

ORIGINAL: FRENCH

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

TWENTY-FOURTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES  
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 3-7 August 1992)

**COUNTRY STATEMENT  
NEW CALEDONIA**

The most significant development in the marine fisheries and aquaculture sector over the past 3 years was the setting up of a fisheries department in each of the 3 Provinces established in New Caledonia in 1989.

As a result, the number of fisheries development officers working in the field has been multiplied by four.

The 3 departments have various means of action. They assist in starting fishing or aquaculture projects, cooperate with territorial staff in training activities and advise fishermen on product marketing.

**Marine fisheries**

Several new and important retail outlets in Noumea have been made available to the artisanal fishery in the past two years, one of which is the new City Market. In connection with the opening of the new market a training course was organised especially for operators of fish stalls. The first part of this course, run by the South Pacific Commission's Post-harvest Fisheries Adviser, focused on fish handling and processing. The second part was more specifically geared to marketing (product presentation, customers' satisfaction, ...).

However, despite more 10 years of vigorous efforts to develop the artisanal fishery, this sector is stagnating: not only is the local market limited but commercial fishermen encounter competition from recreational and subsistence fishermen. In addition, only deep-sea fish like the deep snappers which carry no risk of ciguatera stand a chance of finding export outlets (Australia and Japan mainly), but so far no fisherman has ventured into exports.

The only two artisanal fishery products currently being exported are dried beche-de-mer and trochus shell. As regards the former, depletion of the resource due to overfishing appears to be occurring. As for the latter, all the local button-blank cutting plants having failed and only raw trochus shells are now being exported.

The trochus fishery has long been an important income-earning activity for outlying coastal populations, but the slump in demand recorded since 1991 has put local trochus fishermen in a precarious position.

The industrial fishery, which from the early 1980s to 1990 had been developing satisfactorily, is now also in trouble.

In 1991, for example, fishing on the seamounts was discontinued because of difficulties encountered in obtaining a reasonable price for the catches on the Japanese market.

As regards the tuna fishery, the present sluggishness of the Japanese market, which is the main outlet for the local long-liners, has had a very adverse effect on the operation of the larger vessels. Only the smaller vessels specialising in fresh fish are still economically viable.

Semi-industrial fishing, for which investment costs are lower (10 to 15 m boats), is seen as an alternative which can take advantage of existing export outlets for tuna and deep-sea fish in Japan while seeking to establish new markets (in the Pacific and Europe).

### **Aquaculture**

New Caledonia has been exporting penaeid shrimps for some five years and all stages of the shrimp rearing cycle have now been totally mastered.

Australia, for fresh shrimps, and metropolitan France, for frozen shrimps, are currently the main export markets (370 tonnes in 1991). Attempts to break into the Japanese market, where the demand for large shrimps is very high, are being made.

New Caledonia has only 200 hectares of shrimp ponds at present, but the potential for development is tremendous (several thousand hectares). In addition, the know-how acquired at the Saint-Vincent experimental shrimp farm ensures the long-term sustainability of this activity which, in 1991, proved that it was economically viable.

Apart from a few local oyster farms, shrimp farming is the only aquaculture activity currently carried on in New Caledonia, but trials with giant clams are to be initiated in 1992 and in 1993.

### **Training**

The "Ecole des métiers de la mer" - EMM (School of Maritime Trades) opened in November 1990 and began offering various types of training in March 1991.

- Basic training: 15 students enrolled in 1991 in a 2-year course leading to a certificate in maritime skills. For a number of reasons, this course was a flop (10 students dropped out). A shorter course with a different emphasis was recently set up.
- Continuing education: 2 courses leading to nationally recognised diplomas were successfully run in 1991:
  - Deck officer diploma: 9 enrolled, 8 sat the examination, 6 passed.
  - Fishing vessel motor mechanic diploma: 10 enrolled, 6 passed.

It must be noted that all the students who passed the final examination subsequently obtained employment at supervisory level on local trading or fishing vessels.

#### Mobile training:

The development of small-scale fisheries in New Caledonia has resulted in many more small fishing craft coming into operation without their operators necessarily having the basic skills required for their maintenance.

To cater for this need, special practical training (40 hours) is now being provided:

- directly by the EMM: 4 courses attended by an average of 10 trainees (1 at the EMM, Nouméa, 1 at Ouara, 1 at Oundjo, 1 at Mare);
- with assistance from the Vth EDF: 20 courses for a total of 220 trainees.

This practical hands-on training is of direct benefit to coastal fishermen who would otherwise never have the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills.

In addition, on board training is provided to fishermen on the territorial fishery department's vessel, to familiarise them with new techniques, particularly modern fish handling and processing methods.