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COUNTRY STATEMENT - MARSHALL ISLANDS



REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
DEPARTMENT OF RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT
MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS 96960

Country Report
Republic of the Marshall Islands

Summary: Historically, the Marshallese way of balancing their economic way of life is through their fishing activity. Recently, the canned fish products by its citizens are on the increase and government is beginning to develop the nation artisanal and commercial fisheries. To carry out these expectations, the Office of Marine Resources has recently hired four Fisheries Officers who were trained in the South Pacific Region to assist in its endeavor to reduce the countries balance of payments by encouraging the consumption of local fresh fish products.

Recently a new unit, the Foreign Fishing Base, which was financed through the Japanese Grant and Aid Program has been added to the local fishing industry infrastructure. In addition FAD's have been deployed around the Capitol, surveillance training is being promoted and development in general is following the National Five Year Development Plan.



Staff: The Office of Marine Resources (OMR) is a Division under the Department of Resources and Development and is designated to carry out government's plans for fisheries development. Office of Marine Resources consists of 5 Marshallese and an expatriate. Mr. Capital Bani recently completed a PNG fisheries training course and once oriented will become the Chief Fisheries Officer. The others hold positions as Fishing Master, Outer Islands Development Officer, Urban Center Development Officer and Mariculture Officer.

Fish Marketing Facilities: Three years ago, the Co-op closed its fish market. The building where they conducted business is being refurbished with the expectation that it will be leased to a local private sector fishing company. The old Co-op and new foreign fishing base facilities will comprise the market facility infrastructure. These units will purchase fish from fishermen, process and sell fresh and frozen products to local and foreign markets. A proposal has been recently presented to the Ministry whereas government would provide its lending institution (MIEDLB) funds for middle men to purchase refrigerated display cases, small ice machines and walkin coolers.

Grant & Aid Program: Useful and necessary equipment and materials were recently donated in the Japanese grant and aid program. The Republic received pumps, compressors, gas tank, diving equipment, sharp freezer, fish boxes, rearing tanks, hosts, ice crushers, FAD's, etc. These equipments will be used to reduce fishermen's down time and to assist the Office of Marine Resources in its endeavors.

Sport Fishing: The Marshall Islands Bill Fish Club is still active with fishing tournaments. So far, this year they have held three with contestants from as far away as Japan. Prizes for the biggest fish and for the most fish in various categories, including outboard motors, airline fares, watches, fishing gears, etc. Foods and drinks are served since the starting of tournament and ended with a gala prize award dinner.

Commercial Fishing: Practically in the winter months, fish export to Hawaii are lucrated. Last year several Hawaiian boat owners sent enough fish to Hawaii to create an interest by local Marshallese fishermen. One group of local fishermen intend to combine to export fish three times a week to the Honolulu fish auction. Office of Marine Resources is assisting them in their endeavors.

Artisanal Fishermen: Office of Marine Resources is working with the Japanese to install an outer islands fisheries development project which includes the installation of a 2 ton/day block ice machine on a nearby atoll, chill rooms on islands where fishing communities live and trans-



port vessels. To supply fish, UN designed Kiribati canoes will be sold to islands fishermen. This pilot effort would determine the suitability of equipment installed and test management style. Problems encountered will be worked out satisfactorily before expanding the system to the other twenty-four outer islands and atolls.

Training: The Office of Marine has recently request the Education Department to solicit scholarships for academic training in the fields of Biology, Oceanography, Fisheries Economies, Mariculture, and Public Service Commission in Vocational Training Institution for courses to train outer islands fishery extension officers. It is the goal of the Republic to install one extension officer to each inhabited island or atoll.

Mariculture: A UN financed trainee spent three months in Palau learning how to care for and propagate giant clam. Through the assistance of PFDF, the government received over 1,000 seedlings and suitable rearing trays. These actions have awaken interest by local private sector and now three giant clam operations are gearing up to propagate the seedling to export for tourist, the aquarium trade, foods and seedlings for wholesale distribution.

Industry: One Okinawan pole and line vessel is fishing for the local kasoabushi plant. Catch records and income have been good enough to cause owners to import another vessel and operating crew. The company produces several products as well as smoked skipjack bellies being sold locally.