

The great increase in the price and short supply at the present time of coal, benzene, lubricating-oil, nets, netting-twine, hooks and lines, and all other necessaries connected with the fishing trade comes very hard on fishermen, and is having a far-reaching effect on their earnings and also on the fish-supply for market throughout the Dominion. I believe it is correct to say that, with the exception of one or two instances, there has been little or no increase in the price which fishermen get for their fish since the war began. The result is that, with the high rate of wages offering at other employment, a number of men have given up fishing and taken to other work where they can earn more money and have a regular income. The position with regard to the supply of nets, netting-twine, and all other necessaries connected with the fishing trade has become so serious that I would recommend that immediate steps should be taken by the Government to assist in securing the necessary supplies.

I include in this report a summary of the information contained in the annual reports received from the Collectors of Customs and Inspectors of Fisheries at the various fishing-ports; also tables showing the number of fishing-boats licensed during the year, the number of fishermen employed, &c., and approximately the total quantity and value of fish caught and marketed.

The following is a summary of the information supplied by Collectors of Customs and Inspectors of Fisheries in their reports for the year:—

*Hokianga*.—The market fish taken at this port are principally mullet, schnapper, flounder, and kahawai. These have been fairly plentiful during the year.

*Russell*.—With the exception of flounder-market fish have been plentiful; fishermen report mullet and schnapper as being more plentiful than they have been for a good many years. The principal market for fish is Whangarei and inland towns and settlements. Whales have been plentiful, and a very good season has been experienced at the Whangamumu whaling-station. The sport of angling for kingfish and swordfish has become famous, and the number of sportsmen from England, Australia, and from all parts of the Dominion is increasing every year.

*Whangarei*.—Fish of all kinds have been plentiful, but the number of fishermen has decreased during the last two years, and the supply for local requirements is now principally obtained from Bay of Islands.

*Kaipara*.—The catch for the year has been very small compared with former years. The low price given to fishermen for their fish, the high price of benzene, nets, &c., and having to compete with the trawlers working from Auckland has made fishing an unprofitable occupation for those engaged in it at Kaipara.

*Auckland*.—The return supplied for the present year shows a very large increase in the quantity and also in the value of fish marketed in comparison to the previous year. With the exception of flounder and mullet all the other market fish have been plentiful. The number of hook-and-line boats fishing has shown a considerable increase during the year.

*Thames*.—The fish usually caught by the net and hook-and-line fishermen in the Thames Gulf have been plentiful, and more fish was brought in at times than the fishermen could dispose of. Fishermen complain of the difficulty of finding a market for all they can catch.

*Tauranga*.—During the year practically no fish have been caught for the Auckland market, fishing being confined to what is required to supply Tauranga and district. The extensive fishing-grounds in the Bay of Plenty are capable of great development, as very large supplies of schnapper, tarakihi, trevalli, and hapuku can be taken either by trawling or by lining.

*Gisborne*.—There has been no scarcity of fish, but owing to the bad weather on the east coast, combined with the high price of petrol, there has not been the activity in the fishing industry as in former years.

*Napier*.—The year, on the whole, has been a bad one for the steam trawlers as well as for the small-boat men. The principal reasons given are scarcity of fish, high cost of materials, and difficulty of getting a supply of coal and also labour, and the prevailing easterly weather prevented the small boats working outside or hauling on the western beach.

*Wanganui*.—All kinds of fish have been plentiful, but on account of so many men having gone away on active service there are not as many engaged in fishing as formerly.

*Foxton*.—The year has been about an average one as regards the quantity of flounder and schnapper taken. The run of whitebait was about the average of the seasons.

*Wellington District*.—There has been a considerable falling-off in the number of boats engaged in fishing during the year, seventy-five being licensed, as against eighty-nine for 1917. Good catches of hapuku and hake have been made in Cook Strait when weather conditions were favourable, but a continuation of easterly winds during the summer and autumn very much hampered fishing operations all round the coast, and resulted in a short supply for market from the local fishing-grounds.

*Picton*.—The quantity of market fish taken has been about the average of the two previous seasons. The whaling season was a successful one for those engaged in the industry in the Sounds and Cook Strait.

*Wairau*.—On account of a plentiful supply of fish and easy facilities for shipping to the Wellington market the fishing industry is in a thriving condition.

*Nelson*.—The catches during the past year have not been up to the catches of the previous year. It is considered that the reason why the fishing industry does not show better development is due to unsuitable marketing conditions and the want of proper cool storage for fish at Port Nelson.

*Westport*.—The season has been a good one as far as the large fish usually caught—viz., hapuku, schnapper, and flounder—are concerned, but the run of whitebait was exceptionally poor.

*Greymouth*.—The whitebait season was a very poor one. The catch of other fish was about the average of other seasons. The fishing is chiefly done between January and April.