

U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy
June 17, 2002

Dear Commission Members:

I would like to comment to this Commission with regard to aquaculture development in the United States. I have been involved with the aquaculture industry since my education in Marine Biology back in the mid 80's. What I have witnessed over this time is the United States falling further and further behind the rest of the world in its development of a competitive aquaculture industry. At the same time most of our commercial capture fisheries have diminished in both productivity and value. This double edged sword has caused the U.S. trade deficit in seafood to balloon to well over \$7,000,000,000 (seven billion dollars) in 2001. The current seafood trade deficit is twice what it was in 1995, and is second now only to imported oil as the largest natural resource trade item affecting the U.S. economy. Unfortunately, this gap will only further expand as the trend for increased seafood consumption in the U.S. continues to grow.

Over the past 30 years, European countries have also witnessed their commercial fisheries decline in much the same manner, but they have responded to this situation in a much different way. Their governments have endorsed and developed a robust aquaculture industry. These countries recognize that aquaculture is a necessary and sustainable alternative to the wild capture fisheries of the past. They now produce a variety of aquaculture products, not only for their own domestic consumption, but for significant exports to the United States and other countries. Asian and Latin American countries have also followed this recipe, and now constitute some of the largest seafood exporters of the world. The United States, with its strong dollar is obviously one their primary markets. (Please review the attached NOAA documents.)

Our Nation needs to accept that most natural populations of marine fish can not support the continued pressure of commercial harvesting. Marine fish are one of the last "wild" animals that we are still commercially hunting and harvesting for human consumption. Our Country has spent billions of dollars just trying to maintain salmon populations on the west coast in order for fisherman to capture them for human consumption. If that money was to be spent on the research and development of marine aquaculture, we would have ample amounts of seafood available for human consumption. It is time to shift our view from hunter gatherers to being marine culturists, as we have done with all of our terrestrial food sources. In order to achieve this goal, we need to increase the incentives for businesses to pursue these kinds of developments.

Marine aquaculture has to be fostered in much the same way as we fostered the growth of terrestrial agricultural in order for it to gain a foothold and then expand. Federal, State and local projects were instrumental in the early days of supporting agriculture, and still play a significant roll today. We accepted the changes that were made by traditional

agriculture on the landscape and the environment, in order to develop the industry we have today. The burden was carried by all of us, but the benefits are distributed to all of us in return with the creation of jobs, communities, and an abundant domestic food supply. Aquaculture needs these same types of incentives, since it is an expensive, risky and relatively new venture for companies to pursue. The current regulatory structures that face the aquaculture industry have essentially halted any new significant development of aquatic animal production. Couple this with the constant opposition from commercial fishing interests, environmental groups, and upland owners, and it is easy to see why aquaculture is not flourishing here. Domestic and foreign investment companies are being courted away from our waters with government incentives to develop aquaculture projects in these other countries, while the U.S. aquaculture industry faces stifling regulations at home.

