

REPORT ON FISHERIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1943

This report cannot, for various reasons, contain the detailed information that is customary, but it may be useful to reiterate that the general purpose of fishery legislation and administration is to ensure as far as possible that the exploitation of our fishery resources is kept on a rational basis—that the harvests of the sea are reaped without waste, and especially that the depletion of stocks to the detriment of future supplies is prevented. The *fishing* industry, not the fish *trade*, is the object of this Department's administration under the powers conferred by the Fisheries Acts.

Our functions, to be effective, should be concerned not only with the recording of production, but should have regard to the methods of production, which are liable to variation and expansion in the course of time, and more especially to the effects of such developments on the stocks of fish in our waters. This last consideration involves investigational work which the exigencies of the times have necessarily reduced to a minimum.

The collection and tabulation of fishery returns have been kept up, and this work has acquired a special importance in relation to problems of man-power and other factors of national economy.

The following statement gives the total quantity and value of the principal classes of fishery products marketed during the year :—

	Quantity.	Value. £
Wet fish	311,971 cwt.	442,976
Whitebait	1,206 cwt.	25,984
Oysters—		
Dredged	73,475 sacks	55,106
Rock	5,850 sacks	8,775
Mussels	19,726 sacks	6,959
Crayfish	12,910 cwt.	19,305
Toheroa (canned products)	87,480 lb.	6,198
Whale products—		
Oil	500 tons	12,000
Bone-dust	30 tons	
Quinnat salmon (taken by selling licensees): Angled fish	2,784 lb.	250
Total values		<u>£577,553</u>

The total quantity of wet fish landed during the previous year was 326,863 cwt., valued at £458,393. Some decline in production for all other classes except crayfish is shown.

EXPORTS AND IMPORTS

The value of imported fishery products totals £3,549. Canned fish of the sardine class made up the bulk of this total.

Exports declined in total value from last year's total of £138,029 to £116,523. Among the different classes of fish exported, only blue cod (frozen) and crayfish (canned) show an increase on the figures for the previous year.

ROCK OYSTERS

Though labour and transport conditions provided some difficulties, the total yield of the northern rock-oyster beds of 5,850 sacks (or 17,550 bushels) fell little short of the previous season's total of 5,939 sacks.

They were obtained from the following areas: Bay of Islands, 2,211; Whangarei Harbour, 110; Kaipara Harbour, 1,077; Coromandel, 600; Great Barrier, 251; Hauraki Gulf, 1,601 sacks.

The quota from the Hauraki Gulf was obtained from the several areas as follows: Takatu to Gull Point, 122; Motutapu, 86; Rotoroa Island, 206; Pahihi Island, 19; Waiheke, 752; Ponui, 416 sacks.

OYSTER-CULTIVATION

Oyster-cultivation work was on a reduced scale owing to the difficulty of obtaining satisfactory labour. Detailed reports are not yet available.

DREDGE OYSTERS

The oyster-beds in Foveaux Strait provided a total of 73,475 sacks for the season, a small decline from last year's total of 74,751. Eleven vessels comprised the working fleet, one of which operated for only four months of the season.

TOHEROAS

Helped by the fact that fewer digging parties now visit the toheroa beaches, the beds are now, generally speaking, well stocked. The general improvement in numbers and size of toheroas has not been so marked on the Ninety-mile Beach as elsewhere, and the supplies obtained for canning from this area were substantially less than in the preceding years.

WHITEBAIT

The whitebait fishery was disappointing in every part of the Dominion. In some districts adverse weather and flooded rivers were to some extent responsible for the failure of the fishery, but it is evident that the runs were everywhere smaller than ever before, and in most cases the season was pronounced to be the worst on record. It has not been possible to obtain complete reports on the fishing. The statement which follows, giving totals for the various districts as estimated by local inspectors, will serve to show the production in comparison with previous years :—