

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

FOURTH TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES

Noumea, New Caledonia

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FISHERIES IN FRENCH POLYNESIA

By virtue of its geographic situation and the position of its islands, French Polynesia has considerable fishery resources. These are of two kinds:

- lagoon and reef resources;
- oceanic resources.

I. LAGOON AND REEF RESOURCES

At the moment they are the major ones (62% of fishery products brought to the Papeete market). However, there is already overfishing in the Tahiti lagoons. Also, pollution due to urbanization can no longer be overlooked.

However, and in spite of the increase in fishery activities, available stocks in other islands (particularly in the Tuamotus) are not yet being exploited at a level which would endanger reproduction.

In the lagoon, many fishing methods are used. They are mostly traditional and on a small scale. There have been no major innovations and the most frequently used gear remains:

- (a) passive gear:
 - fish traps, either consisting of sennes or made of netting or meshing;
 - pots (bamboo or mesh).
- (b) other gear:
 - hand-line;
 - bamboo rod;
 - cast nets, beach seines, large nets, gill nets (tangle nets);
 - under-water harpoons and guns.

Responsible Department

The territorial Fisheries Department is responsible for the development of reef and lagoon resources. It has three sections:

- mother-of-pearl and pearl culture;
- oyster farming;
- aquaculture and fish breeding.

Its research and development programme up till 1975 is as follows:

- (a) Mother-of-pearl and pearl culture:
- part-breeding of the mother-of-pearl;
 - culture of mother-of-pearl with spat;
 - pearl grafting;
 - as well as research in parasites, growth rate, nutrition, and formation of the mother-of-pearl layer.
- (b) Ovster farming:
- Research concerning the edible oyster so that it may be developed in French Polynesia (spat collecting, predator control, growth rate according to the environment).
- (c) The possibility of breeding other species is also being studied especially for the fresh-water shrimp (Macrobrachien rosenbergii) and the sea-turtle (Chelonia mydas).

II. OCEANIC RESOURCES

These are both little known and little exploited. At present, the species most fished is the Bonito (Katsunonus pelamis). It accounts for 35% of the total catch recorded.

The yellowfin and the albacore are also fished but in smaller quantities.

AKULE, though it is a pelagic fish, is mostly caught in the lagoon (near passes). It accounts for almost 7% of the total catch.

It should be noted that catches vary depending on the species; monthly averages remain stable.

Fishing Methods

Fishermen use small boats for fishing bonito, for deep-sea fishing. The fishermen locate the shoals by watching the flocks of birds. The boat is kept underway ahead of the shoal. Bonito or tuna is then fished with bamboo rods, 1.5 to 5 m. long which have a short line adapted with a mother-of-pearl lure and hooks.

There are about 100 Bonito fishing boats, of which 72 are in Tahiti. The size of the boats is increasing (from 7 to 15 tons) as is engine-power (up to 250 h.p.). This is because the fishermen are convinced that speed is vital to the efficiency of their boat. Two boats of slightly higher tonnage are using the long-line method of fishing. The size of their catch makes it worthwhile. However, few fishermen are prepared to adopt this method and it is unlikely that it will be developed in the near future.

Responsible Department

The Department of Maritime Affairs is in charge of deep-sea fishing. Its programme is as follows:

- (a) A rational development of present fishing methods;
- (b) Improvements in boats and present techniques;
- (c) Research, adaptation and, if necessary, extension of the use of boats better adapted to new techniques;
- (d) Training of fishermen in a fisheries training school.

CONCLUSION

With regards to homogenous fishing (bonito, tuna), the most urgent problems pertain to a proper organization of the profession and training of the fisherman.

Only then can new techniques be introduced, understood and accepted.

In this connection, the opening in 1971 of the Maritime Apprentice School in Papeete, should prove most useful.

Any aid or technical assistance which would further this aim would be most welcomed by French Polynesia.

TONNAGE SOLD AT PAPEETE MARKET (in tons)

	A N N U A L T O N N A G E S							
	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
Tuna	131	106	86	42	58	120	103	61
Bonito	435	519	404	516	731	519	607	743
Akule	141	152	129	69	109	104	237	143
Reef Fish	629	720	808	948	995	1095	1100	1167
	1336	1497	1427	1575	1893	1838	2047	2114

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