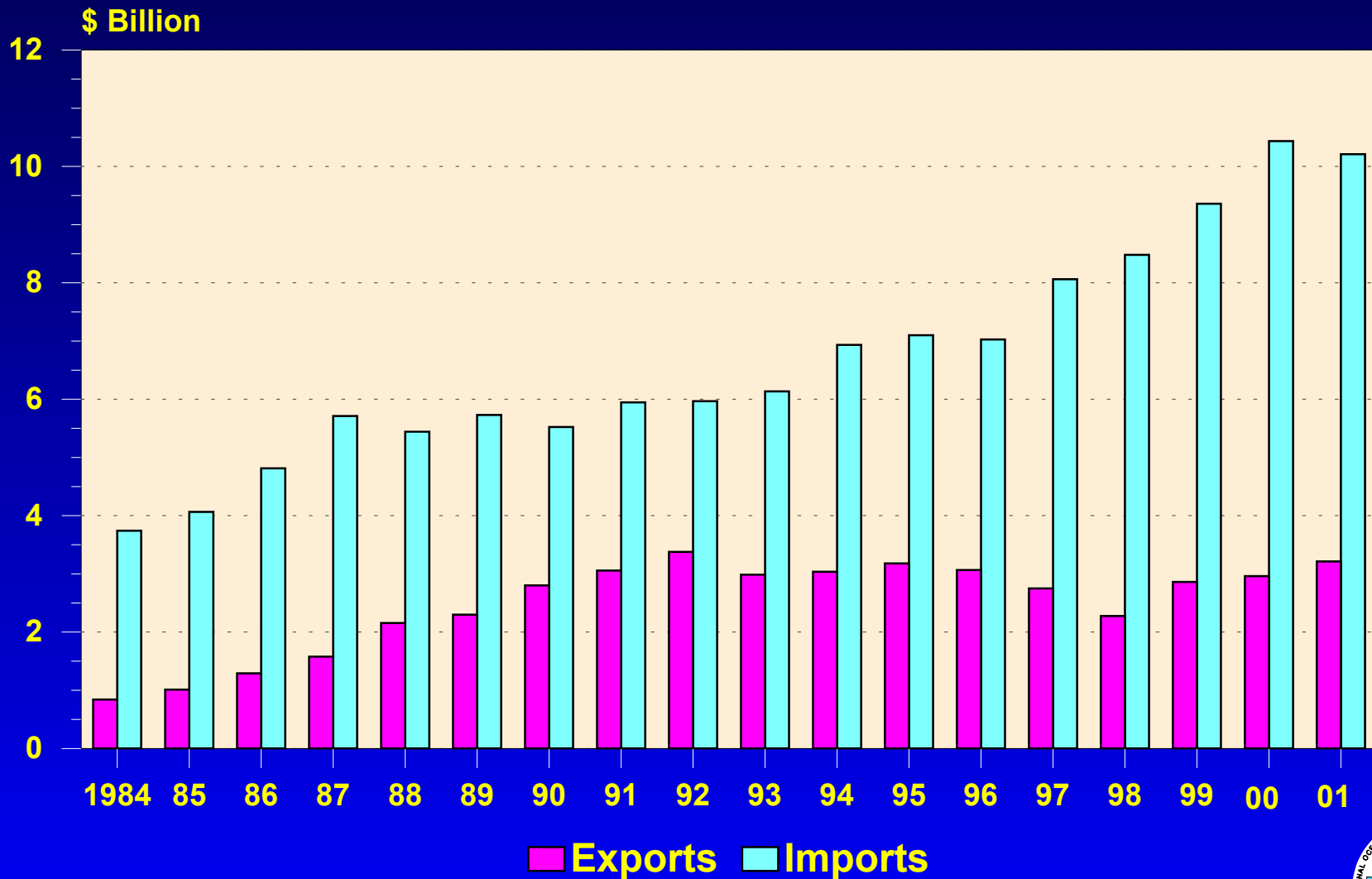
Aquatic farming is relatively young, but has seen, and will continue to see further advances in technology that will increase its efficiency, and reduce its impact on the environment. The only way the industry will continue to discover new and improved ways of farming fish, is if it is allowed to develop and then drive research and production into even newer and improved technologies. Significant advances in feeds, vaccines, holding facilities and breeding have all been made in the relatively short life of this marine aquaculture. When one compares equal amounts of protein production from terrestrial and aquatic farms, it becomes immediately apparent that land animal production causes much more long term impacts than aquatic animal farming. In a recent paper by Dr. Kenneth Brooks (see attached) a leading expert in marine sediment chemistry, he points out that to produce 1,000 tones of beef you would need to utilize 3,600 hectares of good pasture land for nearly 2 years, with all of the environmental affects associated with pasturing those animals. In comparison only 1.6 hectares of deepwater habitat would be impacted for the same amount of time, in order to produce 1,000 tones of farmed salmon. In an environmental-affects point of view, the raising of fish in net pens is significantly less harmful to the environment. We need to recognize, address and accept the relatively small changes that aquaculture may have on our marine environment and then move forward. It comes down to a simple choice, either our government agencies streamline their regulatory processes and help develop this important food source, or we rely on foreign countries to supply our seafood needs in the future.

