$0.15-.20/lb less than AK opilio on the West Coast.

CRAB QUOTAS

The quotas for the 2008/09 Alaska crab fishery have been announced. Below list this years TAC and comparison to the 5 year average.

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	5 year avg.
Bering Sea Red King Crab	15,424,000	16,483,312	13,887,531	18,324,046	18,327,600	16,489,298
Bering Sea Opilio Crab	20,831,000	33,256,303	32,699,911	56,722,400	52,695,000	39,240,923
Eastern Bering Sea Bairdi	0	395,657	1,267,106	3,100,500	2,486,700	1,812,491
Western Bering Sea Bairdi	0	395,657	633,910	1,958,400	1,383,300	1,092,817
Eastern Bering Golden King	2,800,000	2,569,209	2,692,009	2,690,377	2,835,000	2,717,319
Western Bering Golden King	2,700,000	2,382,963	2,002,186	2,246,040	2,551,500	2,376,538

SOFT SHELL CRAB (BLUE CRAB)

Domestic soft shell crabs are in adequate supply and prices are firm. The down-turn in the economy has slowed movement. This year's poor production has made inventories short, but with the slow down, there should be plenty of product available for the Holidays. At this point, you may only be able to order product of all sizes from the East Coast.

Asian soft shell crab inventories are getting short again and prices are firming. The wild crabs from the oceans that are taken to the farms to be raised are in short supply but should improve by month-end, creating better inventories for December. Demand for this product remains strong.

CRAB MEAT

Canadian snow crabmeat inventories are good and prices have leveled off. Demand for product has slowed going into Europe and with the fall in value of the Canadian dollar, more product is available for the U.S. Prices could start to fall slowly.

Korean snow crabmeat will be short for the start of the month, but inventories should improve by the end of the month. Production overseas became very short in September and continued into October but has now improved. Prices will rise as new product arrives into the U.S.

Rock crabmeat inventories of both combo and salad meat are good. Production has improved greatly compared to previous years. Prices have levelled off but could start to come down slowly to increase demand for the holidays.

SCALLOPS

Domestic scallops will start the month with good inventories of all sizes, and prices are currently staying steady. Demand has slowed but this could be just temporary. The current season ends at the end of December. As demand increases, the U/10 scallops will be the first to be out of stock and 10/20's will get short. If you have customers who need U/10's for the holidays, they need to buy now. Prices could quickly firm on all sizes with any increase in demand.

Japanese scallops are in good supply, and prices are down slightly. Production overseas remains good as long as the weather holds. If the weather turns bad, production will slow and prices will rise. Current inventories should be good through December.

Chinese scallop inventories of both dipped and dry product are good. Prices have leveled off and production overseas has improved. With the high cost of storage, some dipped product like 40/60 scallops are not being stored on the West Coast because of slow movement and will need to be ordered from the East Coast.

SHRIMPMEATEastern Canada

Both the Newfoundland and Gulf of St. Lawrence coldwater shrimp seasons are closed. Landing reports to date indicate better than 98% of each respective areas quota was caught. The better part of 60% of the frozen inventory was presold to European markets early on but the current weak economic atmosphere has more product being pushed to US domestic needs.

West Coast-CA/OR

The 2008 west coast shrimp season closed October 31. Final catch for this season which kicked off back in April is 25,154,037 lbs which is a 25% improvement over last year's landed catch of 20,000,000 lbs. Most packers have noticed a shift in size percentages as more of the catch is landed in the 250/350 category.

LOBSTER TAILS

Australian tail inventories are limited, and prices are down because of the economy. Once demand picks up for the holidays, prices will rise. All sizes from a C tail 9 oz (8-10 oz) and larger will disappear quickly with no replacements until product arrives from the new season in January. If you need any of these sizes, you'll need to order now. A and B tails should remain available.

Warmwater tail inventories of all sizes and origins are good, and prices are down. Demand is at record lows and packers need to move product. Production from the current season has been very strong in the smaller sizes from 5 oz to 7 oz. If you need quantities you will find some very good bargains. If you have a customer who usually uses a good amount of 8 oz tails, have them look at a 7 oz tail. The cost difference is significant.

Canadian tail inventories of all sizes are also good, and prices are down. Demand for product is flat and prices have dropped sharply. Importers have got to move product and if you need quantities you may be surprised by the discounts you get.

PRAWNS

Black tiger inventories are good and prices are down. Demand has been way down on tiger block product, keeping prices down when product overseas is being offered at higher prices. The current season is winding down for all production. The next season will not start until April. With demand down, packers overseas will have to lower prices to get importers to buy. The 26/30 and smaller black tiger blocks are in tight supply. Demand for value-added product is better, and inventories are good. Prices are coming down slowly for value-added product, but will level off by mid-month. Prices could start to rise in early December.

Vannamei white inventories are good for all sizes, but prices are soft. Demand is down especially for block product. Movement has been better for value-added products and should continue. Prices should remain pretty steady for value-added product to keep things moving because demand is down compared to last year. Price increases will slow the movement of product.

Mexican shrimp inventories are strong on farmed product and strong on wild U/15 and 16/20's. The current catch on wild shrimp is strong on U/15's and 16/20's and improving on 21/25's. Inventory is very short on 26/30's and smaller. Expect prices to drop on U/15's and 16/20's.

Domestic shrimp production remains low compared to what it should be. Prices are being kept down just to move product. Inventories are limited but boats are still fishing.

Rock Shrimp inventories are finally getting better and prices are down a little. Restaurants would like to put them back on their menus but production has been too limited.

WEST COAST LOLIGO SQUID

The new season for loligo squid should be under way by the middle of the month. Southern California could use some heavy rainfall to help lower the water temperatures to start bringing in the squid to the catch areas. Current inventories are limited and it would really help if the season starts on time, although that has not happened in the last couple of years. If the water is too warm, the squid will not come in close enough to be caught.

*** This publication is a compilation of contributions from Gary Raven, Rick Johnson, Jim Matlock, Nancy Campbell, Darrell Mellum, Ted Mobley and Bart Cox. Edited by Blanche Lease. We would like to thank the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute for use of their images in this publication.