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COUNTRY STATEMENT - SOLOMON ISLANDS

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN FISHERIES IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

Abstract

The paper outlines a number of recent developments in fisheries in the Solomon Islands. These include:

- (i) the commissioning of two 500 T. Tuna purse seiners by the Government;
- (ii) the commencement of a project to establish a clam hatchery;
- (iii) a review of the country's fisheries legislation;
- (iv) the establishment of a new locally based training course for fisheries personnel.

Introduction

At last year's Technical Meeting the Solomon Islands delegation presented a comprehensive review of the status of fisheries in the country. This paper is therefore confined to brief comments on some recent developments.

Industrial Fishery

Following the success of a group purse seine operation, setting around F.A.D.s, the Government has proceeded with orders for two purse seiners. The two 500 T. class vessels are now under construction in Australia, but are being built to a Japanese design.

The two longliners operated by National Fisheries Developments ceased fishing early in the year; they had been hit by a fall in the price of Sashimi grade Tuna on the Japanese market. Both vessels are currently engaged in cyclone relief work.

Progress continues to be made, albeit slowly, with the construction of a new cannery at Noro, Western Province. Solomon Taiyo Ltd. have recently called for tenders for some of the construction work.

Research and Management

The establishment of the ICLARM/S.I. GOVT. Coastal Aquaculture Centre and Giant Clam Hatchery is now going ahead. Initially the Centre will concentrate on research into breeding Tridacnid clams, and will form the Indo-Pacific component of an international Clam Mariculture Project.

A research programme to investigate the interaction between the pole and line baitfish fishery and coastal subsistence fisheries is nearing final approval. A major programme to enhance the country's resource research and development capability is also under consideration.

The section's data processing capability has recently been enhanced by the provision of new hardware; and a suite of new programmes to handle foreign fishing vessel licensing is operational. A short course for Fisheries Observers was held early in the year with the help of a SPC Tuna programme Scientist.

Legislation and Licensing

A draft of a new Fisheries Act has recently been prepared with the assistance of the FAO legal department. The Act would bring the Solomon Islands into line with regional agreements on fisheries, as well as taking account of the Provincial Government system and customary reef ownership.

The Government's "roll-over" access agreement with Japanese distant water fishing interests continues to operate satisfactorily. Solomon Islands has continued to participate in the U.S. Govt./Forum Countries Fisheries Treaty negotiations, and is seeking new agreements with Korean and Taiwanese fishing interests.

Rural Fisheries Development

The Fisheries Divisions of the seven Provinces have continued to provide services to rural fishermen - sale of ice, hire of iceboxes, sale of gear, fish marketing and transport. In some cases, however, there is a trend away from direct involvement in buying and selling fish.

An artisanal boatbuilding project has produced its first prototype - a sailing trimaran. A second prototype based on the local dugout canoe is under construction.

A project proposal for development assistance to establish Eucheuma seaweed farming in rural areas has recently been submitted to a potential donor. If successful the project will commence in mid 1987 and should lead to the creation of 40 small-holder farms within two years.

Finally the Fisheries Department is cooperating with the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education in running a 19 week multi-disciplinary course for Fisheries Assistants. The first course runs from July to December of this year, and may be repeated annually. A limited number of places is available to Fisheries Personnel from other countries in the Region.