Sincerely,

Kevin J. Bright
General Manager, Cypress Island, Inc

U.S. EXPORTS AND IMPORTS OF SEAFOOD

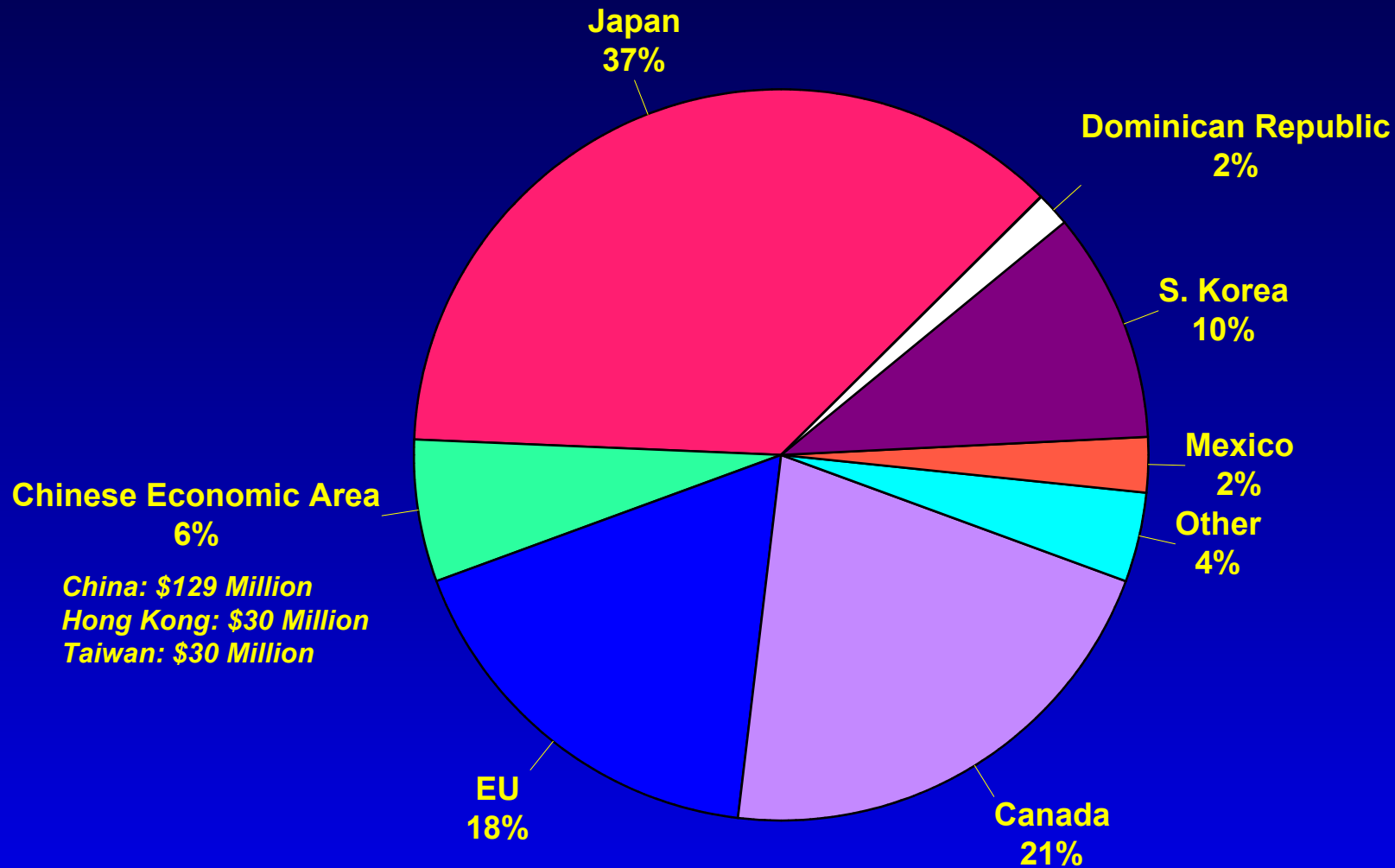
1984 - 2001



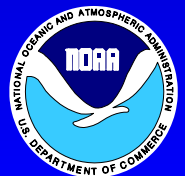
DOC, U.S. Bureau of the Census



TOP U.S. EXPORT MARKETS, 2001

