

INVESTIGATION OF SOME COMMON ASSUMPTIONS CONCERNING MUD CRAB (*SCYLLA SERRATA*) MARKETING IN PORT MORESBY

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ABSTRACT

A survey of mud crab sales in three Port Moresby markets showed that large crabs did not receive premium prices and that price rises on paydays were insignificant.

INTRODUCTION

Both consumers and vendors of mud crabs in Port Moresby have generally assumed that larger crabs command premium prices, and that prices go up on paydays and days immediately following them.

A survey was designed and conducted to test the validity of these assumptions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Nine representative days were chosen for the month of July, 1973 (see *Figure 1*). On these days the crabs for sale at the Koki, Waigani and Gordon markets were sampled. The weight, carapace width and price of all crabs observed were recorded. This information was later converted to price/unit carapace width and price/unit weight for comparison. A total of 87 crabs were examined.

DISCUSSION

Figure 2 seems to bear out the assumption that larger crabs command better prices. How-

ever, the amount of meat or shell volume increases geometrically with an arithmetic increase in carapace width so that we see when the size of the crab is calculated by weight and compared with the price per unit weight as in *Figure 3* a vendor actually receives less for a large crab. This is particularly puzzling when one considers that the percentage of total weight which is inedible shell actually decreases with an increase in size.

The difference in mean price per centimetre of carapace width on pay days and days immediately following as compared with other days of the week (*Figure 1*) is approximately 0.25 toea, or 5 toea for a 20 cm crab. Since all crabs sold are priced to the nearest 10 toea the difference in price can be considered insignificant.

CONCLUSION

Projects such as the rearing of captured mud crabs on trash fish, and marketing on specific days were proposed by those who accepted the previously mentioned assumptions as valid. This study shows that these two steps would be of no or even negative value for the vendor.

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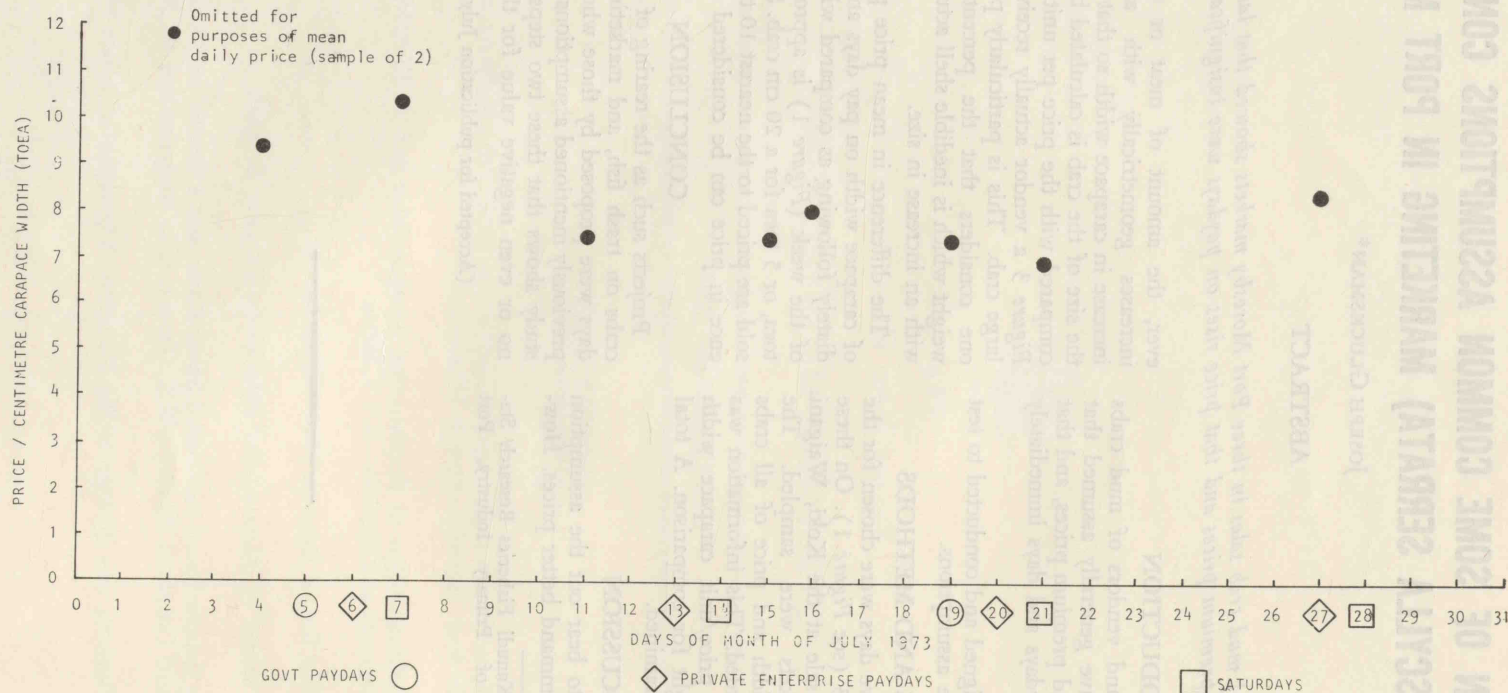


