

# Fisheries In The New Hebrides, Fiji And Tokelaus



*Seven Japanese longliners are being kept busy supplying fish to a new cannery at Santo, in the New Hebrides. In Fiji, the stocking of rivers with new fish species is being considered. Blacklip pearl shell and trochus may shortly be introduced to the Tokelaus. These are highlights of this brief report, prepared following a recent field visit to the three territories by . . .*

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Mr. Van Pel, aided by a local diver, investigating marine life on a small reef plateau in the lagoon of Fakaofa Atoll.

FROM a fisheries officer's point of view one can hardly imagine three territories more dissimilar from one another than those under review here. The contrasts were brought into even greater relief when of necessity I had to visit all three in a short period of time—from late August to late October last.

## New Hebrides Developments

In the New Hebrides, fisheries were practically non-existent until about a year ago. At the time of my visit, however, it had become one of the foremost fish-producing areas in the South Pacific. This change was brought about by the establishment on the island of Espiritu Santo of the South Pacific Fishing Company, in which are represented American, Japanese and local interests.

Activities of the company include fishing as well as the cold storage, curing,

transport and marketing of fish. The fishing fleet consists of seven Japanese boats averaging 100 tons gross, with a crew of 25 to 30 fishermen each. The fishing technique used is longlining. The catches average 60% albacore, 20% yellowfin tuna, 15% marlin and sailfish, and 5% miscellaneous fish.

At the time of my visit, 42 New Hebrides islanders and 34 Japanese labourers were employed in the freezing plant, ice factory and curing plant. The frozen albacore and yellowfin tuna are shipped to San Francisco at the rate of 600 tons every two months. Every three months, 100 tons of frozen and processed fish are sent to Japan. Small quantities of frozen fish are sent to Honiara and Nouméa, and a certain amount is marketed locally.

As mentioned elsewhere in this issue, the plant is now ready to produce fish flakes commercially.

Apart from this large undertaking, fisheries in the New Hebrides have made modest but interesting progress along other lines. Lakes, streams and swamps in several islands have been stocked with *Tilapia mossambica*, which are now thriving. Specimens 10" long, weighing 14 ounces, have been recorded in Santo.

Quite a few enquiries from private people have been answered. Subjects included the construction and operation of fixed fish-traps, reef nets, and fish preservation.

Lastly, in order to conserve natural resources, fishing for trochus and green snail has been suspended in the New Hebrides, pending the framing of new regulations.

## Stocking Of Rivers In Fiji

In Fiji, considerable attention has been devoted lately to fisheries matters.

One item worthy of mention here is the possibility of stocking the rivers with



Above: This haul resulted from a communal fish drive carried out by inhabitants of Atafu Atoll. The entire village will share in the catch. Right: Seven hundredweight of green and red parrot fish taken in another drive off Atafu Atoll.



Above: A Japanese longliner, one of the fleet of seven engaged in catching fish for the South Pacific Fishing Company at Santo, in the New Hebrides. Right: The Company's jetty at Santo, with combined conveyer belt, crusher, and chute for loading crushed ice direct into the holds of the longliners.

new species. A preliminary investigation of the Navua River has already been made. It is hoped that a more extensive survey of this and other rivers and streams of Viti Levu can be carried out early in 1959.

#### Shell Introduction For Tokelaus

Atafu and Fakaofo, two of the three atolls comprising the Tokelau Islands, under New Zealand administration, were visited. Present fishing methods and gear seem quite adequate to provide the islanders with their subsistence requirements without depleting the resources of the lagoons and reefs. Fish and shellfish are staple foods there. Communal fishing was observed in Atafu and the resulting catches were fairly good.

As a result of the survey, recommendations are being made for the introduction of blacklip pearl shell and trochus, which should, as far as can be seen now, find suitable habitats in the lagoons and on the reefs.

On the trip from Fiji to the Tokelau Islands some live trochus were taken along in order to test the "dry" method of transport. In spite of adverse conditions they survived for three days without losses.



Above: Unloading tuna at Santo. Mr. Don Gubay, Director of the South Pacific Fishing Company is in the foreground (right) with a Japanese representative of the Company. Below: Navua River, Fiji. A preliminary investigation has been made with a view to stocking this and other rivers in Fiji with new species of edible fish.

#### Breadfruit Study In French Polynesia

Close on one hundred varieties of breadfruit were studied by the Commission's plant introduction officer, Dr. Jacques Barrau, during a fortnight's cruise he made of the Marquesas, Society and Leeward Islands in September on board the French Navy frigate "La Confiante".

Data he collected formed a valuable contribution to the regional study he is making of breadfruit, which it is hoped will enable the present short season of yield in most islands to be extended by introducing strains bearing at different times of the year.

