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COUNTRY STATEMENT - COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

STATUS OF FISHERY IN THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

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INTRODUCTION

This report is a briefing document on the status of fishery developments in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands for the participants of the South Pacific Commission/Forum Fisheries Agency Regional Meeting on November 17-19,1980 in Noumea, New Caledonia. Details on the socio-economic, legal, financial, and institutional constraints of the Northern Marianas fishery are identified in the Northern Marianas Fishery Development Plan.

I. Fishery Conditions

A. Fish Catch Data

1. The domestic fish catch records indicate an approximate catches of reef fishes, tunas, marlins, etc from 1975 to 1979.

Year	Catch (pounds/metric ton)
1975	26,611/11.83
1976	117,395/52.17
1977	236,888/125.25
1978	59,069/26.25
1979	108,042/48.01

2. The Japanese fishing activities (pole-and-line and longline fishing) within the 200 miles of the Northern Marianas waters from 1973 to 1975 far exceeded local catches of tuna, marlins, etc. (Source: American Embassy - Japan).

Year	Catch (Metric ton)
1973	7,351.3
1974	5,749.8
1975	7,793.8

B. Domestic Fishing Fleet

The fishing fleet in the Northern Marianas consist predominantly of small skiffs ranging from 12 footer to 25 footer and are powered by outboard or inboard engines. There are very few sport fishing boats and commercial fishing vessels.

1979 Boat Survey - Division of Marine Resources

Outboard motorboats	113
Sport fishing boat (30-35 footer)	3
Commercial fishing vessel 30-42 footer	5
72 footer - M/V Olwol (pole and line vessel)	1

II. Physical Infrastructures.
The fishery facilities in the Northern Marianas are totally inadequate and inefficient. There is no centralized fishery complex to cater to the needs of the local fishermen. Reefer and ice facilities are lacking in some places and are privately owned in other areas. Protective berthing places during typhoons are non-existent in Rota. Some of the port harbors are shallow and narrow and will not allow exit and entry of vessels during rough seas. Lights and water facilities are not available in many existing docks. Navigational lights and bouys are also not available in some areas.

A. Port Facilities in Saipan.

1. Charlie Dock (Commercial Port or Pier C)
The "L" shaped dock consist of 4' x 4' x 5' masonry walls of concrete blocks which were constructed by the Japanese prior to World War II. There is a 530 feet berthing space in the north side of the pier witha depth of 25 feet. The west side of the pier is 20 feet deep and the south side has an 8 feet depth. A prefab warehouse with a 12,000 square feet of space is being used for break-bulk warehouse and is inadequate for heavy cargo traffic. Another prefab warehouse is located at the entrance of the pier and is being occupied by the Port Division and also used for government warehouse. A small section is being used by the Division of Marine Resources. The finger pier to the north is occupied by K.K.Industry for operation of a freezer plant and office space. The total open areas at the Charlie Dock are inadequate due to recent increase in cargo traffic especially the containerized cargoes. Fuel depots under Mobil Oil Micronesia is situated south of the pier. The Norther Marianas Department of Public Works is located north of the pier which operates the Saipan Permanent Power Plant and the Central Repair Facility. Two seaplane ramps are not being fully used except launching ramp and berthing areas for private fishing companies. The port areas will be jointly used in the future by the U.S.military and the Commonwealth Government when need arises.

2. Garapan Pier (Garapan "Fishing Base")
The 485 feet finger pier was constructed by the Japanese and was later rebuilt by the U.S.Military Forces. It was the site of a commercial fishing fleets during the early days of the U.S.administration. The area is now in a state of disrepair with eroded shoreline, broken wooden pilings, shallow channels, and several wrecks. The main channel is too narrow and shallow for larger commercial vessel. Navigational facilities are also non-existent. A concrete launching ramp was recently built by the Marianas Government. Lights and water facilities are not available. The area is being proposed as the site for the Saipan Fishery Facility which will provide some of the basic facilities for local fishermen (e.g. reefer, fish storage, ice plant, fuel, office,etc).

3. Sugar Dock
The Sugar Dock pier in Chalan Kanoa was built by the Japanese as a transhipment site for the sugar industry. The existing finger pier is 276 feet in length and was recently repaired by the Marianas Government. The berthing area and the main channel are too shallow and will not entry and exit of fishing vessels during rough seas and even during low tide. The channel is always closed during rough seas. No water facility is available at the pier. The lands adjacent are private properties. A launching ramp was built by the Marianas Government. This area is being proposed as a marina in the Chalan Kanoa/Susupe Redevelopment Plan.

B. Port Facility in Tinian.
1. San Jose Harbor
The San Jose Harbor is located at the southwest side of Tinian and was built by the U.S.Military as a staging area for the U.S.Forces in the Marianas. The harbor has a 1½ miles seawall enclosing 100 acres of spaces which provide good protection from wave actions. The harbor is formed into two basins and are seperated by an "F" shaped finger piers. The inner pier is being used for shallow crafts while the outer piers are for commercial vessels. There is a relatively large areas of open spaces at the piers. The water depth at the outer piers and quays is 24 feet. Fuel and reefer facilities are located adjacent to the dock. Under the terms of the U.S.-Northern Marianas Political Negotiations, this harbor will be jointly used by the Commonwealth Government and the U.S.Military when need arises.

