

much depreciated. The Danish-seiners, working on the “Dab Patch” grounds, were responsible for the greater part of the catches. This class of fishing, carried on by the larger vessels capable of working at greater distance from port, has now definitely taken precedence of the older method of set-net fishing which was formerly used by all the Thames fishermen. A large proportion of line-caught fish, principally snapper, is still brought by road to Thames distributors from Mercury Bay. In Hawke’s Bay, as in the Hauraki Gulf, there has been an unusual abundance of flat fish, though round fish have been scarce. The trawlers did not work full time owing to the limited demand. The discovery of a new hapuku ground, from which some good catches were made, has been reported.

With regard to the industry in Otago, groper (hapuku) catches have been below the average of former years, but better fishing for red cod and kingfish has been experienced. The blue-cod fisheries off Stewart Island and the Chathams have suffered seriously from the diminished demand for exports to Australia, and it would appear that considerable efforts for the improvement of the quality by better refrigeration methods and for a more satisfactory selling organization will be necessary for the rehabilitation of these fisheries.

The statistics of the exports and the imports of the fish and shellfish are given in Table V. As might be expected, a fairly substantial decrease is shown compared with last year’s figures which were themselves much below those of the previous year. Exports of fresh oysters have declined from 140,289 dozen, valued at £1,500, to 45,681 dozen, valued at £543. Frozen blue cod have gone down from 9,504 cwt., valued at £27,213, to 7,329 cwt., valued at £17,866; frozen snapper from 1,624 cwt., value £2,274, to 871 cwt., value £1,051; frozen flounder show practically no decline in quantity (1,894 cwt., compared with last year’s 1,897 cwt.), but a considerable drop in value from £5,774 to £4,617; other kinds exported frozen dropped from 4,653 cwt., value £11,786, to 4,004 cwt., value £6,861. The value of the total exports of frozen fish fell from £47,047 to £30,395. Although canned toheroa shows a decline from £3,353 to £992, the exports of canned oysters show a promising increase from 15,079 lb. to 69,497 lb., though the increase in value (£1,207 to £2,490) is not commensurate. Canned whitebait exports have also increased from 39,066 lb., value £4,908, to 66,386 lb., value £7,459, and other kinds of canned products have increased from 2,347 lb., value £411, to 36,028 lb., value £2,243.

ROCK-OYSTERS.

Oyster-picking was commenced on the 22nd June, and finished on the 19th September, forty-three pickers being employed. The number of sacks taken from the different areas was as follows: Bay of Islands, 1,780 sacks; Whangarei Harbour, 144 sacks; Kaipara Harbour, 467 sacks; Hauraki Gulf (Takatu—Gull Point, 35; Rakino, 157; Rangitoto, 168; Motutapu, 167; Waiheke, 624; Ponui, 131) 1,282 sacks; Coromandel, 377 sacks; Great Barrier Islands, 310 sacks: total, 4,360 sacks.

As might have been expected, the demand was not so brisk as usual, and with our system of a uniform price per sack for all rock-oysters, some difficulty was experienced at the Auckland depot in getting dealers to take anything but the best-quality oysters. Unfortunately, the beds which yield the finest oysters are, generally speaking, the most sparsely stocked, and considerable judgment and restraint are always necessary to avoid a tendency to deplete the best areas to the jeopardy of future supplies.

Oyster-cultivation.

With limited funds available the work was confined to the most obviously necessary and profitable undertakings. The following statement gives a summary of operations and expenses:—

Rock-oyster-cultivation Work.

Area.	High-water Oyster-rock removed.	Other Work.	Costs.
	Sq. yds.		£ s. d.
I. Bay of Islands ..	1,368	250 square yards of rock cleaned from “grape weed”	80 14 4*
III. Kaipara Harbour ..	3,647	7,800 square yards of oyster-bearing stones turned on the Ruawai Stop-bank; six new trays erected	99 1 6
VI. Coromandel ..	..	Twenty-four new trays erected ..	45 2 0
Totals	5,015	..	224 17 10

* Includes an accident compensation claim of £6 1s. 4d.

NOTE.—In addition to the above operations the following work was done by the permanent staff in the course of their ordinary duties, no extra labour-costs being entailed: 1,606,100 “borers” destroyed; 185 yards of “capstones” turned: 280 square yards of rock cleaned from dead shell, and 10 square yards from “grape weed”; 2,001 “pupu” destroyed.

TOHEROA.

The year under review was exceptionally difficult for the canned toheroa trade, owing principally to the reduced demand for this luxury in Australia. One cannery suspended operations and the other packed a somewhat smaller quantity than in the previous year. During the last three or four years