

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

FOURTH TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES

Noumea, New Caledonia

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FISHING BOATS AND TACKLE SUITABLE  
FOR ISLANDERS

THE TAHITIAN BONITO FISHING BOAT AND  
LOCAL METHODS OF FISHING BONITO

I. THE BONITO FISHING BOAT

Developed from pleasure cruises it is made of wood or ply wood. Generally the hull is of the "Sharpies" type. The large cabin takes up two-thirds of the front of the boat. It holds the engine box at the bottom and the cockpit at the top. The helm, with tiller-ropes, is in the prolongation of the cabin roof. The aft deck is free and is used as working space during fishing. The free space on the cabin roof is used to secure the bamboo rods on each side when the boat is underway.

These boats have no fish holds and carry no ice. The fish caught is brought in straight onto the aft deck.

Thus the boat has to return its catch daily for sale at evening market in Papeete (5 p.m.). Only a few boats stay at sea more than one day and this in exceptional circumstances.

As a result the speed required is high and these fishing boats have powerful engines.

Average Characteristics

Gross tonnage : 7 to 15 tons

Powered by 1 diesel engine : 80 to 250 HP

Length : 6.50 metres to 12 metres

Width : 2.50 metres to 3.50 metres

Depth : 1.2 metres to 2 metres

## Maintenance

Boats must be placed on slips about every six months.

Average life of hull : 10 years.

Present average life of the engine : 2 to 3 years.

## II. FISHING TACKLE

The bonito is caught with ordinary bamboo rods of varying sizes (from 1.5 to 5 metres). The smaller being used for large fish.

These rods have a fishing line which is slightly shorter than the rod itself. The hook on the line is straight and has no barb. It is mounted with a lure which has the shape of a small fish about one centimetre wide cut in a strip of mother of pearl or a polished pearl oyster. The fishermen attach great importance to the colour and the lustre of the lure. And during fishing several lures are used to find the best suited to the particular temporary behaviour of the fish.

The fisherman has a set of rods, some of which have two lines. The one not in use is attached to the upper part of the rod in order to save time when changing lures.

## III. FISHING METHODS

The shoals of fish are spotted by observing bird flocks which follow them. Also, depending on the season, the fishermen know from experience the position of the shoals.

During fishing the boat is kept underway so as to remain ahead of the shoal. The fisherman is aft. The lure skips on the surface of the water and is agitated so as to attract the fish which bites on the hook attached to the lure. The fish is then quickly brought in and falls at the fisherman's feet often hitting him on the belly. As the hook has no barb unhitching is quick.

The best catches of bonito are from April to mid June and from November to February. But bonito is also fished at other times of the year.