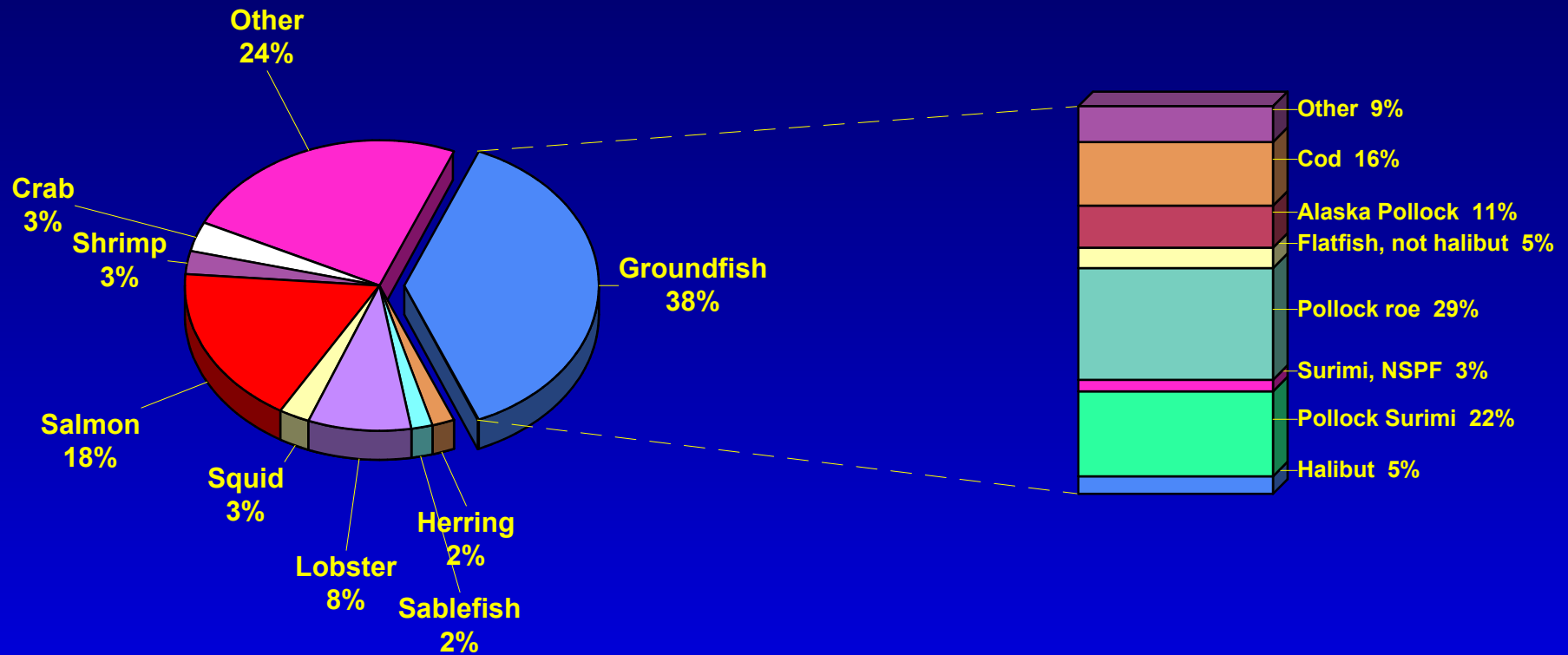


Total Exports: \$3.2 Billion

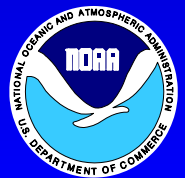


U.S. SEAFOOD EXPORTS, 2001

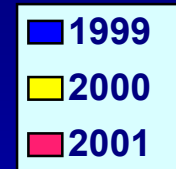
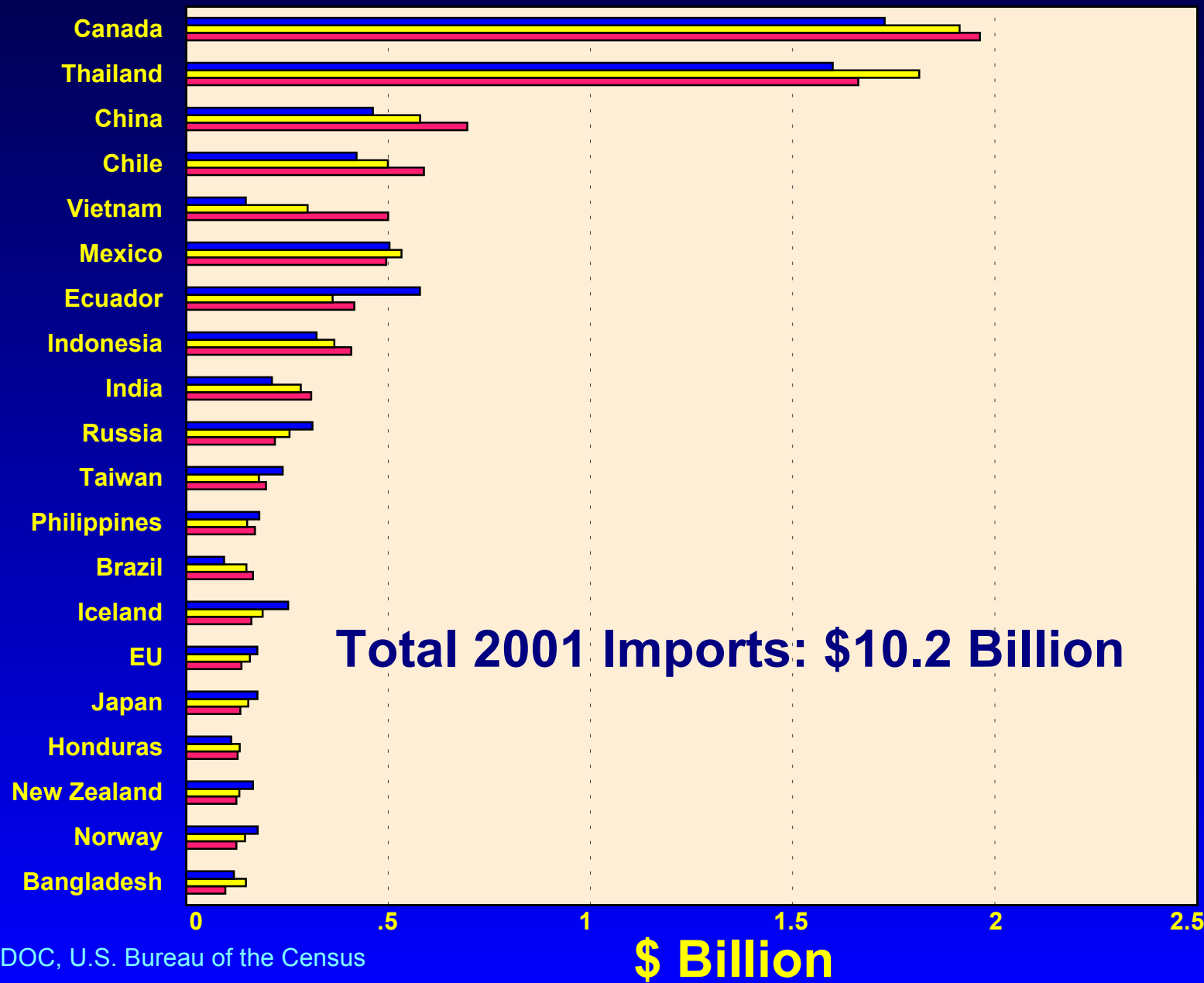
(By Species)



