

AUSTRALIAN FISHERY EXPORTS SET RECORD

Australian fishery exports were a record US\$87.3 million in FY 1971-72 (twelve months ending in June). Rock lobster tail exports were 10.3 million pounds worth a record US\$39 million; these were increases of 5 percent and 22 percent, respectively. Almost the entire quantity was exported to the United States.

Prawn exports set records for both volume and value -- 17.7 million pounds (up 19 percent) valued at US\$31.4 (up 54 percent). Exports of prawn to Japan dropped from 78 to 67 percent of the total. Exports of prawn to the United States were 16 percent, and the United Kingdom 7 percent of the total.

Abalone & Scallop

Exports of abalone increased 30 percent to US\$9.8 million. Canned abalone exports were 5.5 million pounds valued at US\$6.8 million, while frozen abalone exports increased to 2.4 million pounds and US\$3.0 million.

Scallop exports dropped 4 percent in volume to 2.1 million pounds but increased 5 percent in value to US\$2.8 million. The United States bought 54 percent of Australia's scallop exports, taking 1.1 million pounds worth US\$1.5 million, increases of 83 and 114 percent, respectively.

Industry Growth Predicted

The Commonwealth Minister for Primary Industry predicts that the Australian fishing industry will continue to grow, although probably at a slower rate than in recent years. Exports increased by 21 percent in FY 1971-

72. The brightest feature of the year was the enormous increase in the prawn industry. The Minister warned against excessive optimism, stating that most of the prawn production comes from northern Australia, where catches are subject to wide fluctuations.

Among Australian fishermen there is increasing confidence in the future of the industry. More sophisticated vessels are being built, as are modern plants and ancillary services. There is now a solid core of experienced, dedicated personnel in the industry.

Progress in the 5 years ending June 1971 was rapid, with production up 60 percent, and exports more than doubled. The Australian fleet exceeded 9,000 vessels by June 1971, with 46 vessels more than 85 feet in length -- compared with only 15 over 85 feet in 1966. Fishing personnel has increased by more than 3,000 to over 16,000.

Industry Consolidation Ahead

The Minister expects the next 5 years to be a period of consolidation of the industry. Emphasis will be on developing fisheries in remote areas and on exploring mid-water pelagic resources. To increase the supply of fish in local markets, these projects are necessary. Consumption has risen significantly, but only half the fish sold is caught locally and only 21 percent is fresh.

In order to finance increases in the industry, a grant of \$108,000 has been awarded for exploration into a possible jack mackerel purse-seining fishery; a grant of \$109,000 was made for a shark fishery. ('Australian Fisheries')