

at Wellington in good condition. The run of warehou has been very good this season, and some very large hauls have been made by the local fishermen. During the year two firms have established fishing-stations at the Chatham Islands, where they have erected freezing-works. Several shipments of fish, principally blue-cod, have been brought to Wellington, where part of it was sold to some of the retail fish-dealers and the balance was shipped to Sydney, where there is a large demand for blue-cod. The fish brought up was in splendid condition, and was well cleaned and nicely packed.

"In Canterbury the supply of fish for the current year compares favourably with that of previous years. There are now four trawlers working from Lyttelton, and this has had the effect of ensuring a more regular supply as well as a better variety of fish. The hapuka fishing-grounds off Timaru continue to yield a large supply of these fish. With better transport facilities to the Dunedin, Christchurch, and Wellington markets there is no doubt that a very large and regular supply would be obtained from these grounds.

"In the Otago District the information to hand is to the effect that except in the winter months the supply of fish has been equal to the market requirements. There has been no exceptional increase or decrease in the quantity of any of the market fishes, and there has been no material change in the number of vessels and men employed in the industry.

"At Invercargill and Bluff, hapuka, moki, and trevalli are reported as being plentiful during the year. The demand for blue-cod has been in excess of the supply. The more accessible fishing-grounds are not now yielding anything like the supply they did formerly, and fishermen have to go much greater distances from shore, and they are thus more liable to loss of time owing to bad weather when on the grounds, and also much longer in getting their fish to market. The Customs officer at the Bluff reports an increase in the export trade for oysters. In the early part of the season large quantities sent to Christchurch, Wellington, and Melbourne arrived at their destinations in bad condition and had to be destroyed. This was due to the warm weather and to the oysters not having made up condition after spawning. Complaints with regard to the watery and poor condition of oysters in the early part of the season have come under my notice on previous occasions, and I think it is advisable that the season should open on the 1st March instead of the 1st February, and be extended to the middle or end of October. If this is done one of the hottest months of the year would be excluded from the open season, and the oysters would have a month longer to recover after spawning.

"In the Auckland District the Inspectors report fish as being plentiful and the market fully supplied during the year. The supply of mullet is reported to be improving each year, and Inspector Bennett is of the opinion that this is due in the Hauraki Gulf to the close season for these fish which is now in force there. It is pleasing to note that in the Thames and Auckland districts flounders have been plentiful during the year, and besides supplying the local markets large quantities have been sent to Wellington and towns on the West Coast. Last season it was considered advisable to give the oyster-beds in the Auckland District and Bay of Islands a rest for a season, and they were therefore kept closed. This was necessary because of the comparatively small area fit to pick when the Department took over the picking in 1908; the beds depleted by licensed pickers previous to that had not recovered sufficiently to be picked. The beds in the Hauraki Gulf, Great Barrier, Bay of Islands, and Kaipara are now well stocked with young oysters, and in a year or two this large extent of beds will be in condition to be picked, and should supply sufficient oysters for market requirements. There is a very large and increasing demand for rock-oysters, and to meet this it is necessary that the beds should be very strictly protected; and I would also recommend replanting depleted areas, and planting new beds wherever the foreshore is suitable on an extensive scale, either by the Department or by leasing the foreshore for oyster-cultivation to private persons, as is done in New South Wales.

"During the year there has been considerable development in the whaling industry. Messrs. Jagger and Cook have brought out a modern whaling-steamer, and although it was late in the season before all the fittings arrived yet they were able to get more whales at Whangamumu than in any previous season. This firm has now extended their operations to the Campbell Islands, where they have established a station for right-whaling. Hebblerley and party, who have been right-whaling at the Campbell Islands for the last two seasons, are reported to have had a very successful season.

"A phenomenal run of whitebait occurred in the Hokitika River last season. The two canning-factories were unable to take the supplies that were brought in. The fishermen state that it is the best season they have known in fifteen years. A fair run is reported from other rivers, both in the South and North Islands. In the Canterbury Rivers, owing to snow-water coming down, the fish were rather scarce in the early part of the season, but later on good catches were made, and the fishermen were well satisfied with their season's catches.

"With regard to the development of the fishing industry and providing a more plentiful and regular supply of fish for the people of this country, I am convinced that better marketing and transport facilities by rail to the different markets and to the inland towns would result in a very large increase in the quantity of fish sent from the various fishing-grounds. Reports from the Inspectors of Fisheries show that there is a great deal of dissatisfaction in connection with forwarding fish by rail at present, and I would ask that the matter be brought before the Railway Department with a view to try and meet the requirements of the fish trade.

The establishment of public fish-markets in the principal towns would no doubt help the industry, and also be the means of enabling the public to get a better and cheaper supply of fish. The matter was brought under the notice of the municipalities at Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin by the Department in October, 1908, but so far no markets have been established. Improved means of transporting fish by railway are also much required.