

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

TENTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 13 - 17 March 1978)

COUNTRY STATEMENT - GILBERT ISLANDS

1. The Gilbert Islands still remain between latitudes 2.75°S and 3.5°N, and longitudes 162.5°E and 177°E even after the spate of cyclones in the Pacific.
2. During the short period which has elapsed since the last country statement a number of projects and plans mentioned have materialized.
3. The urgency of establishing a fishing industry in the Gilberts still remains high on the priority list.
4. The Government successfully negotiated a special survey to be done in our waters, with the Japanese Government.
5. The 'Kyoryo-Marui' arrived at Tarawa on 3rd November, 1977.
6. Bait fish trials, using milk fish from the Fish Culture Project, started almost immediately. The milk fish (Chanos chanos) have proved to be quite suitable for skipjack pole and line fishing.
7. The bait fish have also proved to be very hardy in travelling, so more fish can be carried. The Japanese project leader states that Chanos chanos will survive almost double the time of other bait fish, under ideal conditions.
8. A second phase of the bait trials will commence in April this year, on a more strict commercial basis.
9. The survey, which began in 1976, to determine stocks and movement of fish in Tarawa Lagoon has been completed. During this survey a number of side information was recorded, such as suitable mesh sizes, depth setting and best methods of mounting nets. It is hoped to have the report printed by the middle of this year, for limited circulation.
10. A fully qualified Fisheries Training Officer, from the United Kingdom, has joined the Fisheries Division. The Officer has started inservice training and has a group of twelve students. Fishermen training is also to be included in the programme. These fishermen will be selected from outer islands.

11 We already have ten young fishermen, who have been selected from outer islands, for skipjack fishing on the Japanese vessel 'Kyoryo-Maru'. They have now been aboard the vessel for three months.

12. Over the past year a senior assistant attended two courses on Bêche-de-mer collection and processing, with marketing instructions to give him an insight in the commercial field.

13. The Bêche-de-mer instructional courses were made possible through the good offices of the Fisheries Division in the Solomon Islands, and have proved very useful indeed.

14. The Bait fish Project is progressing very well. The extension ponds at Temaiku, near Bonriki airport, are nearly completed. Only the main sluice culvert, which has been constructed across the main road, has been delayed, owing to technical problems, and delays in receiving materials for building. The Temaiku ponds will cover forty acres, with further space for additional ponds.

15. Four volunteers have arrived to assist the project manager and extra staff have been recruited to assist with the now enlarged project.

16 There has been some delay in finding a vessel for the UNDP project, but it appears that the situation has improved. Experts who will operate and train Gilbertese on the vessel are being recruited.

17 A vessel for the Fisheries Division extension projects has gone through the planning and application for aid stages and it is hoped that we should have this vessel, by the end of this year.

18 Two graduates who passed the Fisheries Diploma course at the South Pacific University, have joined the Fisheries Division. One of these graduates has been booked to go to Japan for a further course on Fisheries management, he should leave Tarawa in January.

19 The supply of fish to the people on Tarawa, has increased slightly, but owing to a long period of bad weather including severe westerleys, there has been periods when fish could not be obtained on the market. An approximate landing of over 900 tons was calculated from information received from villages.

20 Processed fish is still being sent to Tarawa from outer islands, and a small quantity of shark fins are being exported.

21 The Brine Shrimp project, on Christmas Island has been taken over by the Fisheries Division under the wing of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The project is being re-organised and Fisheries staff will be at Christmas Island by the end of February.

22 The proposed Fisheries Complex is still under application and we hope to be able to see this project cleared by the middle of the year.

23 A consumer and statistical survey was completed in 1977, and has proved extremely valuable in overseas negotiations, as the division had very little in this line of information previously. The survey took just on eight months to complete and the team was led by a senior Fisheries officer.

24 It is well known that there was an outbreak of cholera in the Gilbert Islands and the islands are still under strict travel controls.

25 This situation has restricted the free movement of staff to outer islands, and it has also affected the movement of fishermen, to a certain extent.

26 The serious part of the epidemic is over, but travel restrictions and health regulations will remain under strict control for some considerable time.
