

price ceiling is \$14.75 a cwt., Chicago. This corn-hog ratio of nearly 14 to 1 contrasts with the theoretical break-even point of 10 to 1 or 11 to 1. Wartime peak for the ratio in the Corn Belt was 19.5 to 1 in October last year.

• **The Official Goal**—To conserve feed, War Food Administrator Marvin Jones is asking hog producers to limit 1944 pig output to 100,000,000 head compared with 125,000,000 in 1943. Officials realize, however, that in view of the record-size 1943 corn crop in principal Corn Belt states, it may be necessary to take action on prices.

## Kraut Is Out

**Packers' stocks are frozen until Army needs are filled, and that portends a lonesome winter on civilian tables for spareribs.**

Civilians' last hope of getting any commercial sauerkraut this year faded last week when the War Food Administration froze packers' stocks until military requirements of 3,500,000 cases (No. 2 cans) are filled. With most kraut packers getting about half as much cabbage as usual, says the National Kraut Packers Assn., there will be very little sauerkraut left for the civilian.

• **Plenty of Cabbage**—There's no dearth of cabbage; the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture estimated on Sept. 1 that the "late" (northern states) crop would total 417,000 tons, compared with 390,100 tons last year and 399,500 tons for the 1932-41 average.

Reason for the kraut shortage is the tremendous demand for table cabbage, plus the difference between price ceilings on the table crop and on the kraut crop.

Table cabbage is picked early to obtain the small, green, relatively loose heads usually preferred by the retail trade. Kraut cabbage is allowed to mature in the field, and while farmers normally get about \$5 less a ton for it, they make as good a profit because the heads get firmer and heavier (up to 12 lb.) as they mature.

• **Big Table Sales**—Ordinarily there's little competition between buyers of the two types, but this year because of the shortage of other fresh vegetables, heads weighing up to 10 lb. were sold for table use. One shipper reported selling a load of "table" cabbage that averaged only six heads per 50-lb. sack.

As kraut packers tell it, buyers of green cabbage "swooped down on the fields like vultures," paying farmers \$30 a ton, which they could well afford because of their \$2.90-a-hundredweight price to retailers.

• **Held to Ceiling**—Packers, however, were held to the \$12-a-ton, 60¢-a-hun-

dredweight ceiling which WFA announced last April, with the understanding that kraut prices would be adjusted accordingly. (No kraut ceiling has been established yet; theoretically, at least, each packer is operating under maximum prices as of March, 1942, at which time he was paying \$7 a ton for cabbage.)

As a result, packers are nearly idle now—at what should be the height of their packing season. One 58-year-old company, Christ Sievers, Inc., Chicago, reports that by the first week in October it had packed only 300 barrels, compared with the 3,000 it would normally have packed by that date.

One of the largest New York companies reported its pack as of Oct. 5 as only 300 tons, compared with 10,000 tons in the same period last year. A Wisconsin firm, the Shiocton Kraut Co., reports its current pack as 50% of normal.

• **Price Lid Lifted**—On Sept. 28, WFA announced that packers could pay \$22 a ton for cabbage, and again promised that the March, 1942, ceiling on kraut would be adjusted accordingly. This may yet assure some cabbage for packers, but weather conditions will determine how much they get.

While the \$22 ceiling will salvage some profit for packers who work on contracts and managed to make some of them stick, it's no help to the smaller outfits which always buy their cabbage on the open market but haven't been able to touch any of it this year for less than \$35 to \$40 a ton.

• **Army Pays Ceiling**—That's where the freeze really hurts. Now that the Army is their sole buyer, packers can only expect to sell their product at a ceiling price—still to be announced—based on the \$22 ceiling on cabbage. Those who had to pay nearly twice that much to compete with table cabbage buyers are just out of luck.

## Oysters Are In

**Harvest, now hitting full stride, may be close to normal if prices aren't controlled; but the services get first pick.**

Fear of an OPA price ceiling that would drive oyster fishermen into more lucrative wartime employment is the big cloud overhanging the oyster industry as the 1943 harvest swings into full stride. Barring such a development, the industry won't fall far short of the normal annual crop of 90,000,000 lb. of meats, despite labor stringencies.

• **Take What's Left**—That doesn't mean that oysters will be plentiful in the public markets, for the civilian consumer will take what is left after the armed forces have skimmed off the first 40,000 gal. a week. But it does mean that oyster-packing plants can achieve something approximating normal operation—if their containers hold out.