Figure 1—Price of crabs on different days of the week

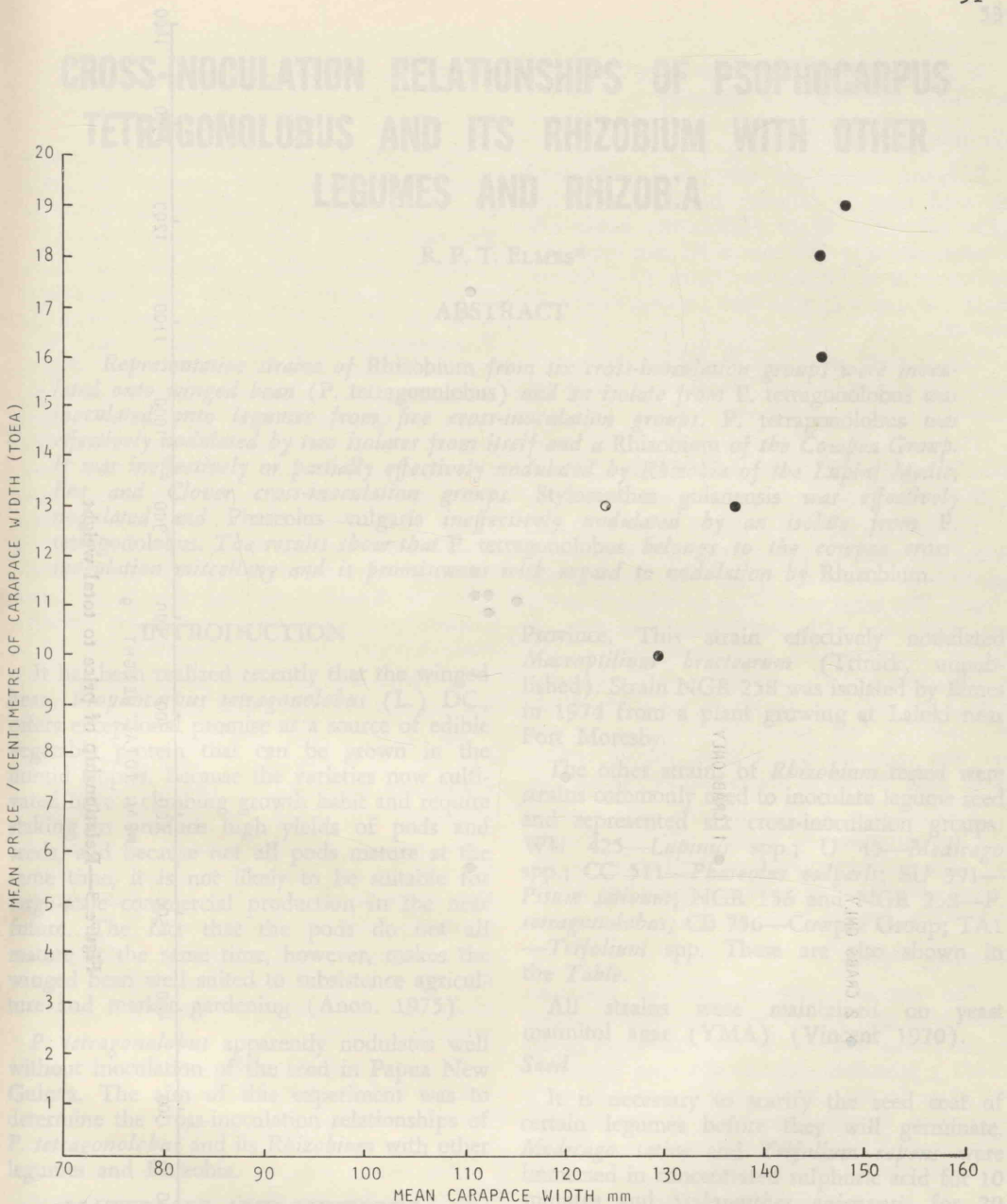


Figure 2—Increase of price per centimetre of carapace width with increase in size

Two isolates from *P. tetragonolobus* were tested. Strain NGB 136 was isolated by Daniels in 1965 from a plant growing in the Wagh Valley near Mount Hagen, Western Highlands Province. Strain NGB 137 was isolated from a plant growing in the same area.

