

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSIONNINTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 24 - 28 January 1977)COUNTRY STATEMENT - WESTERN SAMOAFISHERIES DEVELOPMENT IN WESTERN SAMOA

by

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1. Long before Europeans came to the Western Pacific, the Samoan people in canoes fished for the Skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*) which was and still is one of their main sources of protein. Skipjack tuna can be caught in the waters around Samoa right throughout the year. Up until about 10 years ago practically all fishing canoes were hand-paddled. Now only a few fishermen still resort to the paddle - outboard motors have taken over. The building of the traditional skipjack fishing canoe is no longer what it once was - a work of beauty and art comprising of nine separate sections. Very few old canoe builders remain who know the shape of each nine pieces and how to piece them together with sinet and breadfruit tree gum.

2. With FAO aid and technical guidance and boat building know-how, two types of boats are now being built by FAO at Apia as described by FAO Fisheries Adviser, Mr Oyvind Gulbrandsen in his report. These boats are in great demand and it is hoped to eventually have several hundred of them operate around Samoa. During 1976 a total of 29 such boats were built and are now fishing from various villages. At the end of the year 18 more were on order.

3. During 1976 on-going projects were:

(a) Village Fisheries Project:

This project is described in detail in Mr Gulbrandsen's report - paragraphs 2 - 4. Approximately 160 various types of fishing boats under two tonnes carrying capacity, fish from the Western Samoa Islands. In 1974 the number was 73. It is estimated that these boats caught about 500 tonnes of fish during the year. This figure does not include net fishing and spear fishing inside of the reef which would account for an additional 200 tonnes of fish. The population of the Islands is estimated to be about 160,000. These figures indicate that the local fish supply is limited to about 4.5 kg or 10 lbs of fish per head of population during the year. Again this figure does not include shell fish and crustaceans that are gathered daily by village people at low tide.

(b) Commercial Fisheries Development:

The main obstacle to the advancement of this project is the almost total absence of local natural bait. We are now culturing the Mexican Molly which will be tested during 1977. If suitable it is intended to accelerate its production to a degree where the supply would be sufficient to accommodate several pole and line fishing boats.

(c) Turtle Hatchery:

During 1976 a total of 5254 Hawksbill turtle eggs were collected from the Islands off Aleipata and taken to the hatchery. The hatch returned 1856 turtles. Three months after hatching they were released about one mile off shore. These turtles are marked. Many two to three year-old marked turtles are being caught in Samoa which indicates these

turtles are surviving and growing to adult size. In their normal form of hatching and immediately entering the sea it has been estimated that the survival rate is about 5 per cent. Since the project started over 13,000 turtles have been released in the sea. As the project is a long-term one tangible results cannot be expected until after 10 years or more.

4. Additional projects for 1977 would be try-outs with purse seines and drift nets off shore. Purse seines would involve catching the silver scad known locally as "Atule". This fish abounds in our waters right throughout the year. Drift nets would catch varied types of fish.

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