Containers could prove a bottleneck. Metal containers are rationed, glass is of limited suitability, and fiber containers (for shorter shipments) are available only in limited quantity and must be ordered several months in advance. Boats are no problem; the Navy took few of them because oystering vessels are ill-suited to Navy needs.

• **Where They're Found**—Chesapeake Bay and Long Island Sound have the most valuable oyster beds in the United States, although oystering is carried on also in inshore waters along the Atlantic seaboard southward from Massachusetts, on the Gulf Coast, and on the Pacific Coast (principally Puget Sound).

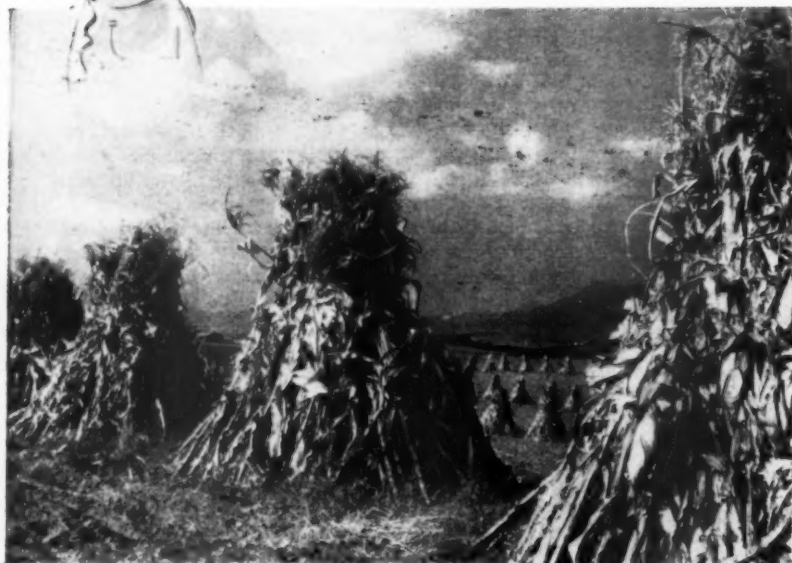
Maryland and Virginia top other states in both quantity and value of output. The Long Island Sound industry, however, shows a much higher



While harvesting their beds through the "R" months, oyster fishermen now find their biggest worries are prices, manpower, and container shortages.



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ratio of value to output because a larger proportion of the oysters is destined to wind up on the half shell and thus command a higher price than the Chesapeake shucking stock.

• **Half Are Cultivated**—Commercially cultivated oysters account for well over half the country's supply. Oyster culture is particularly intensive in the North. Long Island Sound oysters are transplanted as many as five times (from seedbeds to growing grounds to fattening grounds, etc., to improve their edibility on the half shell) before they are ready for market. The important beds in that area are just beginning to show signs of full recovery from the 1938 hurricane. Ordinarily this would mean a supply of larger and fatter oysters this year because it takes five to six years for the oyster to mature in those waters. But many of the planters depleted their beds last year by selling even their three-year-olds to take advantage of the big prices that were offered.

Manpower problems hold fewer terrors for the industry since oyster fishermen and shuckers were given deferred draft status. But the competition of war industries—particularly in the South where shuckers are commanding and getting double their normal pay—is a continuing threat.

## Too Many Eggs

Government manages to unload shell stocks, but drop in demand for dried product poses tougher problem.

It looked for a while last week as though government food men might never get their eggs unscrambled.

Several thousand cases of shell eggs had been put up for auction and scorned by the trade. Even more serious was their second egg problem, for Uncle Sam was under contract to buy some 30,000,000 lb. to 40,000,000 lb. more dehydrated eggs than he could find use for.

When the Food Distribution Administration offered for sale a surplus of between 15,000 and 17,000 cases of shell eggs in the Northeast, it found no takers. Dealers, able to buy fresh eggs, refused to buy storage eggs unless they knew whether they had gone into storage last March or at what time since then.

Observers figured that if the FDA did not regrade the eggs it would have to sell them as Grade C. But FDA was holding out for a higher price. An alternative was to sell them to freezers who could grade the eggs when they opened them for freezing.

• **Purchasers Appear**—By the end of the week, however, about 15 of New York's