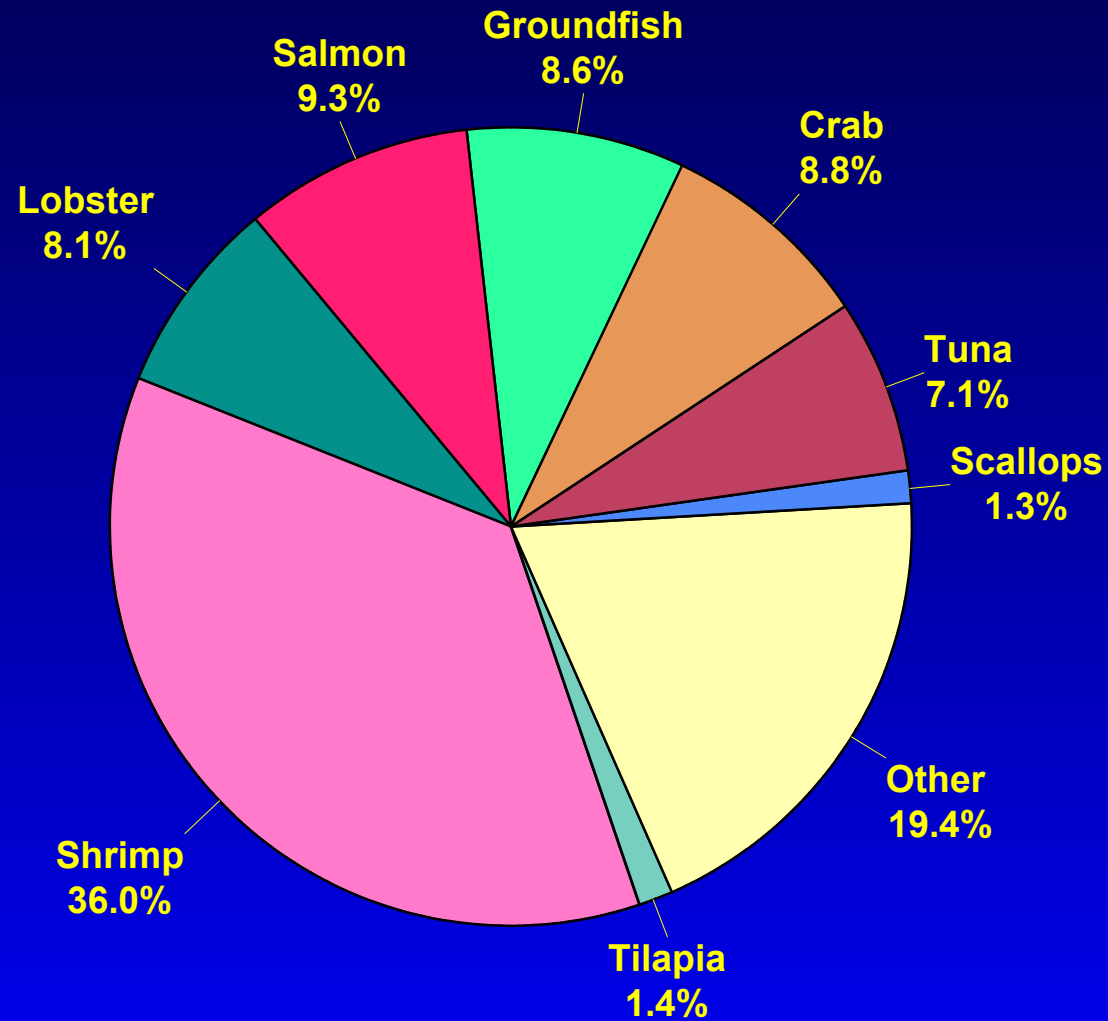
Total Exports: \$3.2 Billion



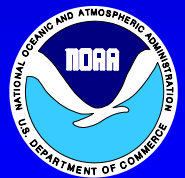
U.S. SEAFOOD IMPORTS, 1999 - 2001



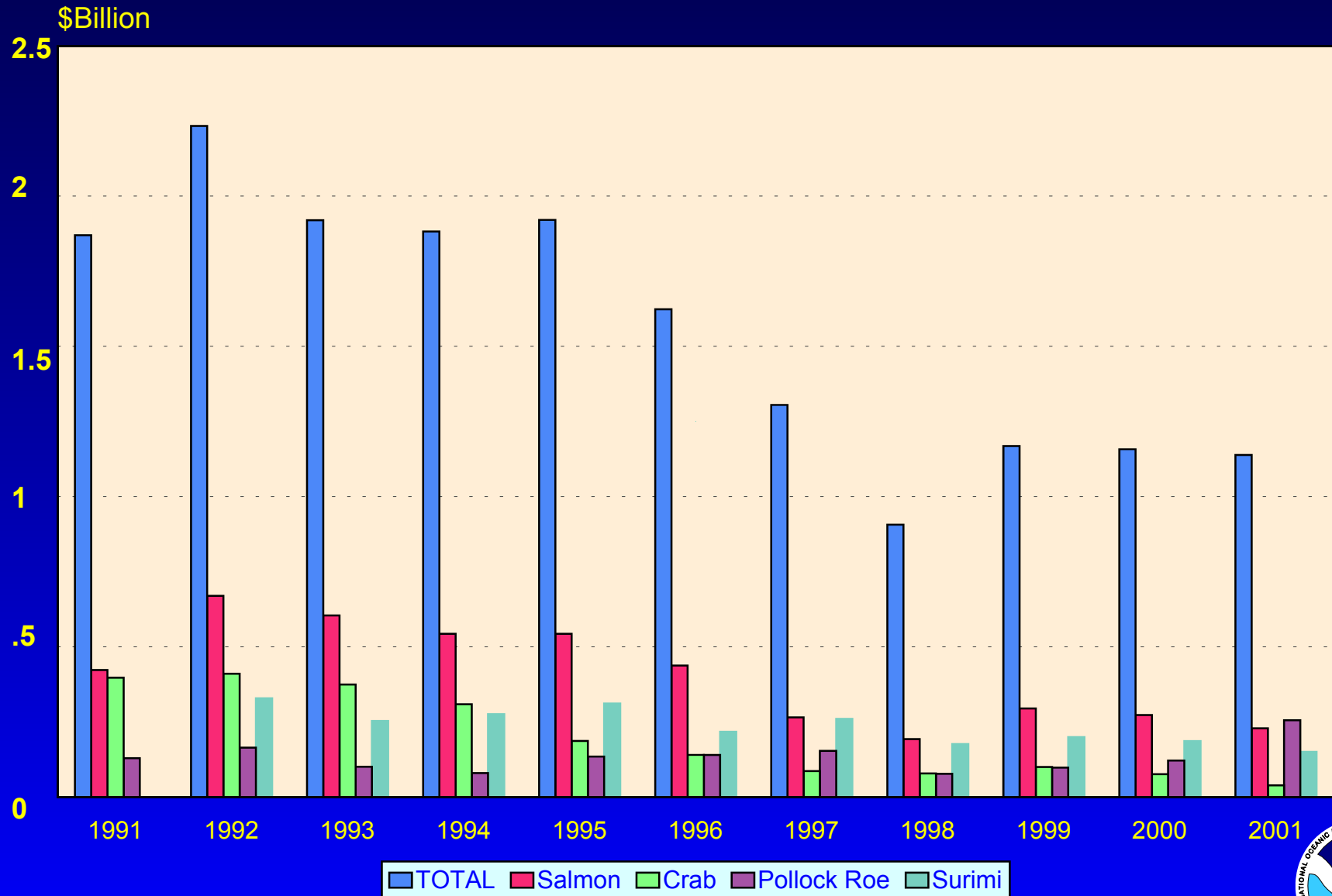
