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SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

EIGHTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES
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FJI - COUNTRY STATEMENT

by

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1. During the last five years some essential infrastructure in the form of freezers, and ice-making facilities were constructed at Lami, Lautoka and Labasa. The National Marketing Authority assumed responsibility for the marketing of fish in 1974 while the Fisheries Division continued to maintain and staff the refrigeration facilities, fish carrier service and extension work in villages. Efforts to assist fisherman were further strengthened during 1974 with the availability of subsidised loans through the Fiji Development Bank.

2. Table 1 shows total local fish production and imports of canned and frozen fish for the period 1971-1974.

Table 1. Fish Production and Imports ('000 lbs)

	1971	1972	1973	1974
Total local fish production including sales in markets and shops	2,649	3,417	3,289	3,860
Local canned fish	—	129	149	409
Canned fish imports	8,866	6,713	11,194	17,077
re-exports	423	194	710	1,194
Net frozen fish imports	255	423	467	866

3. The UNDP/FAO Skipjack Tuna and Live-Bait Fishery Survey, which began in 1971, completed its work in late 1973. It demonstrated that appreciable quantities of bait fishes and skipjack tuna were available to supply a sizeable tuna fishery. Government in late 1974 eventually decided that local people will exploit the skipjack tuna resources primarily for the local fresh fish market and surpluses for canning. An agreement was signed between Government and the Pacific Fishing Company (PAFCO) in 1974, whereby the latter was to construct a cannery capable of processing 15,000 tons of tuna by 1980 (including 5,000 tons of skipjack).

4. Training of fisheries technicians in a three-year Diploma in Tropical Fisheries began in 1972. The need for the training of fishermen also increased, especially with the Government's decision to exploit the prospects of skipjack tuna.

5. Fish farming in reclaimed mangrove areas was undertaken, with the expansion to 20 acres of inter-tidal ponds at Raviravi in 1973. Oyster culture, shown to be not feasible at Bilo Bay, was moved to Laucala Bay where growth and fattening indicated good commercial potential, first on a pilot commercial scale in 1974 and then on a much larger scale in 1975. Consumer acceptance was also good.

FUTURE OBJECTIVES

6. (a) to satisfy the rapidly increasing local demand for fresh fish and canned fish, and
(b) to produce fish and fishery products for export.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

7. (i) to promote and consolidate the development of village and commercial fisheries in order to provide additional income in areas where fish resources are known to be adequate but agricultural potential low; and to produce enough fishery products to satisfy local needs;
- (ii) to develop amongst the local people the capability to fish skipjack tuna through appropriate institutional arrangements;
- (iii) to carry into the commercial phase the culture of fish, oysters and other marine species of animals and plants including weed control;
- (iv) to continue to explore the existing fisheries resources in Fiji waters and to undertake management of fishery resources in order to avoid over-exploitation of the resources available;
- (v) to provide training for both fishermen and extension workers in the necessary skills required;
- (vi) to promote the importation, testing, modification and development of appropriate technology to increase the efficiency of fisheries enterprises;
- (vii) to encourage the processing of fish and other fishery products within Fiji;
- (viii) to provide adequate and effective machinery for inspection, protection services, law enforcement and regulatory activities; and
- (ix) to maintain close liaison with other agencies within the South Pacific region which are involved in investigating with a view to exploiting fishery resources.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

8. The long-term fisheries development programme has to be based on sound management concepts related to the best socio-economic uses of the available fishery resources. Therefore, in addition to setting up targets for the supply of fish and fish products, it is equally important to assess the available fishery resources and to recommend desirable rates of exploitation by specific areas in order to avoid serious depletion and over-exploitation.

9. To this end, fisheries resources surveys will be conducted to locate hitherto un-exploited resources and to ensure that stocks are not over or under-fished. Data on subsistence and commercial fisheries giving information on catches per man-hour or by area would therefore be obtained through interviews with fishermen for records of catches and market sales or through surveys conducted on vessels suitably equipped for this purpose.
 10. In order to encourage greater production of fish, incentives in the form of subsidised credit, provision of detailed vessel plans and specifications as well as financial assistance with boat-building to increase the number of boats in the industry, tax and duty concessions on imported material and assistance with marketing will be given. The development of larger locally-owned commercial fishing operations will be encouraged. Specialist technical and general advice will be provided in building or repairing boats and engines and in obtaining loans, licences or permits.
 11. More freezers and ice-making plants will be built in the main urban centres and in the outlying areas. The fish carrier service will be continued, buying and transporting fish from the outlying areas to urban markets with the assistance of the National Marketing Authority and local co-operatives. Private fishing companies will be encouraged to do likewise. Additional freezer boxes and a fish carrier with refrigerated hold will be acquired during DP VII to serve remote areas. Development of sufficient wharf space to service the anticipated requirements of fishing, fisheries protection, fish carrier, extension and research together with vessels, wharfside facilities for cold storage, ice-making, fish handling and marketing will be undertaken.
 12. The National Marketing Authority will extend its buying activities and offer fixed, remunerative prices at all major fishing centres. As refrigerated holding capacity builds up, National Marketing Authority should be in a stronger position to regulate supplies as well as prices. The development of improved handling, retailing and promotion of fish and fishery products will be encouraged.
 13. Fisheries Division extension staff will ensure that people in outlying areas are aware of the true potential of their marine resources for production of fishery products and for aquaculture and know-how to make best use of them. The knowledge gained by fisheries biologists will be passed as quickly as possible to where it can be put to practical use. Fisheries extension officers will be trained to see their roles in a wider context, not only as agents for increasing the production and supply of fish but also as catalysts in the realisation of rural development efforts generally, including to help improve the quality of life of the people they work with.
 14. The Fisheries Division will continue to co-operate with other institutions (the Derrick Technical Institute, the Fiji College of Agriculture, and the University of the South Pacific) in the training of technicians and managers of all kinds. The 3 year Diploma in Tropical Fisheries course includes training in the techniques of catching, handling and processing fish; gear technology; methods of collecting data on the fishery resources; concepts of applied ecology, including conservation; as well as basic training in navigation and marine engineering, economics, book-keeping and extension methods.
 15. A fishermen training programme especially of skipjack tuna crews and captains will be implemented during the Plan Period. This may include on-the-job training in other skipjack fishing areas as well as within Fiji.
 16. More trained specialist professional staff as well as supporting technicians will be provided to facilitate a successful fisheries development programme. Where outside consultants and experts are employed to implement particular fishery projects, local counterparts will be trained within these projects to eventually take over such responsibility.
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