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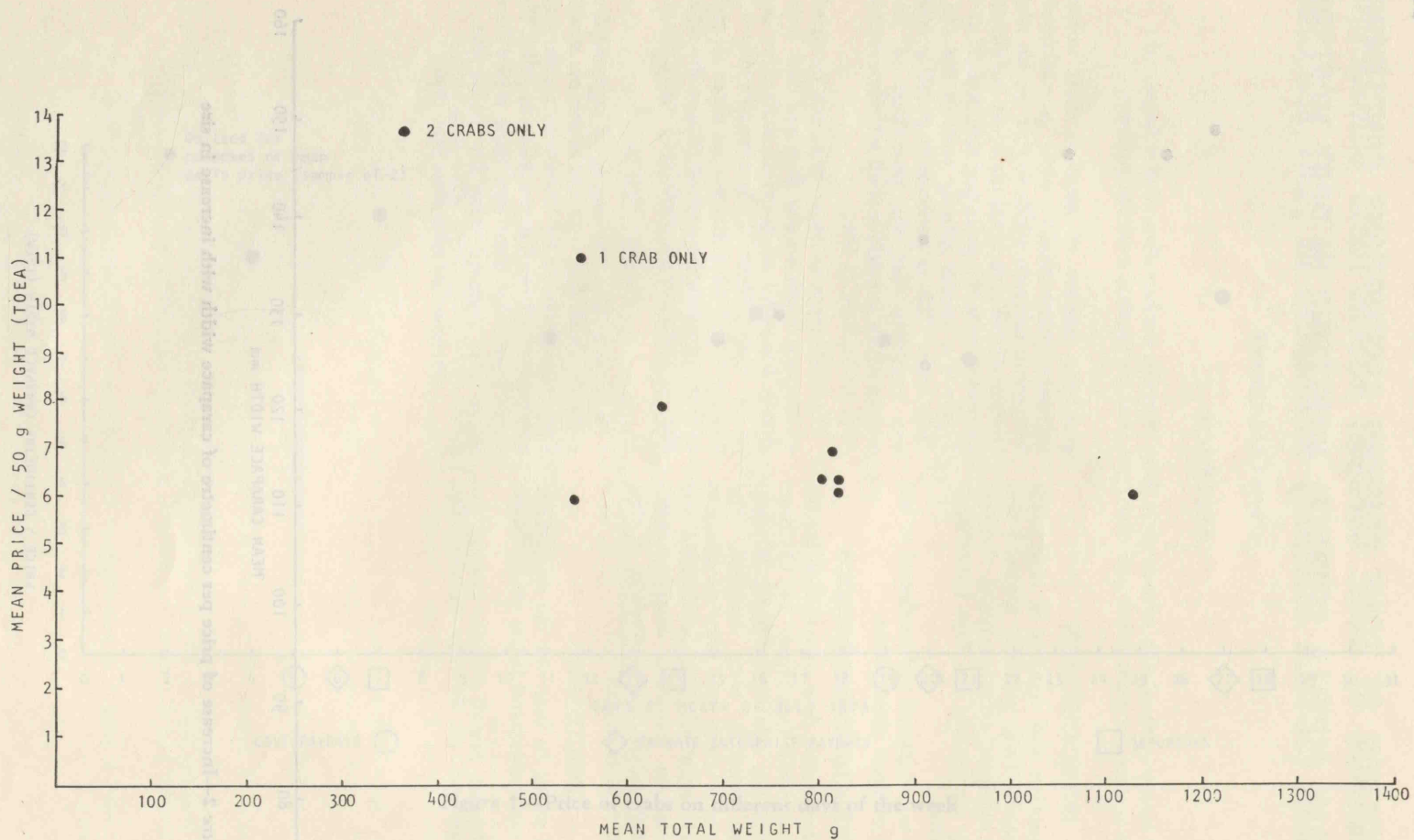


Figure 3—Relationship of price to total weight