

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSIONFOURTH TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES

Noumea, New Caledonia

~~(19 - 26~~ October 1970)

21-29

BRITISH SOLOMON ISLANDS PROTECTORATE
FISHERIES PROGRAMME AND RESOURCES(1) Fisheries Resources of Commercial Value in the BSIP

(i) One expatriate-owned company is exporting crayfish tails from the country. The species concerned are Panulirus versicolor, P. penicillatus and P. ornates.

(ii) Large quantities of fish of all the kinds that might be expected in such waters are available, particularly sharks and the larger scombroids. The fishing company mentioned has had some teething troubles, related to refrigeration failure, but is hoped to be able, now that these have been overcome, to provide an adequate supply of fish to the capital, Honiara, to other towns, estates, etc., within the country and to the Bougainville copper mining project in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea.

(iii) An expatriate company is working in the Western Solomons on the cultivation of the Golden Lip Pearl (pinctada maxima Jameson), with some success, but not quite that hoped for originally. It is considering pearl culture.

(iv) Turtle shell and trochus are exported by a number of local companies, the latter in particular recently with the rise in price. The trade in crocodile skins has fallen off, due to over-catching in recent years. It seems possible that some protection is needed. Green snail is bought by local entrepreneurs but there appears to be no overseas market for this at present. Pearl shell is bought and exported similarly.

(v) A factory processing and exporting bêche-de-mer is in operation in Honiara. However, it appears that there is a market only for Large Black.

(vi) There are some inland fisheries resources, notably Lauvi Lagoon which is land-locked except when the pressure of freshwater from rivers in spate into it opens the sandbar. It is within a mile of an airport on the scheduled international air service (and also only about 3 miles from a good reef for crayfish). Airfreight to the capital is 4¢ per lb. The assistance and advice of the South Pacific Islands Fisheries Development Agency has been sought to enable the nearby people, who have hitherto barely exploited the apparently fairly considerable fish resources of the lagoon, and a small scheme is being framed.

(vii) Tilapia mossambica was introduced into the brackish Lake Te Ngano on Rennell Island about 1957 and now grow to a large size. The lake is some 60 square miles in area but there is no indigenous predator on the adults. Eventually the population of the latter will come into equilibrium, presumably, with the available biomass for its food, when the average size of the Tilapia will start to decrease, and the introduction of a predator seems desirable. The advice of SPIFDA is being sought on this. Pigs are being kept over tilapia ponds at two schools on Malaita.

(2) Fisheries Development in the last Two Years

Both the Golden Lip Pearl venture and the expatriate fishing company mentioned have started operations in the last two years. Skipjack is caught locally but there is no special fishery.

(3) Local Fisheries Services and their Organization

Unfortunately, there is no Fisheries Officer currently at post. However, the provision of this post in the 1971-1973 Development Plan is under consideration. A Fisheries Vessel, now being used for general purposes by the Marine Department will be available for him with, of course, a selection of gear. He will be provided with Fisheries Assistants over and above the vessel's crew, if appointed.

(4) Technical Improvements, Local Fishing Methods

Something could be done alone, by spreading local effective fishing methods from one part of the Protectorate to another, including those for reel and lagoon fisheries in particular. Examples are the Octopus lure from Utupua, Eastern Solomons (somewhat different from that in general use in Polynesia), the fish-trap in the Marovo Lagoon, Western Solomons, which has a bait on a line which is jerked to close the trap when a fish is felt, and others. Outside the lagoons the same probably applies to the longline with gorges for flying fish of Small Malaita, and spider web and kite fishing for garfish. The reefs and lagoons are not, in general, fished to capacity but this will need to be watched. One area has been damaged by fishing with explosives made from fireworks, (legislation is in hand to control the sale of the latter). Outside the reefs comparatively little subsistence fishing takes place, there being in these areas only a few full-time fishermen as against those who launch canoes when a shoal of bonito is seen. There appears room for more exploitation of the open sea by subsistence fishermen. Bottom longlines and deep trolling with multiple lures suggest themselves for experiment. The river estuaries are hardly fished at present, and this could be remedied. There is evidence of a considerable squid population, presently unexploited (save by porpoises).

(5) Technical Assistance

Outside assistance such as SPIFDA's will certainly be needed, if the country's full fisheries potential is to be realised.

(6) The Need for Research

The most urgent need, to the writer, is for more knowledge of crayfish biology for the species mentioned above. There could be a danger of overfishing this valuable resource. There also appears to be a need for a survey of the fresh and brackish water ecology and resources of the country or even one or two areas; outside Lake Te Nganno on Rennell Island almost nothing is known of this. (It would make a most interesting study for someone working for a Ph.D. or M.Sc.).

(7) Type of Assistance

Specifically, advice is needed on the biology of crayfish, the future development of open-sea techniques, particularly for the scombroids, including tuna, and, less importantly, advice on marketing types of bêche-de-mer other than Large Black.

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Original text: English