

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSIONTWELFTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES

(Noumea, New Caledonia, 17-21 November 1980)

COUNTRY STATEMENT - COOK ISLANDS

There is no domestic commercial fishing fleet operating in the Cook Islands at present. What locally caught fish there are that reaches the consumer are caught by sport-fishermen and by fishermen who fish only on a part-time basis. Fishing effort is severely curtailed by the fact that fishing crafts are small and by nature of the unprotected waters surrounding the islands of the Cook Group. Total landed catch for 1979 was 855 tonnes which had an imputed value of NZ\$1,297,000.

The Cook Islands declared its 200 mile exclusive economic zone on 1 October 1979. A licensing agreement have been signed this year permitting Korean long-line vessels operating out of Pago Pago to fish in Cook Island waters. Negotiations are currently in progress with Taiwanese commercial fishing companies for access into Cook Island 200 mile zone.

There are 3 ongoing programmes that are being carried out by the Department of Fisheries which has a staff of eight.

1. Small scale fisheries development on one of the isolated atolls in the Northern Cook Islands is being coordinated by Fisheries. The type of work involving the Department of Fisheries include assistance in the form of technical advice to local fishermen regarding boat, outboard motor and gear maintenance as well as fish handling and preservation methods. The emphasis is for fishermen to concentrate their efforts in the capture of pelagic species. To this effect UNDP has purchased a fish aggregation device which was anchored 3 months ago. Production from this project over the next 12 months have been ~~set~~ at 100 tons. Extension of this project to other isolated islands in the Cook Islands will largely depend on the success of this pilot project.
2. The Department of Fisheries is currently working in close co-operation with a commercial pearl culture company in the collection of spats from Pinctada margaritifera. Spats collected will be raised in nurseries until they are ready for distribution to families who will in turn farm these oysters until the shells have reached marketable size. In this way it is hoped that only pearl-shells of good quality will be produced for export.

3. Seeding of trochus to islands in the Cook Group that do not have these shells are underway. Complete seeding of all lagoons in the Cook Islands is envisaged to take 6 months.

One fish aggregating device was recently anchored off Rarotonga - the capital of the Cook Islands. Another 3 more of these devices will be placed in certain locations around the island of Rarotonga.
