

Abaiang Atoll

On Abaiang Atoll, 16 local residents from 4 villages were interviewed. All reported the presence of pearl oysters. Half of the responses indicated current exploitation while half denied any exploitation. It is suspected that this reflects feelings of reservations to tell the truth in relation to the recent Island Council regulation which prohibits any exploitation of the resource.

The results of the survey however showed that on average for a 3-4 hour trip, 14 pearl oysters are usually collected. These are all obtained from the western reef passages. Most are sold at a price ranging from AUD\$10.00 to UAD\$20.00 per half shell. Also quite a large number are given away to friends and only some are being used for fish lures.

It is suspected that although there is a current regulation prohibiting the collection of the resource, there is very little enforcement. A meeting with the Island Council would be appropriate to encourage enforcement and discuss the potential for pearl oyster farming and pearl culture.

Butaritari Atoll

On Butaritari Atoll, a total of 14 local residents from 5 villages was interviewed and all reported the presence of pearl oysters on the island.

Results seemed to indicate a more limited pearl oyster stock for Butaritari than for Abaiang. An average catch of only 4 pearl oysters per 2-3 hour trip was reported. These are all obtained from the western reef passages. Most of the pearl oysters are given away as gifts with some being sold. Those sold are priced from AUD\$10.00 to AUD\$50.00 per half shell and therefore are more expensive than the Abaiang oysters.

There is no current existing Island Council regulation and therefore the stocks are likely to be totally depleted if exploitation is continued. Butaritari Atoll would also be considered for future pearl oyster research work and therefore an immediate moratorium on further harvesting is to be recommended by the Fisheries Division to the Island Council.

Shell prices (black-lip, trochus and green snail)

*Source: FFA Export Market Report,
Third Quarter 1990*

A. April 1990					
	(All prices in US\$/kg)				
	Solomon Islands (FOB prices)	Solomon Islands (Prices to producers)	Vanuatu to producers	Fiji	Australia (FOB prices)
Trochus	8.60	4.00	3.00	4.67 - 5.67	4.00
Black-lip	8.00	4.00	5.00 - 6.00	5.00 - 5.67	4.00
Green snail	15.00 - 32.00	3.20 - 7.20	4.00		
B. August 1990					
	Papua New Guinea (Export)	Solomon Islands (Export)	Vanuatu (Export)	Vanuatu (Producer)	
Trochus	6.40 - 7.00	8.60	*	1.77	
Black lip	5.00 - 6.00	8.00	13.25	3.35	
Green snail	15.00 - 20.00	15.00 - 32.00	55.00**	7.07	
C. December 1990 — January 1991					
	Papua New Guinea (FOB prices)	Solomon Islands (Prices to producers)	Vanuatu to producers	Fiji	Australia (FOB prices)
Trochus	6.00 - 8.00	4.80	2.00	4.70 - 5.30	4.70
Black-lip	7.00 - 9.00	4.40	5.00 - 6.00		4.70
Green snail	25.00 - 30.00	3.50 - 8.00	4.00		

* Trochus button blanks sell for US\$ 26.50 per thousand

** Price for processed (i.e. cut) green snail shell in Korea