

been a decided increase in the quantity of flounders netted from Lake Ellesmere. This proved a very welcome addition to the supply of flounders for the Christchurch market, which was, with other places, experiencing a short supply of these fish. Trawling in Pegasus Bay and off the Akaroa Peninsula has been rather poor for some time. The local Inspector reports that the result of this condition is that at the present time only one vessel is working out of the six which were employed before the beginning of the year, four of the others having left for other fishing-grounds, and one gone out of commission. The extensive fishing-grounds off Timaru are now attracting the attention of those interested in the trade in the south. Since the beginning of this year two trawlers from Lyttelton have commenced operations, and up to the present time they are reported as being well satisfied with the results obtained. During the year there has been a considerable increase in the quantity of fish brought in by the smaller fishing-boats.

The catches from most of the fishing-grounds off the Otago coast during the past year are reported by the local Inspector as having been unusually good, and the market well supplied with fish. When I visited Moeraki in November last the fishermen complained of a scarcity of blue-cod on the local fishing-grounds. Some of the oldest fishermen stated that there had been a steady decrease for a good many years. One man made the statement that "Fifteen years ago one of the old sailing-boats would bring in as many blue-cod in a day as all the boats could do now." The Collector of Customs at Oamaru in his report of the 19th April says, "Blue-cod are now very scarce." The large fish-salesmen in Dunedin report the supply of flounders and soles as poor during the year.

At Invercargill and Bluff during the past winter the quantity of fish brought in was about the average for that season. A decided improvement, however, took place during the spring and summer.

At Picton the local Inspector in his report on the fisheries indicates that, with the exception of blue-cod, the catches of other market fish have been equal to the average of other years. With regard to blue-cod he says, "There is certainly a decreasing tendency, owing no doubt to small fish having been caught."

At Westport the Collector of Customs reports a marked increase in the quantity of fish caught during the year.

At Napier eleven trawlers have been employed during the year. During the winter months the supply of fish was so poor that a good many of the trawlers and small fishing-boats were laid up. The fish, however, commenced to show up in the early spring, and since then the fishing has shown a decided improvement on the previous year's catches. The Collector of Customs at Napier gives the quantity of fish brought in for the twelve months at 2,731,400 lb., valued at £25,536. The number of boats engaged in fishing he gives at sixty-five, employing a total of 152 hands on board.

In the Auckland District fish have been fairly plentiful during the year, and on the whole the market has been well supplied. Complaints have been made about the scarcity of schnapper on some of the grounds most easily reached, but all the boats that worked well out are reported as having made very large catches. Inspector Bennett reports mullet as being very scarce in the Hauraki Gulf. The Inspector for Kaipara reports them as being fairly plentiful, and the Inspector at Onehunga reports very large hauls as having been made. Flounders are reported as being fairly plentiful in the Manukau and Kaipara, and the supply from the Thames flounder-grounds has been well maintained during the year. Inspector Bennett reports a poor supply from other parts of the Hauraki Gulf, and recommends increasing the trawling-area so as to allow trawlers to work the off-shore flounder-grounds which exist in the Thames Gulf south of Cabbage Bay, and which cannot be worked by the small boats. I would recommend that this should be done, as the fish on these grounds can be taken only by trawling, and the supply is very much needed to supply market requirements throughout the country.

At Whangarei the Inspector reports fish as having been fairly plentiful during the year.

When I visited the Bay of Islands in December last fishermen stated that, with the exception of mullet, the catches during the winter and up to the time of my visit were equal to the average of other seasons. There is a steady and increasing demand for fresh and smoked fish inland, and the opening of the railway through from Opua to Whangarei has opened up an important market for fish from these fishing-grounds.

*Chatham Islands.*—The Inspector of Fisheries reports that during the year the fishing operations carried on at the Kaingaroa and Owenga fishing-stations have been fairly successful. From September to the end of November very little fishing could be done, owing to continued stormy weather. In December and January the weather conditions improved; fish were plentiful, but they would not take the bait, owing, it is supposed, to the abundance of natural feed at that season. Since the beginning of February fish have been very plentiful, and have taken the bait well, and large quantities of blue-cod and hapuka have been landed. The stranding of the s.s. "Himitangi" caused heavy loss to the owners and the fishing industry generally.

*Rock-oyster Beds.*—The beds in the Hauraki Gulf and at the Bay of Islands were picked last season, and yielded a total of 4,782 sacks, 2,431 being obtained from the Bay of Islands and 2,351 from the Hauraki Gulf beds. These beds are again being picked this season, and it is expected that they will yield a larger quantity than last season. The method of picking which the Department has given instructions is to be carried out is that only a certain percentage of the marketable oysters are to be taken off each year. This ensures a sufficient quantity of mature oysters to supply brood being left everywhere, and also allows a crop being taken off for market every year. The beds depleted by licensed pickers in the Hauraki Gulf are recovering steadily, and it is expected that in about two years all these parts will be ready to pick. There is a very large and increasing demand for oysters, and to meet this it is necessary that the Department should continue a vigorous policy with regard to the extension and protection of the beds in all