C. Port Facility in Rota.
The two harbors are located at the narrow isthmus of Taipingot Peninsula with the West Dock on the northside and the East Dock on the southeast area. Both harbors have narrow and shallow channels are are useless during rough seas. The West Harbor has a 50,000 square feet of land spaces with a 200 feet long dock space. The entrance channel extends across 1000 feet of partially exposed fringing reef and is 9 feet in depth and with a 200 feet turning basin. Entry and exit during rough seas and prevailing crosswinds is impossible which cause a major constraint on the economic developments of Rota. The power plant and the government reefer facilities are located at the West Harbor. During Typhoon Pamela in May of 1977, East Dock was severely destroyed which enabled Rota to use the Federal Disaster Assistance Grant to repair portions of the West Dock. The U.S.Army Corps of Engineer is working with the Commonwealth Government in preparing Master Plan for the development of the West Harbor.

III.Fishery Resources

Various resource assessments had been conducted over the last ten years by government and private initiatives to identify and quantify the fishery resources within the Northern Marianas especially the offshore deep-water fish species, tuna, and baitfish resources, etc. These surveys also investigated other resources such as lobsters, deep-water shrimps, marine mammals, and etc. and also conducted oceanographic measurements . However, the term of the surveys were very short and the available data are inadequate.

Cruise	Type of Surveys
A. R/V Townsend Cromwell National Marine Fisheries Service	
1. April 21-May 2,1971	Baitfish, surface trolling, vertical longline, atulai or bigeye scad handline, lobster net, crab net, wire trap, shrimp trap, pelagic trawl, ocean and weather measurements.
2. July 11-19,1976	Baitfish survey, surface trolling, trolling around floating devices, plankton tows, marine mammals, bottom trawls, oceanographic measurements.
3. May - June, 1978	Surface trolling, bottom fishing, atulai handline, lobster trap, crab trap, pelagic trawl, precious coral drag net, plankton tow, marine mammal, tuna tagging, seamount charting, oceanographic investigations.
B. F/V Akitsu Maru JAMARC - Japan 1974 (few days)	Tuna pole-and-line, baitfish, plankton tow, oceanographic investigation.
C. Korean Fishery Agency	
1. 1974 one month	Shark longline and oceanographic surveys
2. 1975 one month	Shark longline and oceanographic surveys

D. F/V Daikatsu Maru
Chartered by Mendiola Fishing Company and Japan Micronesia Coordinated Co.
January - February 1976 — Bottom fishing and oceanographic surveys.

E. M/V Olwol
Commonwealth Fishing Co.
June 1976 - May 1977 — Vertical longline and net fishing

F. F/V Wooseong No.1 and 2
Korean longliners chartered by Commonwealth Fishing Co.
1/14/77 - 2/13/77 — Bottom fishing, vertical longline, and bottom fishing.

G. F/V Eiryo Maru
Japanese vessel chartered by Matsunaga Fishing Co.
1977 - 1978 — Vertical longline and bottom fishing.

H. F/V Iwa and Pacific Nomad
Albacore trollers chartered by the Pacific Tuna Development Foundation
April 1979 — Long-distance trolling

I. F/V Typhoon
Chartered by Pacific Tuna Development Foundation
June 1980-April 1981 — Seamount groundfish survey

VI. Financial Assistance.

The Commonwealth Government is now utilizing several federal aids for fishery developments in the areas of resource assessments, collection of baseline data, fishery enhancment programs, fishery training, and conservation educations.

A. Salstonstall-Kennedy Act
National Marine Fisheries Service
Pacific Tuna Development Foundation

1. Fishery Training FY79 — $43,420

2. Tuna Aggregation Project FY79 — $28,250

3. Shark Fishery Development Project FY80 — $53,020

B. Sea Grant (P.L.94-461)
University of Hawaii Sea Grant College

1. Marine Advisory Program FY80	$11,000

C. Coastal Zone Management Act
(P.L. 94-370)
Commonwealth Coastal Resource Management Office

1. Reef Atlas of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota FY79	$20,940
2. Reef Fish Study of Saipan FY79	$12,495
3. Fish Catch Statistics FY79	$ 3,200
4. Improving Saipan Lagoon Reef Fishery FY79	$ 4,969

D. U.S.Enviromental Protection Agency
Northern Marianas Division of Enviromental Quality

1. Artificial Reef Project FY80	$20,000

SUMMARY

Fishery developments in the Northern Marianas are in the stage of economic evolution. The necessary physical infrastructures are lacking or inadequate in many areas. There is no centrallized fishery complex to cater to the needs of the local fishermen. The magnitude of the fishery resources are not known and are continually being exploited by foreign fishermen without any benefits to the Commonwealth. The economic potentials and the biological conditions of the various commercial marine species are not defined which are needed for management and investment purposes. The local government lacks the capability for resource assessments and federal initiatives had been very minimal. The status of our local fisheries are under-capitalized and predominantly consist of outboard powered skiffs which are expensive and inefficient fishing platforms. In 1978 the domestic fish harvest was 26 metric tons which was lower than the imported fish products in the amount of $250,000. The development of reef fishery is being hampered by the problem of fish poisoning or ciguetoxin. There had been several outbreaks of fish poisoning in the last few years. Although there are various fishing methods that were known in other areas, these technologies have not been transfered to the Northern Marianas.

In the areas of aquaculture developments, this type of industry has not taken roots in the Northern Marianas although the potential for this industry exists especially the development of mariculture of salt-water species and the culture of freshwater species such as prawn, eel, and etc. The Commonwealth Government is determined to develop its economic bases thru fishery and agriculture despite these constraints.