

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

EIGHTEENTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES

(Noumea, New Caledonia, 4 - 8 August 1986)

SEA FISHERIES AND MARINE CULTURE IN NEW CALEDONIA AND DEPENDENCIES

COUNTRY STATEMENT - NEW CALEDONIA

I. SEA FISHERIES

Sea fisheries as an economic activity in the Territory comprises three main sectors: coastal fishing, artisanal fishing beyond the reef, and industrial fishing in the economic zone.

It was not until 1980/1981 that the Territorial Department of the Merchant Navy and Sea Fisheries began gradually to recruit the staff necessary for effective assistance to the development of sea fisheries in the Territory.

Industrial fishing

The first attempts at industrial fishing using vessels commissioned in New Caledonia began in 1981/82 with TRANSPECHE (pole-and-line fishing for tuna for canning purposes) and POLYPECHE (longline fishing for tuna and associated species for the Japanese sashimi market).

TRANSPECHE, a French company, had to cease operating in May 1983 after 18 months' existence, because of poor catches and the fall in the world market price for tuna for canning. The Franco-Japanese company POLYPECHE which had originally established its fishing base at Thio (on the East coast), subsequently changed its type of activity to distant water fishing, using two freezer-longliners from the middle of 1983 onwards, but had to cease operations in December 1984 because of the financial losses accumulated in the course of the Thio operation. From March to December 1985, with the permission of the Commercial Court, the two longliners were operated by another Franco-Japanese company (SOCAPECHE), but they were subsequently decommissioned.

Since October 1985 the Franco-Japanese company CALEDONIE TOHO has been fishing with a freezer-longliner commissioned locally, and has been obtaining good results.

It was known, before the TRANSPECHE and POLYPECHE projects were launched, that the only resources of the economic zone that could be fished on an industrial scale were tuna, swordfish, marlin and similar species. In the light of the experience gained through these two projects,

it may be fairly stated that with the world market for "canning tuna" depressed for many years now, the only distant water fishing that could be developed from the Territory is longlining, primarily for the Japanese sashimi market which offers good prices but to which access is difficult and where one can work only through Japanese partners.

Artisanal fishing

In view of the data collected - mainly by ORSTOM - on the deep bottom fish resources of the outer reef slopes of the Mainland, the Territory decided in 1982 to put into operation suitable fishing boats of 11 to 13 metres. Three local master fishermen ventured into this new type of fishing between 1982 and 1984, but two of them are meeting with serious financial difficulties mainly because of a drop in local demand for fish as a result of the decline of tourism in the Territory.

Coastal fishing

The various actions taken by the Territorial Department for Sea Fisheries in the past six years have been based on the following main ideas:

- The lagoon and coastal waters surrounding the Mainland and the inhabited islands of the Territory should be reserved for village fisheries, the stocks in these waters being too fragile to sustain industrial fishing operations. The primary purpose of such coastal fisheries is to supply the local market, although this does not exclude some controlled development for export purposes of certain types of coastal fishing (for example, for trochus, beche-de-mer or coral);

- A governmental aid scheme should be set up with a view to enabling coastal village communities, for whom the sea is often the only possible source of income, to become progressively part of a market economy;

- All efforts to develop production should be planned in terms of the capacity of the local market, which is still limited and poorly structured. A special effort should therefore be made to organise marketing.

With this in view, priority has been given to setting up fishermen's co-operatives and equipping them with the means of production (i.e. boats) and of marketing their catches (ice-making machines, ice-boxes, freezers, vehicles, etc.).

While the actual fishing itself remains, in most cases, an individual activity decided by and carried on under the direction of the master fisherman, it is indeed advisable that all fishermen working in any given area should group together to manage jointly the 'semi-permanent' equipment that is needed for marketing their catches. This is the only way that producers can learn to master the whole series of sectors in the production/marketing chain.

The officers of the Territorial Department give promoters technical assistance at all stages of the preparation, launching and follow-up of projects, thus:

- encouraging them to discuss together the suitability of the project, the choice of equipment and the production/marketing strategy. This stage, which is often very long, is essential if the persons concerned are subsequently to take over the project and if it is to be integrated into the local social context;

- giving administrative assistance in preparing applications for finance and helping with the formalities required by the various bodies concerned;

- giving commercial assistance, i.e. finding markets;

- giving assistance with accounting and management;

- offering initiation into new fishing techniques, into methods of preparing and conserving fish and in the use of navigation instruments (compass, echo-sounder, etc.) on board the Department's experimental fishing vessel (the DAR MAD, a catamaran);

- providing information about fisheries regulations and the biology of species, with a view to encouraging sound management of stocks;

- providing technical assistance for maintenance of equipment (in particular ice-making machines).

