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SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

ELEVENTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 5-10 December 1979)

COUNTRY STATEMENT - TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

MARINE RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
FISCAL YEAR 1978

1. The major impact of fisheries development has been concentrated in reef and lagoon areas near population centres. Recent introduction of the cash economy, which requires production in excess of immediate needs, has caused local over-fishing. While reef and lagoon areas of the Trust Territory may continue to provide the basic food requirements for a large portion of the local population, their resources will not support extensive commercial development.

2. Catch statistics from the Japanese distant water fisheries operating in the Trust Territory area provide an indication of the magnitude of the tuna resources available to fisheries based in the Trust Territory. Estimates by the Government of Japan indicate that annual catches by fisheries operating within the 200-mile zone of Trust Territory islands averaged 93,000 metric tons in 1973, 1974 and 1975. This represents an average annual catch, predominately large tunas, by long line vessels of 23,000 metric tons, and an average annual catch by pole-and-line vessels, mostly skipjack tuna, of 70,000 metric tons.

3. The Micronesian Maritime Authority was created by PL 7-71 as amended and charged with the responsibility of managing the exploitation of fisheries resources in the fisheries zones of the Trust Territory. Palau and the Marshall Islands Districts have exercised their options under this law and have established independent Maritime Authorities to manage the exploitation of the fisheries resources in the extended fisheries zones of those Districts.

FISHERIES PRODUCTION

4. The subsistence fishery production remains unreported in the Trust Territory as statistics are maintained only for the fishery products entering the cash economy through the cooperative marketing system.

1465/79

5. The 1977-78 production of 1,000 metric tons of fish and shellfish produced by part-time fishermen exploiting the resources of the reef and lagoon areas may represent less than 25% of the total [illegible]

SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT

14. In order to supply local markets and to introduce a commercial fisheries tradition to the population, most districts have given a high priority to the development of small-scale fisheries to exploit the ocean resources utilizing equipment and skills which can be economically justified. The nature of this development varies from district to district depending upon the amount of local experience with commercial fishing activities.

15. The district centres in Palau, Truk, Ponape, and the Marshall Islands have similar fisheries reefer complexes for the support of small-scale fisheries. They provide 5 tons of ice per day, 3 tons per day freezing capability, and 100 tons cold storage. Substantial upgrading of the units in Palau and Truk will be completed in 1979. Smaller facilities are located in Yap and Ulithi in Yap district.

16. An outer reef fishing expert from the South Pacific Commission assisted in training Yapese and Kosraean fishermen in the most effective technology for harvesting the resources of the outer reef. The trained fishermen will operate the small alia-type skiff built by the Yap District Fishing Authority to demonstrate the advantages of this craft over the high speed outboard powered craft.

17. The sea cucumber fishery, or bêche-de-mer processing training programmes in Palau have stimulated interest in developing this cottage industry. A successful small processing operation led to the establishment of a camp on Helen's Reef to produce bêche-de-mer and the installation of a modern, 1500-pound per day production facility in Koror.

18. Fisheries for trochus, giant clams, and other sedentary molluscs require careful management and regulation because of low growth rates and the vulnerability of the species to harvesting techniques. Exploitation near population centres and illegal fishing by foreign fishing vessels have damaged some of these beds. A survey of these beds in Palau provided valuable information for the management of these resources. Trochus harvests are closely monitored and sanctuary areas are protected year around.

19. Development of fisheries to utilize the marine resources of the outer islands of the Trust Territory poses problems in addition to those encountered in the development of small-scale fisheries in the district centres. Equipment will have to remain simple because of the lack of skilled technicians, and the difficult logistics of supply. Infrastructure required for the support of the fishing operations is nonexistent, and may be prohibitively expensive to establish. Effective utilization of these resources will require an innovative approach.

MARICULTURE

20. The Micronesian Mariculture Demonstration Centre continues its research on the application of existing mariculture technology to conditions in the Trust Territory. In order to make the most effective use of resources, activities have been concentrated on demonstration of the potential for fresh water prawn and rabbitfish.

21. Through technology pioneered at the Centre, it has been possible to dispense with the requirement of "green water" in the culture of larval fresh water prawns, Macrobrachium rosenbergii. It is now possible to produce enough juveniles to use effectively the demonstration grown-out facility at Oikull in Palau. The fourteen, quarter-acre, grow-out ponds will allow demonstration of the relative advantages of Hawaiian or Palauan strains of the prawn, and locally produced feed from copra cake and fish offal or imported commercial foods.

22. The Centre is now producing two species of rabbitfish, Siganus canaliculatus and S. lineatus, juveniles for existing pond culture operations and experiments directed to identifying the most effective grow-out technology for the Trust Territory. Comparisons are being made between production in ponds, cages, and natural cove impoundments.

23. A brief examination of the potential for establishing an oyster hatchery at the Centre was conducted. Results indicated that the technology was not yet sufficiently developed to allow the establishment of a successful oyster or mollusc shellfish hatchery at the Centre.