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SIXTEENTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES

(Noumea, New Caledonia, 13-17 August 1984)

COUNTRY STATEMENT - PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Prepared by
Fisheries Division
Department of Primary Industry
Konedobu
Papua New Guinea

PAPUA NEW GUINEA - COUNTRY STATEMENT

PRESENTED AT

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This statement summarises activities by the Fisheries Division since the last Technical Meeting in 1983.

1. **FISHERIES RESEARCH**

During 1983-84 research undertaken by the Fisheries Research and Surveys Branch has continued to be orientated mainly towards the development requirements of Papua New Guinea's coastal fishery. Particular attention has been paid to the need to develop new fishing craft and fishing methods. Two new designs of small craft are presently being tested to evaluate their suitability for the Coastal waters of Papua New Guinea (PNG). Experimental fishing has concentrated on deep-line fishing and results have consistently shown that this method has potential for development. It is fully recognised that for this research to have any impact on the fishery, it must be demonstrated to the fishermen themselves and two programmes involving local fishing communities have been initiated.

Research's role in the tuna, prawn and barramundi fisheries has continued to be mainly that of management, involving the monitoring of catch data. Research into the Torres Strait Lobster stocks re-commenced in 1983 with a view of improving the management of this valuable resource.

A major study of fish stocks in the Sepik River has now been completed. Results indicate that the introduction of further species should be considered in order to increase the fish resource inhabiting the Sepik, and through this the catches made by fishermen.

In Wewak, on the north coast, a study is being conducted into the pelagic fish resource of the area. Pelagic fish are generally under-utilised and the study will help establish fishing methods which may be used, and the extent of the resource. In particular the use of FADs is being investigated.

A shallow reef study has been conducted for several years in Kavieng (New Ireland). Results show that at present the reef resources in the area are generally under-utilised. A second study undertaken at Kavieng is attempting to obtain yield estimates from coastal area using LANDSAT, coupled with results from a fish trapping programme.

Research on the estuarine fishery and fish stocks of the Gulf area is based at Baimuru. All catches landed at the fish-buying centre are recorded and expansion of the fishery is being carefully monitored. Together with biological information, this data will enable management requirements for the area to be established.

Data collection has also commenced in Port Moresby with the aim of providing details on an existing well developed marine fishery. The study will provide data on the yields of fish from given areas of reef and the effect of fishing pressure on the fish resource is also being investigated.

In March the Research Branch took delivery of an 18m vessel fitted out to undertake gear trials and surveys in the coastal areas. This is the first of two vessels that have been purchased using funds provided by the European Economic Community. The second vessel is 25m in length and will be used for survey work further offshore.

2. COASTAL FISHERIES

2.1 Background/Present Situation

The development activities associate with coastal fisheries were promulgated as a result of the 1979 National Coastal Fisheries Development Plan.

The plan aimed inter-alia to improve the welfare of the coastal people by providing them with an opportunity for increased development, business and education through the better utilisation of the coastal fisheries resources. The plan was instrumental in establishing Coastal Fisheries Stations in the maritime provinces by providing fish collection system, freezing cold storage and marketing services.

The programme to date has provided a useful experience analysis drawing attention to the fact that what can be done practically is not necessarily a real indication of what can be done economically; and point the way for a development programme with more clearly short, medium and long term objectives. These objectives and programmes need to take into account the associated inherent problems and needs. (Some of which are not related to fisheries development).

The immediate objectives of the coastal fisheries development are mainly concerned with the Coastal Fisheries Development programme being implemented through the Coastal Fisheries Stations in the maritime provinces.

In consideration of the National Executive Council Decision 7/83 directed the maritime provinces to establish Fisheries Authorities to better promote and develop the coastal fisheries. The objectives of the Coastal Fisheries Development Programme will be supportive to those objectives contained within the Provincial Fisheries Authority Legislation which apply to resource development.

2.2 Propose and Future Development

The Coastal Fisheries Development Plan whilst failing to produce viable commercial enterprises, has however resulted in the establishment of development extension centres where many activities associated with up grading subsistence fishing into small scale commercial fisheries projects.

