

8. Laws and regulations

The Deficiency Appropriation Act, U.S. Statutes, volume 43, approved March 4, 1925, stated: "* * * for cooperation with State and municipal health agencies in the prevention of the spread of contagious and infectious disease in interstate traffic through oysters and other shellfish * * *." Public Law 410 also provides authority for cooperation with the States in preventing interstate spread of communicable disease.

PART II. DATA BEARING ON ECONOMIC ASPECTS AND IMPACTS OF THE PROGRAM

9. Economic effects

Effect on personal income.—Continuing production and sale of shell fish products are dependent upon the maintenance of acceptable sanitary quality. The industry employs, directly or indirectly, approximately 50,000 persons. Thus the livelihood of 200,000 to 250,000 persons are, fully or in part, dependent upon the industry. Most of the jobs are concentrated in the coastal areas where the industry is, in many cases, an important element of the economic base. For example, a Public Health Service-sponsored study in Franklin County, Fla., discloses that 65 percent of the jobs and 55 percent of the income were generated by the oyster industry.¹ Any restrictions on marketing shellfish would be a great economic blow to many coastal regions and would result in a significant loss of income for coastal communities. Conversely, the effective administration of this program permits the continued utilization of this unusual natural resource.

Effects on earnings.—In many coastal areas shellfish resources are a significant source of income. Workers now employed in the industry could not be readily trained for other jobs nor could capital investments be readily utilized in other endeavors.

Effects on business.—Approximately 1,500 firms, mostly small businesses, are involved in the production and processing of shellfish. Their continuation in business is dependent upon protection of growing areas from pollution and other public health measures which will assure the sanitary quality of the product. The "protection" is provided by the national shellfish sanitation program.

Effects on wage levels.—Unknown.

Other benefits.—It is difficult to calculate the costs to the community of a major disease outbreak. For example, in 1961-62 approximately 1,100 cases of infectious hepatitis were attributed to raw clams or oysters which had apparently been harvested from polluted areas. The cost to the community in terms of hospitalization, loss of work, and welfare benefits must have been significant.

Geographic differentials.—The economic benefits of the program accrue most directly to the 21 States which have areas used for the production of shellfish. The distribution of these areas is shown in table 2.

¹ Marshall R. Colberg and Douglas M. Windham (both of Florida State University, Tallahassee), "The Oyster-Based Economy of Franklin County, Fla."; Public Health Service, U.S. Department of Health Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C.; July 1965.