

The Chief Inspector reports that, as regards the Wellington District, the supply of fish has not been equal to that of the previous year, and that some of the salesmen state that the demand has been considerably less, but that this is, no doubt, only temporary. The enterprise shown by fishermen and others in procuring additional and better-class fishing-vessels proves that they have confidence in the future of the industry. The local supply of blue-cod has not been up to the average of previous years, and several of the dealers complain of the small size of the fish brought in. The warehouse season has been a fairly good one. Some good catches were made in the early part of the season, but the fish took off earlier than usual.

The following is the purport of the reports received from the local Inspectors:—

At Auckland during last autumn and up to the end of August schnapper were so abundant that the dealers had to limit each boat to a certain number of dozen per week. They are still plentiful in the Hauraki Gulf, but scarce in Tamaki Strait. Kahawai, rock-cod, and hapuka have been plentiful, but mullet have been very scarce. Flounders have been fairly plentiful. There are about a hundred boats, employing over two hundred men, engaged in the industry, and there are five fish-curing establishments, employing about thirty fish-curers and five carriers.

At the Thames there are thirty-eight boats, employing about eighty men, engaged in fishing, the fish taken being mostly flounders and schnapper, of which there have been good supplies. There are two fish-curing establishments and a fish-freezing works in the district.

At the Bay of Islands the principal fish that have been taken were schnapper, mullet, flounders, crayfish, parori, tarakihi, maumau, kahawai, and hapuka. Other kinds which have been taken in smaller quantities are rock-cod, red-cod, barracouta, butterfish, garfish, kingfish, and yellowtail. There are two fish-canneries and ten smokehouses in the district. There are forty-five registered fishing-boats, whose crews consist of sixty-seven Europeans and fifty-four Maoris.

At Kaipara a large quantity of fish has been caught all over the harbour. The principal fish taken were flounders, schnapper, and mullet. Mullet have not been so plentiful as during the previous two seasons. Kahawai are plentiful, but are not used by local people. Trevalli and gurnard have been scarce. There are two canning factories in the district. Thirty-one licenses were issued to fishing-boats. Trawling has been prohibited within this harbour.

There are nineteen licensed fishing-boats in Manukau Harbour, and the principal fish which have been taken during the year are schnapper, mullet, and flounders.

All the fish taken in Hokianga Harbour have been consumed locally. The principal kinds caught were schnapper, mullet, kahawai, flounders, rock-cod, kingfish, herring, moki, tarakihi, whitebait, and crayfish. The number of licensed fishing-boats is seventeen. There are seventeen smokehouses in the district, and a few rough structures which are being used by the Maoris for their private use. Shellfish which are taken are mussels, pipis, cockles, and escallops.

In Hawke's Bay eleven steam trawlers are employed, and it is stated that all of them did well up to the end of January last, but since then fish have been scarce. There are about sixty persons employed in all branches of the industry. The trawling fleet was increased during the year by the addition of the Hawke's Bay Fishing Company's large trawler "Countess." This vessel is equipped in a very complete manner. The trawler "Nora Niven" has worked the grounds in Cook Strait, in Tasman and Golden Bays, and in the Bay of Plenty with very good results.

Some of the fishermen in Queen Charlotte and Pelorus Sounds are reported to have done very well, whilst others have obtained only fair catches. The principal fish which have been taken are groper (hapuka) and flounders.

In Westland the whitebait season was short, but fairly good while it lasted. The other fish taken have been principally herring and flounders, but the supply has not been very good.

In Otago and Canterbury there has been an improvement in the industry. Fishing operations have been carried out along the whole of the coast-line, with good results. Off Rangiora, Kaiapoi, New Brighton, Redcliffe, Sumner, and Lyttelton large and increasing quantities of fish have been taken, and delivered daily to the Christchurch markets. Steam trawling is carried on profitably. At Akaroa all the estuaries and shallow bays have been worked with good results. At Timaru daily catches of considerable magnitude are taken. Sixteen new boats have been built, and equipped with the latest appliances. At Oamaru there has been a steady supply. At Moeraki the catches have not been up to the standard of former years. From Waikouaiti to Catlin's River there has been continued improvement. At the Nuggets the Department has improved the fishermen's landing-place. Considerable additions have been made to the Otago fleets, and another steam trawler has been procured. Seventeen ordinary fishing-boats fitted with oil-engines and the latest appliances have been launched, and a large number of boats are on the stocks. There are forty-three fish curing and preserving establishments in existence, from which 7,000 pounds' worth of goods have been exported, besides the quantity manufactured and supplied for local consumption. Freezing-stores with chambers capable of storing 1,000 tons are now in course of erection. The principal kinds of fish taken are kingfish, groper (hapuka), trevalli, tarakihi, schnapper, trumpeter, moki, barracouta, blue-cod, and flounders.

At the Bluff the industry has not been so successful as during the previous year. Seventy-six vessels, aggregating 639 tons, were licensed during the year. Of these, four were steamers. A fishing-station with a freezer has been established at Broad Bay, Stewart Island, where a large number of men and boats will be employed. The Bluff Fish and Oyster Company has procured a good-sized vessel, which is being fitted with a refrigerator and all the latest requisites for fishing. Flounders are not so plentiful as formerly, but more groper are taken, and they meet with ready sale. During the year 335,050 dozen oysters, valued at £2,551, and 8,004½ cwt. fish, valued at £1,200, were exported; 1,109,732 dozen oysters and 3,241 cwt. of fish were distributed from the Bluff for consumption in the Dominion. The fish comprised cod, groper, flounders, trevalli, trumpeter, greenbone, and moki.