

Napier.—A drop of 12·3 per cent. is recorded in the total quantity of fish landed at Napier and in the district. Danish-seine landings fell from 303 to 215 and line landings from 1,165 to 639. The quantity of line fish taken fell from 37·6 per cent. to 25·9 per cent. Trawler landings increased from 958 to 1,327.

Wellington.—Two steam-trawlers and one part-time motor-trawler operated from Wellington. The steam-trawlers made 124 landings in comparison with the 109 recorded in 1938-39, and brought in 69·9 per cent. of the total quantity of fish landed. Tarakihi constituted 69·5 per cent. of the catch, moki 5·6 per cent., barracouta 5·6 per cent., red cod 3·2 per cent., and hake 2·8 per cent. The average landings of long-line boats in Wellington show an increase with regard to groper and decreases in respect of hake and ling.

Making 7 landings at Wellington during the year, the fish-carrier "South Sea" brought a total of 9,565 cwt. blue cod and 71 cwt. groper, valued at £5,503, from the Chatham Islands.

French Pass.—Returns from the French Pass district give a total of 2,556 cwt., compared with the previous year's total of 2,649 cwt. The landings for the individual species are much the same except that blue cod has increased by 163 cwt. and snapper has fallen off by 226 cwt. Landings at the French Pass totalled 876, a reduction of 0·6 per cent.

Otago District.—The quantity of fish landed in the Otago district is 34·4 per cent. less than in the previous year. The reduction is almost entirely accounted for by the fact that the steam-trawler "Hananui" was not in operation for eleven months of the year. In comparison with the previous year, Karitane and Taieri Mouth totals are much the same, the Port Chalmers' catch declined by 49·7 per cent., and the Nuggets' catch by 25·8 per cent., while the Waikawa landings increased by 70·2 per cent. Of the total quantity of fish (20,189 cwt.) landed in the Otago district, 59·5 per cent. was made up of flat fish.

EXPORTS AND IMPORTS.

Exports and imports are shown in Table V (p. 35), which gives details as to quantities and values of various classes of fishery products exported and the ports from which they were shipped.

While the value of the total imports, consisting largely of canned products, has fallen from £262,916 for last year to £164,611, a decline of 37·4 per cent., the value of the total exports of New Zealand fish and shell-fish is £149,882, as compared with £171,570 for 1938-39, a fall of £21,688, or 12·6 per cent.

The comparatively small export of fresh oysters* has risen to 64,210 dozen (approximately equivalent to 1,000 sacks or 3,000 bushels) from 33,466 dozen, the value of the total being 86·9 per cent. higher than that of last year. Frozen fish show a decline from 43,213 cwt. to 35,552 cwt. in quantity and from £139,743 to £119,999 in value, a falling-off of 17·7 per cent. and 14·1 per cent. respectively. This includes crayfish, which fell from 583 cwt., valued at £1,631, to 293 cwt., valued at £968. Smaller quantities of blue cod, snapper, tarakihi, and "other kinds" were shipped this year, the decline being due mainly to the absence of some of the larger steam-trawlers over the last six months of the year. This is indicated by the greater declines being shown for the classes tarakihi and snapper than for blue cod and flounder, the export of which have shown very little change, the value of flounder exported showing a slight increase on the figure for 1938-39. Exports of oysters preserved in tins substantially increased, from 182,451 lb. to 291,760 lb. (59·9 per cent.) in quantity and from £9,356 to £15,750 (68·3 per cent.) in value. Exports of tinned toheroa reached a total of 63,202 lb., valued at £3,887, representing increases of 49·4 per cent. and 24·9 per cent. respectively. On the other hand, shipments of canned crayfish fell from the respectable total of 30,600 lb. (valued at £2,678), to 4,599 lb. (value, £408), which are respectively 15·0 per cent. and 15·2 per cent. of the figures for 1938-39. Exports of tinned whitebait also declined from 111,493 lb. (value, £14,917) to 48,983 lb. (value, £7,953), which is a fall of 55·2 per cent. in quantity and 49·1 per cent. in value.

ROCK OYSTERS.

The picking of rock oysters for the 1939 season was begun on 1st June and finished on 31st August, the depot in Auckland being open for sales from 15th June to 2nd September. The condition of the oysters this year, especially those from the Hauraki Gulf and the Bay of Islands, was exceptionally good. The total of 5,930 sacks produced was the highest since 1929, when 6,240 sacks were marketed. This season's total falls below the average for the five years 1926-30 by less than 1 per cent., but exceeds the average production for the five years 1931-35 inclusive by over 36 per cent. The average for the immediately preceding five years is exceeded by 45 per cent. There has been a steady recovery since 1935, when the production for market reached the lowest figure recorded of 3,037 sacks. The decline was in all probability due to a succession of bad or poor spawning seasons, and it is now evident that the beds had been overpicked in the attempt to meet market demands during a period when propagation was below normal. The recovery now definitely in evidence may be ascribed to the natural increase resulting from two or three favourable spawning seasons in a decade, the augmented supplies from cultivated sections and, added to these, careful and conservative picking in connection with which credit must be given to the conscientious work of local inspectors, overseers, and the oyster-pickers themselves. Details as to the quantities taken from the various areas are shown in Table III (see page 34).

* The export of rock oysters is permitted only with the consent of the Minister of Marine.