

Whakatane and Tauranga.

The drag-net is not used in this district to any great degree by the professional fishermen. A little drag-netting is done at Ohiwa and at Tauranga, but with the exception of one man at Tauranga the landings from these boats are negligible. It was alleged by several witnesses that nets with undersized meshes were used in this district, and there is no doubt that more constant supervision is required. Some complaint was received concerning the operations of the fisherman who works a drag-net in Tauranga Harbour, but his method of fishing is quite legal and not likely to deplete the grounds. Further, his catch is of value to the town, as it is often landed in bad weather when the sea-going boats are unable to get out. The main trouble arises from the large number of drag-nets operated by amateurs all over this district. Many of these nets are not up to the legal standard, and a strict enforcement of the regulations is desirable. This matter can be dealt with only by more rigid inspection and some form of control of the unlicensed fishermen.

Kaipara.

All the commercial fishermen who came before the Committee in the Kaipara district or who submitted statements, and also the local Inspectors of Fisheries, both past and present, were in favour of the total abolition of drag-nets in this harbour, on the grounds that they kill too many small fish, that illegal nets which are difficult to detect are in common use by amateurs, and that these nets destroy the bottom by being dragged over the weed which harbours the food of the fishes. They further asserted that the nets are often used illegally by being dragged ashore instead of being emptied in the water. As the principal fish caught here are flounder and mullet, the Committee considers that the minimum size of the mesh of any drag-net used in this harbour should be 5 in.

Recommendations.*New Zealand.*

1. That all nets, whether used from licensed vessels or not, be registered and checked by a fisheries officer.
2. That the possession of drag-nets having a mesh of less than 4 in., except where exempted for the catching of particular species of fish, be made illegal.
3. That the Fisheries Regulation No. 61 relating to nets used for the taking of other species of fish be altered so as to increase the mesh from 2½ in. to 4 in.
4. That more adequate provision be made for the supervision of fishing in the district from Opotiki to Thames.

Kaipara.

5. That the minimum size of the mesh of any drag-net (hand seine) used in the Kaipara Harbour be 5 in., and that there be no exception to this rule—i.e., for bait-nets, &c.

SPECIAL NETS.*Sardine and Pilchard Fisheries, Cook Strait.*

A fisherman at French Pass applied to the Committee for financial assistance to enable him to complete the manufacture of a pilchard-net. Arrangements were made for such a loan to be considered, but in the meantime the fisherman had managed to raise the small sum required (£100) from an outside source.

Large quantities of this fish are seen from time to time, and quantities are taken for use as bait by the fishermen on the Wellington side of the Straits. Complaint was made that the Wellington fishermen come over to catch these fish as bait and take fish which are too small.

No regulations govern the minimum size at which this fish may be taken. It was suggested that these fish should be caught and either sold fresh, cured, or canned. If the evidence as to the quantities of these fish obtainable is reliable, some consideration should be given to the establishment of such an industry.

Sardines, Auckland.

Evidence was tendered that there had been an attempt to float a sardine industry in Auckland. Further developments are held up owing to financial difficulties and the requirements of the protection of fishing-rights. On the evidence submitted, this Committee cannot recommend any advance by the Government of the sum asked for by those interested in the project. If the possibilities of this fishery are as good as the promoter averred, there should be no difficulty in raising the money privately. Further investigation into the feasibility of the applicant's schemes and a survey to obtain knowledge as to the regularity of the appearance of the sardines in large quantities would have to be made before we could make any recommendation.

Recommendations.*General.*

1. Investigations should be made to establish the relation of the length to the age of the pilchard or sardine, with a view to the prevention of its capture before maturity either for bait or for any other purpose.
2. After the establishment of such length, experiments as to the size of the mesh of nets necessary to allow fish under such length to escape should be undertaken.
3. The possibility of the establishment of an industry in cured or canned pilchards should be examined, and if such industry appears possible it should receive assistance and protection.