Introduction Of Edible Pond Fish From Philippines

Fingerlings of three species of edible pond fish, taken from nurseries in Manila, were flown to New Caledonia last October to stock experimental fish breeding ponds there. How the operation was carried out is described below by the Commission's Fisheries Officer . . .

H. VAN PEL

Right: During his brief stay in Manila Mr. Van Pel lectured students of the Philippine Institute of Fisheries Technology on the Commission's programme for developing fisheries in the South Pacific.

IN view of the interest being shown in territories in the stocking with fish of swamps, small lakes, ponds and streams, the Commission, in co-operation with the Port Laguerre Farm School, New Caledonia, has built two experimental fish ponds in the grounds of the school.

Each pond is 33′ x 33′ at water level, with an average depth of 2′. Wooden sluice gates with slide boards make it possible to control the water level. The bottom and dykes are of clay.

These ponds now contain three species of fish, constituting an original breeding stock which, if the planned experiments give satisfactory results, will ensure a supply of fingerlings for South Pacific territories.

The project will serve two purposes. In addition to supplying fingerlings for distribution, it will provide the trainees at the Port Laguerre Farm School, as well as those attending the S.P.C.-F.A.O. Fisheries Training Course in late 1956, with a valuable opportunity to study fish farming.

These fish have come all the way from the Philippines. On my way back to Headquarters from a fisheries survey of Guam and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, I spent a few days in Manila. As the Philippines are justly famous for their fish culture industry, I was interested in securing some healthy stock for the South Pacific.

The fisheries authorities in Manila were very helpful and, thanks to their co-operation, I was able to take from their fish nurseries, 40 *Tilapia mossambica*, 32 *Osphromenus gourami* and 20 *Trichogaster pectoralis*.

These fingerlings were put in two tin containers, and accompanied me on a 5,600-mile journey by plane and car lasting eight days. No special arrangement was made for oxygenating the water or coping with the great differences in temperature encountered. However, by using some tricks such as a thermos bottle of hot water, I managed to avoid mishaps. The most courteous co-operation was extended by the authorities of the Philippines, Australia and New Caledonia. Finally, the fish came to the end of their voyage in good condition, with the exception of a few gourami.

They were immediately liberated in the two ponds at the Port Laguerre Farm School, care being taken to separate the tilapia from the other two species. Twenty days later they were in good health and had already increased in size.

The water is fertilized with organic manure and contains an abundant supply of food. It is therefore unnecessary to give the fish any supplementary food. It is yet too early to give a definite opinion on the success or failure of the project, since many factors remain unknown. However, the early stages have proved satisfactory.

Tilapia mossambica, Peters has great possibilities as a pondfish, both for fresh and brackish water ponds. It can also be used for stocking irrigation reservoirs and ditches and inland waters. It is a prolific breeder and a female will spawn at four months old. The species is omnivorous.

Osphromenus gourami, Lacépède (Giant Gourami) is one of the best table fishes living in fresh water. It is primarily vegetarian but will eat frogs, insects, worms, in addition to many vegetable foods. It reaches sexual maturity in its third year. A female of about 14 inches long (35 cm.) may lay from 800 to 1,000 eggs.

A three-year-old gourami weighs from two to three kilograms and will grow much heavier if it is kept longer under good conditions. It is a good fish for artificial ponds and backyard fish culture.

Trichogaster pectoralis, Pallas (Sepat Siam) matures at seven months and a female of that age will lay about 7,000 eggs. A female ten inches long (24½ cm.), weighing about 8 oz. (230 grammes), can produce 82,000 eggs. This is a good fish for lakes, swamps, rivers and irrigation canals. It is a vegetarian. Sepat Siam has become an important food fish for people who cannot afford expensive fish.

One of the two experimental fish ponds built at the Port Laguerre Farm School in New Caledonia. On the right, some of the fingerlings flown from Manila are shown being liberated.