

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

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**Director's Overview of SPC's Division of Fisheries,  
Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems  
March 2011**

Division of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems  
Secretariat of the Pacific Community  
Noumea, New Caledonia

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## **Director's Overview of SPC's Division of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems March 2011**

### **Introduction**

1. Traditionally this working paper has provided an overview of the objectives and structure of the Division; the work undertaken during the previous year; staffing and finance; and a discussion of issues. Much of this information is now available in the Division's Annual Report for 2010, so the paper will focus mainly on the progress made in addressing some of the strategic issues raised at the 2009 Heads of Fisheries meeting and the 2010 informal consultation with Heads of Fisheries. The paper also identifies some important gaps in the work programme for which we would like endorsement from Heads of Fisheries to seek more resources.

### **Strategic initiatives**

#### ***Programmes review***

2. At the last full Heads of Fisheries meeting a review of the Coastal and Oceanic Fisheries Programmes was launched, and many of the participants were interviewed by the independent consultants that carried it out. The findings were generally positive and the main points can be summarised as follows:
  - a. The programmes remain effective.
  - b. SPC is the only organisation in the Pacific providing real leadership on many fisheries issues.
  - c. Demand for SPC services in fisheries and aquaculture remains very high.
  - d. SPC is moving forward with the increased use of JCSs for management purposes with positive results.
  - e. It would be beneficial if the OFP and CFP be included in one Strategic Plan since the very broad objectives of the two programmes are the same and there are opportunities to share support services.
  - f. There are some shortcomings at the strategic level in that the implications of implementating some recent plans and strategies put forward do not seem to be fully incorporated in the SPP.
  - g. Some operational level shortcomings were found in the failure to adequately link activities and outputs to the objectives.
  - h. A series of changes are needed to ensure that the service provided by MRD is adjusted to reflect the changing needs and challenges facing the PICTs.
  - i. Caution needs to be exercised in implementing SPC's decentralisation policy for MRD.
3. The review made 20 recommendations, of which 18 were accepted by SPC and are being progressively implemented.

#### ***Strategic Plan***

4. A new Strategic plan for the period 2010-2013 was completed in 2009, incorporating the objectives and results developed by HOF6, as well as major recommendations of the review. The objectives and results were further considered by FFC meeting, and endorsed by FF Ministers. The final draft of the plan was approved by CRGA 39, and printing and distribution were completed before the end of 2009.

5. The plan formed the basis for the work plan for 2010, but is intended to be a 'living document'. In 2011 a new area covering research on the impacts of climate change has been added to the results of the OFP. In late 2011 the plan will be more formally reviewed, and it is likely that, among other things, the objectives of the OFP will be adjusted to match the structure of the programme.

### ***Integration of SPC services***

6. The Division has pursued greater integration of services between sections – for example collaborative work on community based management initiatives and alternative fishing opportunities; between programmes – e.g. work on deepwater snapper and data collection from artisanal tuna fisheries; and between Divisions – in areas such as food security and climate change.

### ***Collaboration between SPC, FFA, WCPFC and other regional agencies and international initiatives***

7. SPC and FFA held technical consultations early in 2010 and again in 2011 to firm up agreement on collaboration, including a joint funding proposal to NZAid to enhance regional capacity to support national observer programmes. The WCPFC service agreement was renewed, now for an extended three-year period (2010-2012), and additional WCPFC funding secured to fund service delivery. OFP staff have continued to work closely with IATTC on issues of mutual interest, particularly in bigeye tuna tagging in the Central Pacific, data sharing and stock assessment methodology. CFP staff have participated in several Coral Triangle Initiative workshops.

### ***Strategic policy advice, including economic advice, with respect to coastal and nearshore fisheries***

8. With the recruitment of a new Coastal Fisheries Management and Science Adviser in 2010, capacity in this area, including advice on coastal fisheries legislation, has been enhanced. Other senior staff of the Division also provide assistance in this area. A Fisheries Development Officer (economics) has been recruited, replacing one of the traditional fisheries development officer posts. As part of a broader effort to extend the range of services provided by the CFP Fisheries Development Officer (post-harvest) is also under recruitment to help countries address market access issues for fisheries products.

### ***Project management***

9. Heads of Fisheries #6 raised concerns about the reliance of the Division on project funding. It was noted that gaps between projects could cause problems with service delivery; that project funding could limit activities to certain groups of member countries while excluding others; and, more specifically that the EDF10 projects for the Pacific ACP group lacked any corresponding support for work in the OCTs.
10. There are no immediate solutions to these problems. The Division has had to seek additional project funding so as to meet the growing demand for services from members, and indeed we are very grateful to our partners for providing it. In the 2010 revised budget around 68% of the Division's funding came from projects; and the figure for 2011 will probably be higher when new projects are taken into account. Funds earmarked for work in Pacific ACP countries account for the majority of this project funding.

