

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

FOURTH TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES

Noumea, New Caledonia

(21 - 29 October 1970)

GILBERT AND ELLICE ISLANDS COLONY

1. The following is the status of the fisheries of this territory together with the programme of the Fisheries Section:-

2. Background

All effort of the Colony fishermen is subsistence fishing. The only recorded export of fish products being two tons of Shark fins per annum.

Approximately 80% of fishing effort is within the lagoons where large numbers of varied monofilament nets are used. Some fibreglass runabouts with outboard engines of from 10 to 40 h.p. are used for ocean fishing.

Lagoon catches are made up of the following species:

- (a) Mullet (Mugilidae)
- (b) Bonefish (Albula Vulpes)
- (c) Milkfish (Chanos chanos)
- (d) Jacks (Carangidae)

Ocean catches are made up of the following:

- (a) Yellow Fin Tuna
- (b) Oceanic Skipjack
- (c) Kingfish.

Fisheries Experts have visited the Colony on several occasions and submitted reports to Government. These experts include: R. Powell, A. Adams, UNDP, D.N.F. Hall.

3. Development Programme

The Fisheries Section of Government was formed in May of this year. Estimates have been approved for the construction of a 48' multi purpose, ocean-going survey vessel. Construction has now begun on this vessel and delivery expected at the end of the year.

An Assistant Fisheries Officer (Expatriate) is presently being recruited to assist in surveys and training programmes.

Two local Fisheries Assistants are in training. One of the Fisheries Assistants has had a short training course with the Van Camp Sea Food Company in the Carolines. A further two local Assistants are being recruited.

Planned for 1971 is a post for a Marine Biologist to assist in the development of the lagoon fisheries and in the ocean survey.

At the present time the Fisheries Section has, on charter, a 39' Scottish vessel to conduct preliminary resource surveys. The vessel is fitted with multiple trolling lines and catches so far have been encouraging.

When the new Fisheries vessel is delivered it will be fitted out primarily as a live bait boat. Gear on order includes: Pole & Line gear, Long Lines, Bait nets and a Beach seine.

The objectives of the Fisheries Section are:

- (a) to develop the local fisheries to meet an increasing demand from a growing population
- (b) to investigate the possibilities of establishing a live bait fishery on Skipjack and Yellow Fin Tuna aimed at the export market
- (c) to encourage fishing effort from the lagoons to the ocean by the introduction of suitable vessels
- (d) to investigate the lagoon resources and develop any possible small industries from the lagoons
- (e) to initiate a statistical collection programme to determine the fishing effort of the area and the annual landings of fish from both the lagoons and ocean fisheries.

4. Assistance Required

The main assistance required, at this stage, by the Fisheries Section is contact with other agencies engaged in surveys similar to our own proposed surveys so that an interchange of information could be built up.

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