As a result,

- 7 groups or co-operatives of fishermen are now carrying on more or less sustained operations:

Northern Region	Arama co-operative Waawatch group (Poum, Tiabet and Northern Islets) Gaou group (Oundjo-Gatope)
Central Region	Kunie group (Isle of Pines)
Southern Region	Noumea fishermen's group Ouara group (ile Ouen)
Loyalty Islands Region	Roh group (Mare)

- 2 groups which, although they are well-equipped, are not currently active:

Northern Region	Belemas co-operative (Belep)
Central Region	Goro group

- 7 groups are in the process of being established:

Northern Region	Hienghene Touho Poindimie/Tibarama
Central Region	Thio/Borindi Nepoui
Loyalty Islands Region	Eni (Mare) Chepenehe (Lifou)

The aim is to set up some fifteen fishermen's groups throughout the Territory, to produce an average of 30 to 40 tonnes annually per group, which would make an overall annual production of between 450 and 600 tonnes for all the groups taken together. It should be possible to sell this total production on the local market without any major difficulty, provided that the demographic structure of the Territory does not undergo a major change and that tourism starts up again.

The Territorial Department, besides what it does with the groups and co-operatives, also helps fishermen who are geographically isolated or those who already operate as commercial fishermen and wish to improve their effectiveness.

Furthermore, the Territorial Department initiated the establishment of small workshops for making button blanks out of trochus shells, in order to add value locally to a resource that requires very careful stock management.

II. MARINE CULTURES

1. Aquaculture: seawater shrimps

The first aquacultural trials with seawater shrimps in New Caledonia were started in 1970 on the initiative of SPC and under the aegis of FAO. Since then the Territory, in co-operation with 'CNEXO', now called 'IFREMER' (French Institute for Research on exploitation of the Oceans), has been continuing these experiments at the Saint-Vincent aquaculture station. The results so far obtained indicate that it should be possible to develop semi-intensive shrimp aquaculture in 'fattening' ponds of 8 to 10 hectares constructed in swamp areas.

Two artisanal shrimp farms are already in operation (Chevalier and Aquamon), as is the first 40 hectares phase of the SODACAL farm.

The SODACAL farm is of an industrial type, one of its aims being to test, on a full-size scale, the economic and technical feasibility of raising and marketing seawater shrimps. 80 hectares of additional ponds and an industrial hatchery are very soon to be added to this farm, and its production could then supply future artisanal farms with the post-larvae they need for their production.

In 1985 the total production of shrimps (primarily Penaeus stylirostris and P. monodon) was 95 tonnes from a total area of 57.5 ha., which is an average yield of 1.6 tonnes per hectare.

2. Other marine cultures

Apart from raising seawater shrimps, the Saint Vincent station is pursuing the following experiments:

- raising mussels (under an agreement between the French Government and IFREMER and with FIDES-General Section financing): an experimental green mussel farm has been set up in a village near Hienghene and is giving encouraging results. The aim is to develop some artisanal production for the local market, which is supplied at present by imports;

- production of trochus spat for restocking the coastal reef-flats (ORSTOM/IFREMER agreement with CORDET financing);

- raising freshwater shrimps, as part of a project financed by EDF, although its start-up has been much delayed because of the time taken to select appropriate sites and to build ponds on the East coast.

NEW CALEDONIA AND DEPENDENCIES

SEA FISHERIES PRODUCE : 1985

<u>A/ Produce for human consumption</u>	<u>Production</u> (in tonnes)
1/ <u>Commercial fishing</u>	
1.1. <u>Distant water fishing, frozen</u> (tuna and associated `species)	463 t
1.2. <u>Open sea fishing</u>	59 t
- deep water fish (snappers) : 11 t	
- tuna and associated species : 48 t	
1.3. <u>Coastal Fishing</u> (estimates)	2 410 t
- fish 1 050 t	
- shellfish 65 t	
- molluscs 35 t	
- holothurians (bêche-de-mer) 1 260 t	
2/ <u>Recreational fishing and subsistence fishing</u> (estimates)	2 100 t
	5 032 t
	<u>Sub-total "A"</u>
 <u>B/ Produce not for human consumption</u>	
- trochus shell 554 t	
- corals 82 t	
	636 t
	<u>Sub-total "B"</u>
	<u>GRAND TOTAL</u>
	5 668 t

YEAR 1985NEW CALEDONIA AND DEPENDENCIES1. AQUACULTURE PRODUCTION : SEA WATER SHRIMPS

Farm	Pond area (in ha)	Number of harvests in 1985	Production (in tonnes)
St. Vincent experimental station, at Bouloupari (Terr./IFREMER)	8.5	2	16.3
SODACAL (Moindou)	36	2	65
AQUAMON (Paita)	8	1	5.6
CHEVALIER FARM (Bouloupari)	5	2	8.1
TOTAL	57.5	-	95