

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSIONFOURTH TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES

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INFORMATION PAPER ON FISHERIES IN NEW CALEDONIA
AND DEPENDENCIES

by

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Paradoxically the economy in New Caledonia is not centred mainly on the sea but is mostly based on the mining and industrial sector. The fishing industry is small, with about 200 fishermen out of a total population of 100,000.

These individual fishermen use small boats. The following table gives an indication of tonnages.

0 - 1 ton	1 - 3 tons	3 - 5 tons	5 - 10 tons	10-15 tons	beyond 15 tons
14	33	9	14	5	4

To these powered fishing boats should be added the 40 odd canoe-type boats in the territory.

The boat most used is the 6-7 metres cutter powered by a 45 HP diesel engine equipped with a fish-well to keep fish alive for sale on the Nouméa market.

Iced fish is also marketed through the fishermen's co-operative. This body is the first step in organizing the profession, with about 20 ship-owner members. In 1969 the co-operative sold 130 tons of fish for a total value of 12,000,000 francs CFP.

Total marketed fish in the territory comes to about 450 tons per annum.

NOTE - This is gross tonnage.

Most of this fish is caught in the Caledonian Lagoon which stretches along both the East and West coasts of the main island and, in places, is up to 30 nautical miles wide.

Techniques used are simple - rod fishing, line fishing, the use of drift and mesh nets. The seabed is such that trawls and other dragging devices cannot be used.

Since 1967 the Territory has received assistance from Metropolitan France and the Fisheries Development Plan has enabled those ship-owners who were at all keen to benefit from the following:

- 1967 : Purchase of a ring-net for live bait : 2,150 FF
Fishermen's Co-operative : 15,400 FF
- 1968 : Fishermen's Co-operative : 27,000 FF
Oyster Farming : 6,500 FF
- 1969 : A cold storage plant for the Fishermen's
Co-operative : 63,250 FF

Grant to two shipowners for the installation of refrigerated holds, and the purchase of a refrigerated lorry and nylon nets : 36,542 FF

Thus, altogether over the past three years aid from Metropolitan France to the Territory has amounted to 99,792 FF.

Since 1968, Fishery matters are in the hands of one Department (the Service Territorial de la Marine Marchande et des Pêches Maritimes) which deals with the compilation of Fishery Rules, the organization of the profession of fisherman, training of fishermen, the economy and techniques of Fisheries. The Head of the Department is the Director of Maritime Affairs.

There is close collaboration between this Department and the Oceanography Section of ORSTOM*. In 1965, the Nouméa Centre of ORSTOM launched a deep sea fishing programme for the South West Tropical Pacific. The programme provides for a study of physico-chemical properties of the waters, of their seasonal changes, as well as a survey of the various links in the elementary chains. This should enable us to locate the big pelagic fish, and in particular tuna, of special interest to fishermen.

A coastal waters programme has also been started. This deals with oyster growth and reproduction problems in New Caledonia as well as qualitative stocktaking of species of the Caledonian lagoon.

* ORSTOM = Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer.

As the economy in New Caledonia stands at present, the fishing industry can only be developed slowly. It has no attraction for labour and is carried out mostly by amateurs who want a pastime. Nevertheless, we should not underrate the role it may play one day in the economy of the Territory, should its balance be upset. Whilst we must not be too hopeful about the possibility of developing industrial fishing, we feel we should incite the small fishermen to go beyond the lagoon and improve their techniques. This is the objective of the Fisheries Development Plan.

At the same time, appropriate measures have been taken, and will be stepped up, to conserve marine fauna in the Caledonian lagoon where very interesting species exist.

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