

UC Studies Point Way To More Food For Asians

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Research conducted by The University's Scripps Institution of Oceanography in the seas of southeast Asia is pointing the way toward new food resources for that teeming corner of the world.

So says Eugene LaFond, oceanographer from the U. S. Navy Electronics Laboratory, who recently visited Thailand and South Vietnam to review the progress of Scripps' Naga Expedition. The vessel Stranger has been based in Bangkok, Thailand for the past 18 months under the auspices of the governments of Thailand and South Vietnam and the U. S. International Cooperation Administration. During her 18 months in the area, Stranger has made nine oceanographic cruises into the Gulf of Thailand and adjacent South China Sea. She has followed the full annual cycle of monsoon winds and corresponding ocean currents and has collected samples of the marine life.

"I don't think that there is any question that more food can be obtained from the sea," LaFond says. "The scientific way to approach the marine resources problem is through marine meteorology, physical oceanography, chemical oceanography, and other ecological factors. This is essentially what the expedition is doing, and it is doing it well."

Preliminary results indicate that the southwest monsoon wind in summer develops upwelling on one side of the Gulf, the northeast monsoon in winter causes upwelling on the other side of the Gulf. Upwelling regions, in which nutrients are brought up toward the surface, are characterized by an abundance of the plants and small animals on which fish feed.

The Gulf of Thailand, LaFond says, is one of the most fertile bodies ever studied in tropical latitudes.

Naga Expedition sailed for Thailand in May 1959. It will end when the Stranger, which is leaving Bangkok in March, returns to her home port of San Diego in May this year.