

STATUS OF THE INDUSTRY

COOK ISLANDS

The fisheries industry of the Cook Islands is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and at present is being administered through the Department of Agriculture, but with the appointment of a new Fisheries Officer on 1 July 1970 the administration is now falling under the Fisheries Section.

Listed below are the present Government Officers concerned with the fisheries programme:

Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries:
Hon. A. P. Short
Fisheries Officer:
Dr Barry B. White
Assistant Fisheries Officer:
Captain Ioaba Marsters.

A comprehensive fisheries programme, drawn up by the Fisheries Officer, Dr Barry White, was adopted by the Cabinet of the Cook Islands Government on 13 August, 1970. This programme calls for a fleet of 27 foot, fast, "Bonito" type boats, freezer units and fish handling facilities on the outer islands of Aitutaki, Pukapuka, Palmerston and Manahiki, "portable" freezer units to be carried on the inter-island shipping to transport the produce of the outer-islands to a fish processing plant and retail store on Rarotonga, which contains over half of the population of the Cook Islands. A Fisherman's Cooperative Society is being set up to operate the facilities. The fishing boats will be purchased by the local fishermen under a purchasing scheme operated by the Fisheries Section.

An oceanographic research programme is being instituted by the Fisheries Section and will consist at present of mapping the surface temperatures and the thermocline and depth sounding to determine the bottom contour around the islands to locate sea mount areas and upwelling areas. These surveys will be carried out aboard the GMV "RAVAKAI" operated by the Fisheries Section. Marine biology pilot projects into cultivation of oysters and mussels are to be started at once as well as research into pearl culture, crayfish breeding, trochus and M.O.P. shell transplanting cultivation and marketing.

At present, except for one local vessel fishing commercially by longline method, all fishing in the Cook Islands is being done on a subsistence basis. Rarotonga, with over half of the population, is presently consuming about $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds of fish per week per person, and little or no subsistence fishing is being done as there is a labour shortage and all able-bodied men are employed. The need for a high protein product in Rarotonga is paramount. The 1969 figures show over 50 tons of frozen fish from New Zealand were imported.

By the end of 1971 it is hoped that the fisheries programme will be able to provide some 300 tons of fish for local consumption and that some 100 Cook Islanders will be employed in a commercial fishing programme.

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