11. SPC has been working with a committee of representatives of member countries to develop a more sustainable long term financing strategy. Working paper 3 invites Heads of Fisheries to consider which components of the FAME work programme need recurrent funding, as opposed to those that are appropriately funded by projects. Of course, donor partners also need to be convinced of the value of providing long-term programme support to SPC – and one currently seems to be moving in the opposite direction. There is a possibility, however, that the EU may be willing consider a shift away from project aid to a more programmatic approach in the next funding cycle.
12. In terms of ACP/OCT projects, the Applied Geoscience and Technology Division of SPC (formerly SOPAC) is currently developing a proposal that will complement the proposed OCT *Integre* Project, which is likely to be implemented by SPC. While this should ensure some collaboration in project activities, the main focus is on waste management and not fisheries.

### **Work programme issues**

13. Work programme issues will mainly be discussed in the context of the presentations by each Programme. This paper therefore only discusses a few topics where SPC has so far been unable to mobilise the resources needed to address priorities that were identified in recent meetings.

### ***Aquatic biosecurity***

14. Aquatic biosecurity and aquatic animal health management have been identified as issues for aquaculture development in the region for some time. While SPC has provided some ad hoc advice when requested, we lack the capacity to address the many issues facing the region – from the ability to adequately diagnose diseases, to the skills required for risk analysis. Most recently the ‘Tahiti 2010’ aquaculture conference called for a coordinated regional approach to aquatic animal health management. It is proposed to seek donor support for this, recognising the growing importance of aquaculture for food security in the region.

### ***Deep-water snapper***

15. The last two Heads of Fisheries meetings have directed SPC to provide more assistance to members with stock assessment of deepwater snappers. In response to this we have:
  - Commissioned a consultancy on the status of deepwater snapper fisheries in member countries, with a focus on the data available;
  - Provided technical support for the work of a MSc student in New Caledonia to conduct a stock assessment for the fishery in the territory;
  - Started to provide technical support for a PhD student from Tonga, studying in New Zealand, to carry out a stock assessment for Tonga.
16. Unfortunately the experience in New Caledonia, and the indications from countries other than Tonga, is that the quality of fisheries data available does not allow stock assessments that can reliably inform management of the fisheries. As a result, the emphasis of work in this area will need to shift to supporting the collection of better data at the national level. Funding is now being sought for: a workshop to agree on data requirements; the development of a TUFMAN type database module for snappers; and a pilot project to collect data on the ground in one PICT. Further support for data collection and stock assessment work will be necessary to improve management of this resource which is important for food security, income, and in some countries export earnings

### ***Tuna ecology and climate change***

17. HOF #6 participants “looked forward to enhanced modelling and analysis of tuna fisheries at the scale of members’ EEZ’s, as well as the proposed analysis of the effects of ocean MPAs and of climate change on fisheries resources.” Good progress has been made over recent years with the development of the SEAPODYM model, and some of the projections that it has provided for impacts of climate change on tuna fisheries will be presented during the special session on Thursday. Further climate change modelling work is planned under the GTZ project ‘Coping with Climate Change in the Pacific Islands Region’.
18. While this work provides the best available projections of the ways in which climate change will affect the region’s tuna resources, the models are only as good as the data on which they are based. The SEAPODYM model predicts the response of tuna to changes in the ecosystem and there are still large gaps in our understanding of that ecosystem. Also, unlike projections of surface climate which are based on comparing the outputs of many different computer models, all our current projections are based on one – SEAPODYM. In order to better inform members on the impacts of climate change and plan adaptation, it is proposed to seek more resources for a programme to improve understanding of trophic relationships; monitor changes in the micronekton which form the base of the food chain; and develop the *EcoPath* model (an existing software package for fisheries ecosystems) for Western Pacific tuna resources so that it can be used for comparison with SEAPODYM. The analysis of tuna diet also provides important baseline data on the status and composition of the mid-trophic levels of the ecosystem – effectively using tuna as a sampling mechanism – which are likely to provide early indications of the effects of climate change.
19. One of the main projected impacts of climate change on tuna resources – and one with great significance for member countries - is a shift in the distribution of the resource. Tagging has provided most of the insights that we now have regarding the movements of tuna, and it would be useful to plan a longer term tagging strategy to provide the information needed to better predict and monitor climate change impacts on the movement and distribution of tuna.

### **Reporting to CRGA**

20. The main decision-making body for SPC is the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations, CRGA. In the past technical meetings such as HoF made recommendations for endorsement by CRGA, which then became part of the policies or plans of the organisation. Recently this link seems to have been weakened, and while the views of HoF are obviously reflected in work plans and budgets approved by CRGA, there is no specific report on the recommendations of the HoF meeting. It is proposed to re-establish this process, so the Representatives of member governments (normally from Foreign Affairs Departments) are fully informed of the views of the technical specialists.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

21. Heads of Fisheries are invited to note progress with a number of strategic issues raised at the last meeting.
22. It is recommended that HoF support efforts by SPC to secure additional project funding to support member countries in the areas of:
  - Aquatic biosecurity and animal health;
  - Deep water snapper data collection and stock assessment;
  - Improved modelling of tuna ecology and climate change.