

Trochus marketing trends: Solomon Islands

by H. Bibi* and T. Adams**,

* Fisheries Division, Fiji

** South Pacific Commission, New Caledonia

The trochus situation in the Solomons has been reported as interesting. On his first duty visit to the Solomons, the newly appointed SPC Senior Inshore Fisheries Scientist Dr Tim Adams compiled the following information.

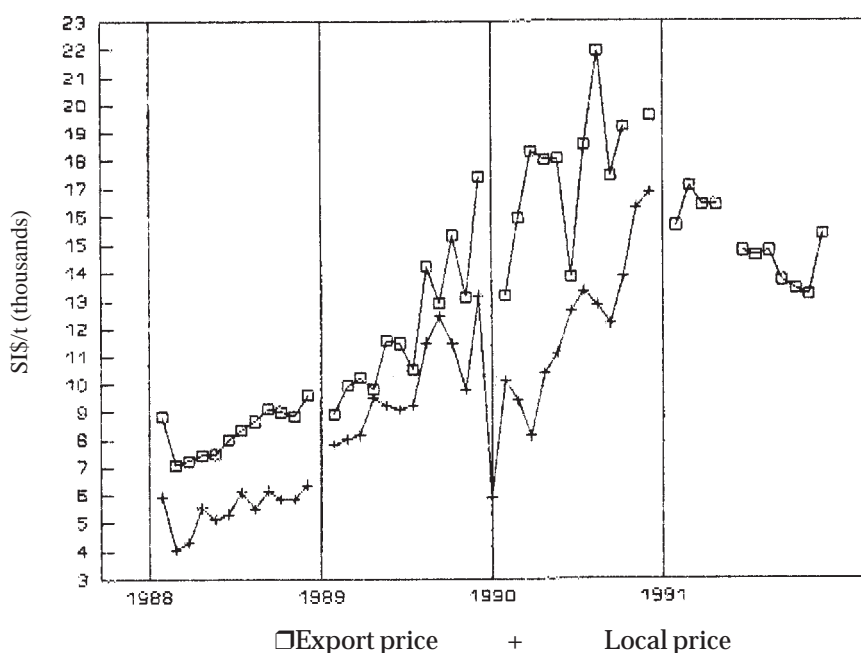
Exports of raw trochus shell dropped right down over the past two years with a total of 306,569 kg valued at SI\$5,466,707 being exported during 1990 compared to 87,475kg valued at SI\$1,444,601 during 1991.

The reduction is almost certainly due to the influence of the two new button factories — Daido which opened early in 1990 and only processed 25 t in that year and Solko which opened in 1991. However, this does not appear to have dampened the enthusiasm for button factories — another new factory is planned to open soon, so the market prospects appear to moderately buoyant (unlike Fiji, where all was doom and gloom in the button factories)

A notable feature, however, is that the Solomons is going through a beche-de-mer 'boom' at the moment and 'beche-de-mer fever' is gripping the islands, with people abandoning crops and copra and fishing on behalf of Chinese and Australian beche-de-mer traders. These fishermen are probably also contributing to the trochus catch and it is possible (only possible, the two events may be unlinked) that when the beche-de-mer boom crashes Solomons will see a drop in trochus supplies, as happened in Fiji. As in Fiji, these button factories may be built on shaky ground.

The Fisheries Division gets price, quantity and source information direct from the exporters when they apply for export licences, but the data are probably incomplete, or incorrect. However the Division also gets a complete record of export figures from the Ministry of Finance Statistics Section (from Customs records). Following are the latest export figures from the Statistics Section:

Trochus Exports	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Weight (kg)	445,216	460,065	371,693	306,569	87,475
Value (SI\$)	2,045,169	3,814,538	4,541,445	5,466,707	1,444,601



Customs-quoted export prices and Fisheries-quoted local price for the last 4 years (monthly)