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Fabricated Foods

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Fabricated foods used to be oriented toward the consumer-convenience-and-profit syndrome. But University of Minnesota food scientist Eugene Sander says that is not true.

Sander says now food fabrication emphasizes more efficient protein utilization, improved human nutrition and exploitation of new protein sources. Optimism that the sea will provide unlimited resources for fish protein overlooks palate preference for selected species. Also, excessive waste that results from preferential fishing is placing limits upon this most natural resource.

Preference is limited to approximately 20-percent of available fish. The remaining 80-percent are ignored as a protein source. They are returned to the sea dead or alive, or used in pet foods. Even a seafood product as popular as shrimp can be used more efficiently. Minced shrimp flesh can be recovered during processing and re-shaped into whole-shrimp.

The abundance of small crustaceans also provides a ready source of shrimp flesh which can be minced and combined with a matrix agent and shaped into larger shrimp that have greater customer appeal. Basically, this same concept has been used very successfully for fabricated onion rings.

If unfamiliar species of fish are to replace the shrinking supply of desirable fish, processing methods must change. The fish processing industry has been, and is, extremely wasteful in providing fillets to the fresh and frozen markets.

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