U.S. MAJOR SEAFOOD IMPORTS, 2000



Total Imports: \$10.2 Billion



U.S. EXPORTS TO JAPAN, 1991 - 2001

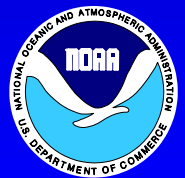


DOC, U.S. Bureau of the Census

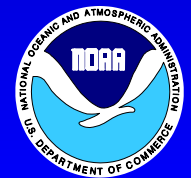
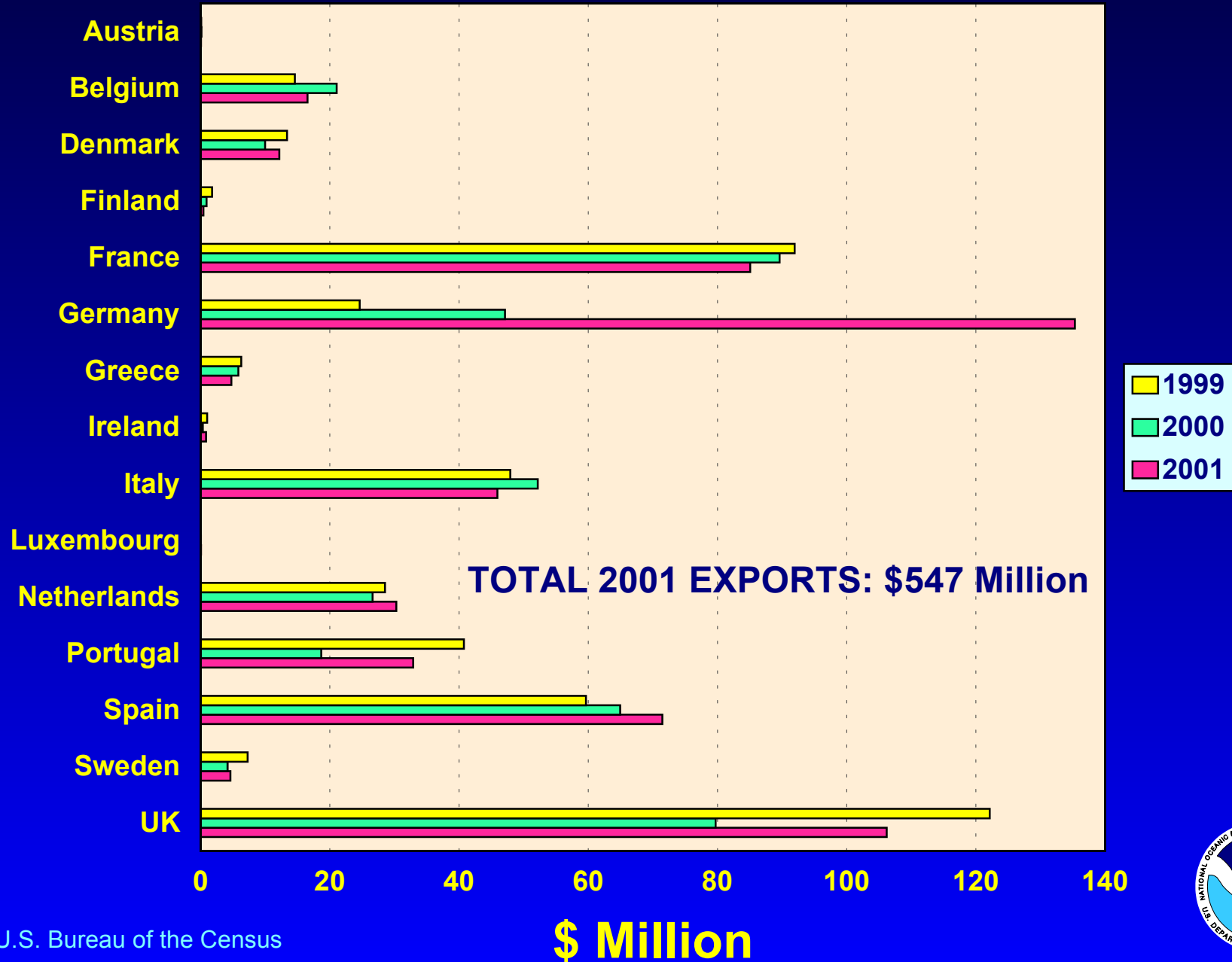


U.S. SEAFOOD EXPORTS TO EUROPE

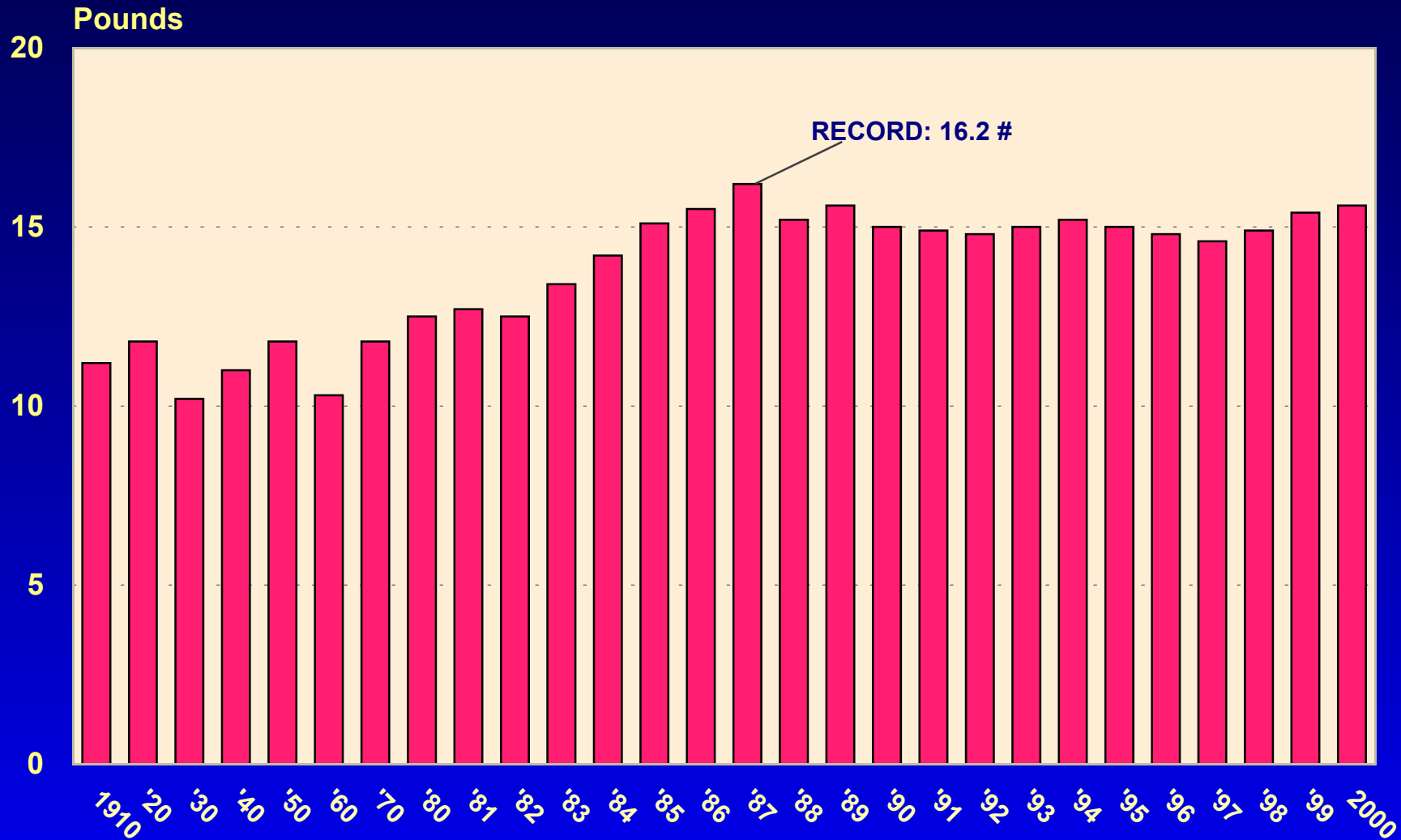
(\$Million)



