

ABSTRACT: "OILS AND FATS STATISTICS"

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THE term "Oils and Fats" is not confined to edible materials, but extends to nearly all oils and fats from vegetable, animal and marine sources; some of these are used entirely for inedible purposes, whilst others can be used in either the edible or the inedible field. The proportions in the industrialized countries are roughly two-thirds edible and one-third inedible usage, but in the under-developed countries utilisation for inedible purposes is naturally much lower.

An idea of the utilisation can be obtained from the main end-products. On the edible side are included margarine, butter, lard, compound lard, cooking fats, dripping and edible oils for cooking or salads, etc. The principal inedible use is in soap-making, whilst large quantities of drying oils (mainly linseed oil) are needed for paint and linoleum manufacture, and for other purposes. It is unnecessary to list all the sources of the fatty materials used in the manufacture of soap, margarine and edible fats, but copra, ground-nuts, sun-flower seed, cotton-seed, palm oil, palm kernels, tallow and whale oil are the principal sources; other important sources are soya beans, rape-seed and olive oil.

World Production of Oils and Fats (Oil and Fat Content) Metric Tons

<i>Estimating Authority</i>	<i>Pre-war</i>	<i>1948</i>
U.S. Department of Agriculture	19,771,000*	18,918,000
Food and Agricultural Organization	23,200,000†	21,745,000
Unilever	21,587,000†	20,931,000

*1935-39 average.

†Mainly 1934-38 average.

Metric Ton=2,000 lbs.

The degree of accuracy attainable in these production estimates depends on many factors. Statistics of dairy butter production, for example, are reasonably accurate, whilst figures of farm production of butter are subject to fairly wide margins of error. The international control of whaling permits exact calculations so far as whale oil is concerned, but the production of other marine oils is difficult to assess, since in the under-developed countries the necessary figures are not collected. In a few producing countries, factory statistics of tallow, etc., output are available, but for most countries estimates of output of "other animal fats," *i.e.*, tallow, slaughter fat, etc., are more in the nature of "informed guesses." The accuracy of vegetable oil production figures also varies from country to country; reasonable accuracy is possible for the production of the more developed countries, but not for many of the under-developed tropical countries; although exports from these latter countries are published, the figure of domestic consumption of oils and fats can only be a broad estimate.

About 18-25 per cent. of the oils and fats produced enter world trade. For some producing countries the percentage exported is, of course, much more than 25 per cent. whilst Europe (and particularly U.K.) is heavily dependent on imports to supplement indigenous or local production of oils and fats.

**Visible* Fats and Oils : Pre-war (1934-38) World Production and Consumption
(Oil and Fat Content)**

Thousands of Metric Tons

	Indigenous production	Net imports or exports	Apparent consumption	Percentage of world population
Countries with high fat consumption (27 kg.=59 lb. or more) mainly U.S.A., Australasia and Western Europe	5,745	+3,035	8,780	14%
Countries with medium fat consumption (10-27 kg.=22-59 lb.)	5,125	+ 360	5,485	17%
Countries with low fat consumption (below 10 kg.=22 lb.)	12,330	-3,395	8,935	69%

Imports + ; Exports—.

The precariousness of the fat supply position for Western Europe (the main importer in the high fat consumption group) is obvious from the table. The supplying centres fall mainly in the low fat consumption group, and even a small increase in their *per capita* consumption, if uncompensated by higher production, could severely cut European supplies. This, of course, has happened to some extent during and since the war, although the shortage of oils and fats in Europe has been due not only to the decline in export supplies from the Far East, but also to lower production of butter and other animal fats in Europe.

Figures of *per capita* consumption are useful in giving a broad picture, but do not necessarily provide a precise comparison of nutritional standards. The figures include both edible and inedible usage of oils and fats, and since inedible usage is higher in the more developed countries, nutritional differences are not quite so pronounced as the table suggests. But even if a similar table giving edible fat consumption was available, it would still have to be related to general nutritional levels. It would then be found, for example, that the rise since pre-war in the *per capita* consumption of oils and fats in the Far East was due partly to lower supplies of cereals, particularly of rice. Furthermore, information on "visible" fat consumption as shown in the above table would require to be supplemented by information on fat consumption in an "invisible" form. Changes in "invisible" consumption during and since the war have been considerable. In the Far East there has been wider use of fresh coconuts and ground-nuts as food, and this has occurred in addition to the rise in "visible" fat consumption. In the United Kingdom the lower *per capita* supplies of "visible" fats, *e.g.*, butter, have been offset to some extent by a larger consumption of fresh milk. In Western Germany, on the other hand, much of the milk is skimmed in order to permit a high level of butter production, so that "visible" supplies are raised at the expense of a reduction in "invisible" fat consumption.

* "Visible" : Production and consumption which is known or can be accurately estimated.