



## *The New Zealand Fishing Industry*

The New Zealand fishing industry has come a long way since its early days, when small inshore vessels, which were generally limited to trips of one to three days, carried out fishing. From about 1907 the arrival of vessels like the steam trawler *Nora Niven* saw the industry begin to develop. These vessels were larger and could venture further afield. This made the discovery of new fishing grounds possible and meant increased prosperity for those working in the industry.

The New Zealand Fishing Industry Board was set up in 1963 to represent the interests and to promote the development of the seafood industry. The board is committed to the principle of making full use of the nation's marine resources on a sustainable basis. It works closely with government and regional authorities in the decision making process, helping the industry to expand.

An important function of the board is to develop and promote trade both in New Zealand and internationally in partnership with industry and other interested parties. The board promotes co-ordination within the seafood industry and also draws the attention of government and the industry to areas where research and development are required.

The development of the deepwater fishery and aquaculture has had a major impact. The fishing industry and New Zealand's economy have greatly benefited from this resource. Research into further developments continues with work done by the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA), and the fishing industry.

For many years New Zealand governments did little to support the fishing industry and many foreign fishing vessels reaped the benefits of our rich fishing resources. In 1979 New Zealand's 200-mile exclusive economic zone was created to provide some control over fish stocks. This meant that only New Zealand or New Zealand licensed vessels could fish within 200 miles of any New Zealand territory. This zone is one of the largest in the world.

New Zealand's remote and pollution free environment is home to a wide variety of fish. The commercial fishery consists of over eighty species, which are subject to a scientifically based management programme. Stock assessments are undertaken annually and fishing efforts strictly controlled. The introduction of the quota management system in 1986 has insured that our fishing industry will remain a viable resource for generations to come.

Maori have participated in fishing both commercially and as recreation for generations. In 1989 government passed the Maori Fisheries Act. This was done to give Maori a more active role in the fishing industry and as part of the settlement of the Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840.

Many Maori have been actively expanding their involvement in the industry, buying additional quota and existing fishing ventures. The most significant of these has been the establishment of Moana Pacific Fisheries Ltd and the 50% purchase of Sealord Fisheries Ltd.

While fishing is declining in some parts of the world, the New Zealand fishing industry is steadily growing, with new vessels being built and existing vessels purchased for the industry. Conditions aboard these large, new trawlers are much better than on the vessels of the past, but the work is still hard and the hours long.

Thousands of people are employed ashore and afloat, and many others not directly involved, such as shopkeepers and truck drivers, benefit because of New Zealand's fishing industry. Many of these jobs are in the smaller provincial centres such as Bluff, Timaru, Picton, Wanganui, Hawkes Bay, the Coromandel, Northland and Nelson, which is New Zealand's largest fishing port.

Today the fishing industry is highly sophisticated. Technological changes, larger vessels and a highly skilled workforce both at sea and ashore have enabled New Zealand's fishing industry to become a world leader. The fishing industry now contributes over one billion dollars a year to New Zealand's economy and with careful planning the industry will continue to grow.

Further reading: *Nets, Lines and Pots*, Emmanuel Makarios (available at the Museum of Wellington City & Sea Shop).