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**SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION**

**TWENTY-SIXTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES**  
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 5 - 9 August 1996)

**COUNTRY STATEMENT**

**NEW CALEDONIA**

The Territory of New Caledonia, in conjunction with its three Provinces, has continued work over the past two years in the following major areas:

- training in the Provinces
- development of lagoon and coastal fisheries
- support of offshore fishing
- aquaculture development

## 1. Skill training

Since 1991 training for seamen in New Caledonia has been provided by a public institution, the *Ecole des métiers de la mer* (EMM) (Marine Trades Training School).

EMM continued its activities in 1994 and 1995, particularly in the area of artisanal fisheries.

During this two-year period, 250 trainees from the main island and the Loyalty Islands received training in 55 sessions covering areas such as boat hull and motor maintenance, navigation, fishing techniques and fish storage. A total of 236 vocational training certificates were issued.

## 2. Maritime fishing

In 1994, production statistics for commercial sectors showed the following results:

- fish: 2245 mt
- shellfish: 33 mt
- others: 1080 mt
- aquaculture shrimp: 691 mt

The information currently available for 1995 only allows an estimate of production for the year, as follows:

- fish: 2080 mt
- shellfish: 40 mt
- others: 730 mt
- aquaculture shrimp: 880 mt

### 2.1 Lagoon and coastal fisheries

A major extension effort on deep-sea fishing techniques has been made over the past 10 years by New Caledonia in order to encourage artisanal fishermen to fish outside the lagoon.

This was especially noticeable in a review report<sup>1</sup> written at the beginning of 1995 which summed up the results of experimental deep-sea reel fishing over a period of seven years: This report covered more than 2500 hours of fishing carried out at depths between 40 and 360 m from 1985 to 1992.

Also, considerable work in shipboard skills training is being carried out by the Territory at the request of Provincial Fisheries Services. These operations aim mainly at teaching fishermen new techniques which they can then use on their own boats.

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<sup>1</sup> Desurmont A., Simoni P., Etaix-Bonin R., 1995. *Résultats de pêches profondes au moulinet en Nouvelle-Calédonie : Territoire de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Service territorial de la marine marchande et des pêches maritimes, January 1995, 21 p.

At the same time, the Territory has continued to moor fish aggregation devices (FADs) around the mainland and the Loyalty Islands, either at request of the Provinces or as part of the practical module of the SPC-Nelson Polytechnic Training Course.

In fact, in 1994 and 1995, the Territorial Merchant Marine and Maritime Fisheries Service ship was used for on-board training during the Nelson Polytechnic Training Course Practical Module.

Finally, it should be noted that information collection continues to be carried out each week in the main seafood outlets in Noumea. This information is used to assess the availability of various products on the market as well as to inform fishermen of developments in retail prices.

## **2.2 Offshore fishing**

A new fleet of longline tuna boats has been based in New Caledonia since May 1994. These vessels use monofilament longline techniques to harvest target species for the Japanese sashimi market, i.e. yellowfin and bigeye tuna.

The first two years of operations were not up to the vessel owner's expectations as landings of high-quality specimens of sashimi tuna were meagre, a fact which can be attributed in part to the seamen's inexperience. Nevertheless, in comparison to results recorded for vessels which still use traditional longlines, high-quality tunas were caught in greater numbers when monofilament longlines were used.

In addition, the fact that catches were not exceptional can be also attributed to the unusual climactic conditions (El Niño). In fact, it has been noticed that monofilament longlines catch many small-sized, bigeye tunas, which means that this gear is more selective with regard to target species. A deep thermocline would explain the difficulty in finding large-sized bigeye tunas.

The expected return to more normal climactic conditions should allow, together with the experience acquired by master fishermen, an improvement in yields of the most sought-after species.

What is more certain is that the analysis and processing of tuna fishing data for New Caledonian waters conducted as part of a large-scale study of the economic zone, called ZONECO, will this year provide professional fishermen with a decision-making tool designed to improve strategies to exploit resources available in this area.

Zonéco is a multi-year exploration and assessment programme for marine resources (living and non-living) within the New Caledonia economic zone; the programme entered its active phase in 1993.

Finally, it should be noted that the tuna sampling programme in Noumea Port, begun in November 1992, has continued over the last two years.

Sampling covers all species taken by local longliners. Nevertheless, most length measurements have been made on yellowfin tuna and white-meat tuna (albacore).

Thus, over a three-year period, more than 10,000 separate fish of all species combined have been measured.

### **3. Aquaculture**

The new aquaculture programme launched with the technical support of IFREMER (French Institute for Research into the Exploitation of the Sea) has allowed juvenile giant clams to be raised and placed in nursery sites in several different locations.

However, support for shrimp farms constitutes IFREMER's main work in New Caledonia. In this area, the Institute's staff have been working for the past two years to understand and treat the problem of significant shrimp mortality rates which New Caledonian aquaculture farms have been experiencing. This reminds us, indeed we needed reminding, of the need to have access to substantial research capacity in the area of aquacultural pathology.