The emphasis on commercialization within the programme should more reflect:-

- a. the identification and stimulation of acceptable and appropriately scaled business opportunities which can be adopted by individuals, village communities and/or private companies.
- b. the determination of the kind and scale of welfare services and financial, development extension, and training support which needs to be provided by National and Provincial Government to facilitate such coastal fisheries developments.

In order to formulate and implement such a programme effectively it is considered utmost importance to clearly identify and understand the social, economical environmental, technical and political problems and needs which related to the development of coastal fisheries stations in the maritime provinces.

The development targets/activities needs to be specific as possible and to be quantified and qualified in relation to short, medium and long term objectives of the coastal fisheries development programme.

3. INDUSTRIAL FISHERIES

PNG has four industrial fisheries at the present time. These are the tuna, prawn, lobster and barramundi fisheries.

3.1 Tuna

Efforts over the period of this report concentrated on attempting to re-establish the domestic pole-and-line fishing fleet and shore based processing facilities. An agreement (the Okinawan Agreement) was signed in May 1984 paving the way for the return of pole-and-line fishing vessels. These vessels will start operating in August 1984 and will initially be based in Kavieng. As part of this agreement the Katsuobushi plant on Nago Island will be reactivated. Tenders for two tuna processing facilities in Kavieng and Manus have been called internationally. It is also planned to investigate the feasibility of a medium sized transshipment facility for the distant water fleets operating in PNG waters.

Distant water fishing activity in PNG's DFZ remains at a high level. Vessels from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, America and Honduras are licenced. The highest number of ATA affiliated vessels are currently licenced. In total 30 ATA vessels are operating and licenced in PNG waters.

3.2 Prawns

Emphasis in the prawn fishery concentrates on rationalising the exploitation of the fishery in order to generate higher returns to the fishing companies and PNG. In late 1983 two companies were amalgamated and the state took up 33% equity in the new company. This is the first joint venture established in PNG in the fishing industry. There were another significant development in the prawn fishery as national participation was increased.

The prawn fishery in 1983 enjoyed robust conditions as catch rates were high and the prawn market bullish. The market and catch rates weakened into 1984.

3.3 Lobster

The diver lobster fishery around Daru is being promoted to a large degree. It is anticipated that an increasing share of lobster landings will come from this component of the fishery. Trawl catches of lobster in 1983 were poor and a ban on this method of fishing in the short term is likely.

3.4 Barramundi

The barramundi resource was greatly underexploited due to logistical problems associated with getting the fish from the fishing grounds to processing facilities and markets. A major review of this fishery is being undertaken in 1984.

4. SURVEILLANCE

Fisheries Surveillance is Supervised by a Committee known as National Surveillances and Enforcement Co-ordinating Committee, which consists of members from various government departments and bodies. This Committee is headed by the Defence Force which supplies most of the manpower and resources for surveillance work. The Defence Force attach class patrol boats for patrolling the 200 mile DFZ and two Nomad aircraft for aerial reconnaissance.

The Department of Primary Industry is a member of this Committee and assists in surveillance work by providing a Fisheries Surveillance project of its own. This project, with two surveillance vessels, liaises very closely with Defence Force for joint exercises and for investigation of individual reports of sightings in the DFZ.

There is a radio network in existence linking the two DPI vessels, coastal radios established on remote islands and the Defence Force boats and aircraft. The coastal radios are operated by volunteers who report on foreign fishing vessels activities in their particular areas. This network is co-ordinated by the Defence Force from the National Surveillance Centre in Port Moresby.

At present the NSECC is assisting in trying to obtain replacements of both Defence Force and DPI vessels in order to carry out surveillance work more effectively.

5. **IFAD PROJECT**

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) have provided a loan of special Drawing Rights 9,050,000 (= US \$ Approx.) at 4% interest for the development of coastal fisheries in the Gulf & Milne Bay Provinces.

The project which will become effective in August 1984 and will fund: a fishermen's credit scheme; improvement of fish collection, handling & marketing facilities. Extension, staff training, gear development, project management, consultancy services and project monitoring & evaluation are also financed under the loan.

The project operates under formal legal agreements between the State and the provinces concerned, the Milne Bay Fishery Authority, Baimuru Fisheries Co., the PNG Development Bank and the PNG Fish Marketing Corporation.