

The following table shows that there has been a decline in the flat-fish landings over the last six years, more particularly over the last three, during which the seine boats have operated, but that the entire responsibility can be attributed to the few seine boats in the district seems incredible.

The flat-fish landings were :—

Year.						Cwt.
1931-32	..	..	..	..	..	5,700
1932-33	..	..	..	..	..	4,300
1933-34	..	..	..	..	..	5,386
1934-35	..	..	..	..	..	3,958
1935-36	..	..	..	..	..	2,329
1936-37	..	..	..	..	..	1,987

The drop in the total landings of flat fish coincides with the start of the Danish-seining in 1934-35, but if the Danish-seiners were to blame for the whole of the drop there should have been a lag of at least one year before the decline in the total landings was noticed. The effect of the Napier earthquake on the young-fish stocks of that year (1931) may be showing up now when these stocks and their progeny would have been mature. If there was a high mortality in the baby fish under a year old, which would normally be in the shallow inshore water at that time of year, that would account for the shortage of marketable fish in 1934-35 ; and the loss of the progeny which they would have produced, plus the more intensive inshore fishing of the Danish-seiners, would account for the increased shortage noticeable in 1935-37.

The earthquake also ruined a large area of ground—the inner harbour, which carried large stocks of tiny flat fish—and the loss of this nursery in conjunction with the loss of the crop of young fish of that particular year was probably a large contributing cause of the sharp drop in the total catch. The action of the Harbour Board dredge in dumping spoil all over one of the best inshore flat-fish grounds also affected the operations of the fishing-fleet. This nuisance has now been abated. At this port, as in many others, the lack of adequate statistics relating to the last ten years is proving a great handicap to efficient administration, the statements of interested parties having to be taken as being accurate without adequate statistical proof. One fact, however, is quite definite : there has been a steady decline in the flat-fish landings of recent years, and steps must be taken to avert the total ruin of the flat-fish fisheries in these waters.

Gisborne.

Four trawlers fish from this port, these being responsible for the bulk of the fish landed. One steam trawler has been laid up for a considerable period, due to the high price of coal and heavy operating-costs. It was proposed to install Diesel engines in this vessel, but finance has proved a serious difficulty, and the vessel will have to obtain a license under the Industrial Efficiency Act.

The motor trawlers use otter trawls with 90 ft. on the foot-rope ; some use short extensions of 12 ft. The trawling-grounds are from Karapiki to Table Cape, and the vessels work in water up to 48 fathoms in depth. All the vessels make daily trips and return to port each night. There has been some decline in the catches, but the weather rather than depletion was probably responsible for this. Unfortunately, failure to compile proper statistics in the past renders it impossible to separate the trawling landings from the landings made by line boats, but the following table shows that, allowing for small changes in the fleet, the total annual landings have varied inconsiderably and have been maintained with fair consistency :—

Gisborne Fleet and Annual Landings.

Year.			Trawlers.		Line Boats.		Total Landings.
			Whole-time.	Part-time.	Whole-time.	Part-time.	
1927-28	..	..	1	1	4	..	Cwt. 3,761
1928-29	..	..	1	..	4	..	3,465
1929-30	..	..	1	..	10	..	2,717
1930-31	..	..	1	2	9	2	3,093
1931-32	..	..	1	..	13	2	2,937
1932-33	..	..	1	..	15	..	2,876
1933-34	..	..	1	..	14	..	3,281
1934-35	..	..	2	..	13	..	3,320
1935-36	..	..	?	?	9	4	2,190
1936-37	..	..	3	1	3	6	4,219

Auckland.

The only trawling carried out from the Port of Auckland is that done by the steam trawlers owned by Messrs. Sanford, Ltd. This firm maintained, and produced figures to show, that the trawlers could bring in more regular supplies throughout the year than the seine boats. In this connection it is interesting to note that for the year ended 31st March, 1937, the two steam trawlers operating full-time, plus one operating part-time only, landed 34 per cent. of the total fish landings at Auckland.