U.S. EXPORTS TO THE EU, 1997-2001



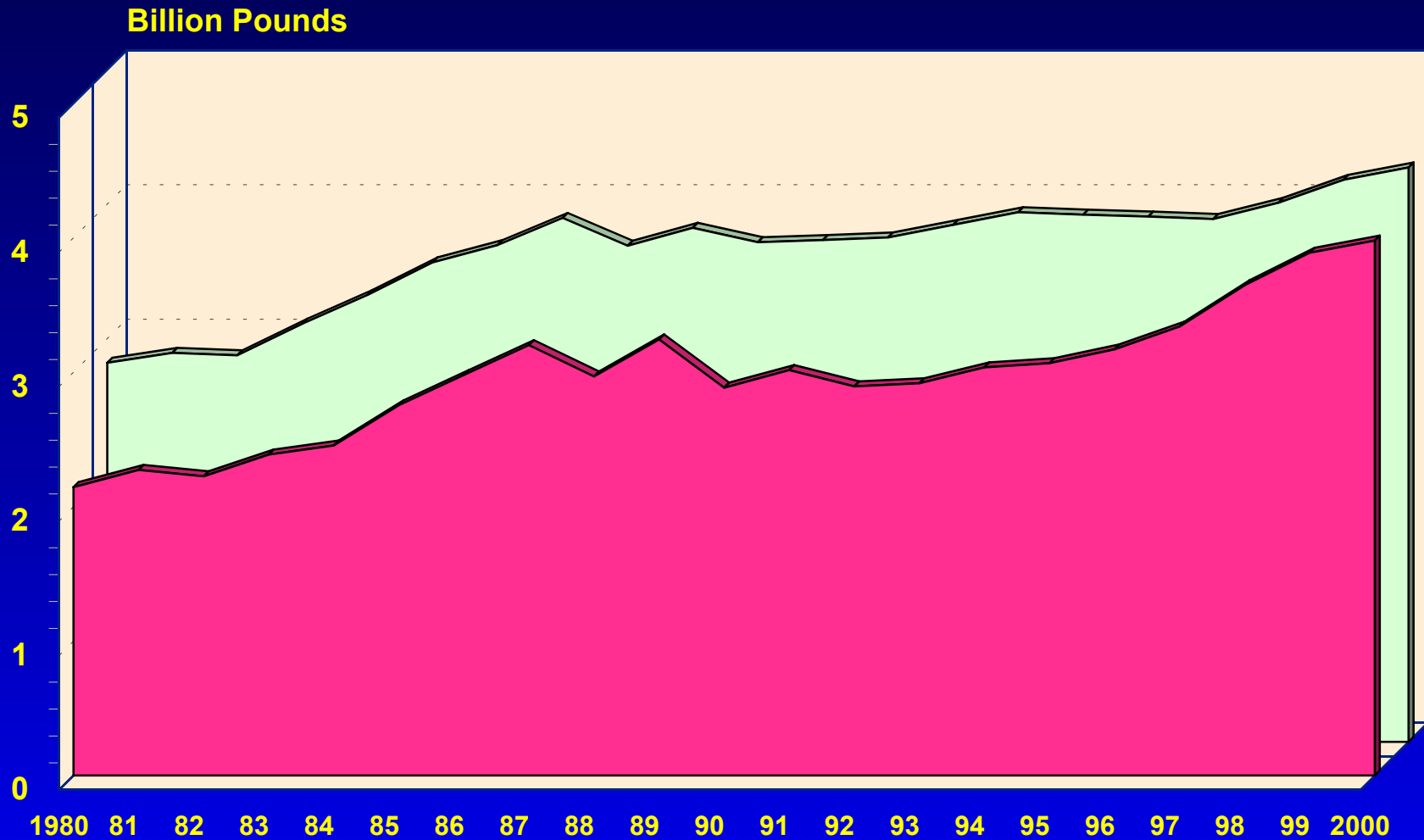
U.S. PER CAPITA SEAFOOD CONSUMPTION



DOC, U.S. Bureau of the Census



U.S. SEAFOOD CONSUMPTION



Imports Total Consumption

DOC, U.S. Bureau of the Census

