

## REPORT ON FISHERIES.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit my report on fisheries for the year ended 31st March, 1934.

A summarized statement as to the principal methods of fishing, the number of fishing-vessels and men employed, and the quantity of fish landed for the year at various ports is given in Tables I and II; and in Table IIA the quantities of different kinds landed are indicated for certain of the ports from which data have been obtainable. As will be seen by examination of these tables, the data on which they are based are not so comprehensive nor so categorical as one would desire. There are also variations in the degree of their approximation to accuracy according to the local facilities that exist for the collection of figures for the returns. Where the industry is a steady and well-established one with definitely known agencies for distribution the question of obtaining records of the annual quantities of fish handled is not very difficult. There are, however, certain places where the fishing industry though by no means negligible is so irregular and diffuse that it is impossible to get any reliable record of its operations.

Although by various methods, such as the collection of data from individual fishermen's log-books and from returns of fish of different kinds landed or handled at various fish depots, we have acquired for certain of the ports more detailed records of the results of fishing operations than hitherto, we still lack the means of obtaining data of real statistical significance on which to base statements that may be considered as satisfactorily elucidating the main features and trends of the industry. The principal defect is the absence of information about fishing power and the time factor in relation to the quantities of fish landed; for it is obvious that the quantity of fish caught will depend on the abundance of the stock in the area fished, the efficiency of the method (fishing power), and the duration of the time spent in fishing operations.

From the collation of returns obtained from local inspectors of fisheries for the purpose of this report the approximate quantities and values of the chief categories of fishery products for the year have been estimated as follows:—

	Quantity.	Value. £
Wet fish .. .. .	313,319 cwt.	283,107
Whitebait .. .. .	2,118 cwt.	10,993
Dredge oysters .. .. .	42,176 sacks	21,088
Rock-oysters .. .. .	4,717 sacks	5,254
Mussels .. .. .	4,888 sacks	1,309
Crayfish .. .. .	8,922 cwt.	5,494
Toheroa (canned products).. .. .	1,433 cases	2,832
Whale products—		
Oil .. .. .	208 tons	3,095
Fertilizer .. .. .	Nil.	..
Quinnat Salmon (netted fish only) .. .. .	13,527 lb.	507
Total value .. .. .		<u>£333,679</u>

In addition to the above it is worthy of note that the returns from Auckland include 13 cwt. of shrimps at £48 and 13 sacks of scallops valued at £10, besides 31 cwt. of sardines valued at £4, indicating an increased tendency to utilize for market purposes certain minor products of the sea which have formerly been ignored or only harvested by amateur fishermen.

Reviewing the broad features of the greater commercial fisheries, one finds in comparison with the previous year that an appreciable increase is shown for every section with the single exception of whitebait, of which the quantity taken has greatly declined.

The Auckland returns are the most comprehensive and the most uniform in comparison with those of previous years. The total quantity and value of fish landed here show an increase—91,512 cwt. and £65,498 compared with 82,758 and £59,617 for the year 1932-33. Snapper and tarakihi landings have increased appreciably, but the flounder fisheries have produced a much smaller yield. The following shows the quantities of flounders (including dabs) landed at Auckland and Thames in the last four years:—

	1930-31.	1931-32.	1932-33.	1933-34.
	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.
Auckland .. .. .	2,549	4,201	10,452	6,607
Thames .. .. .	6,889	7,228	6,516	4,869

The figures would have more significance if the returns were capable of being analysed so as to show the average catches per day's fishing of representative boats.

The increased yield of snapper is to some extent connected with the greater range of the Danish-seining vessels and the exploitation of new grounds, aided by the generally favourable weather of the last year. The flounder fisheries have been continuously pursued on very much the same grounds and, while the intensity of fishing was increased from 1931-32 to 1932-33—when the fishing was very good—it does not appear that there was any diminution in intensity of fishing from 1932-33 to 1933-34.