FISHERIES

The technical committee points out that fish, because of its high protein value, is one of the more important sources of food in a program for raising the nutritional levels of peoples throughout the world. Fish is one of the least costly of the protein foods and the most quickly and easily obtained from nature.

World production of fish is estimated at about 39,000,000,000 pounds annually (pre-war figure). Of this total about two-thirds is marketed for human consumption and about 40% of the marketed quantity, or 10,400,000,000 pounds, is edible.

There is considerable waste of the fish caught because of uneven distribution and because of local prejudices which cause people in one part of the world to refuse to eat a fish which in another part is considered a delicacy.

FAO will study the possibilities of more intensive prosecution of existing fisheries, greater utilization of the catch and greater exploitation of little developed fisheries.

The Technical Committee makes the following recommendations, under seven general headings, as some of the immediate functions of FAO in the field of fisheries:

1. Information

FAO should encourage all the nations to establish comparable systems of collecting and publishing fishery data, and to this end should arrange a conference to plan the adoption of uniform methods. Publications should be exchanged between the countries and a catalogue prepared of sources of fishery data so that all published reports are made known. Agencies publishing reports should be encouraged to prepare summaries of them for the use of research workers. Eventually it may become desirable for FAO to arrange for the publication of digests of important contributions to the knowledge of fisheries.

2. Research

Biological: Investigations to determine the natural history, distribution, migrations and environments of fishery species, the size and extent of fish populations, the methods of obtaining maximum production without endangering the future supply and effective methods of artificial propagation, stocking and disease control are fundamental to the intelligent use of fishery resources. FAO should encourage such research and should likewise encourage the exchange of students and research workers among nations to ensure co-ordination of activities.

Nutritional: There is already a large volume of information available concerning the nutritional components of fishery products. This knowledge and the results of new studies should be utilized to the fullest extent in order to popularize fish as an excellent source of protein food in countries suffering from protein deficiency.

Technological: This concerns the handling of fish aboard the vessel, its preparation for market by freezing, drying, salting, canning and other methods of preservation, the storage and transportation of fishery products and the preparation of by-products such as fish meal and oil. Existing knowledge is already so far in advance of application that the efforts of FAO should be directed towards securing adoption of the improved methods. The committee suggests that FAO make existing reports on these matters