

PRESS RELEASE

## **7<sup>th</sup> SPC Heads of Fisheries meeting: climate change at the forefront**

Four important fisheries meetings are being held at SPC Headquarters this week. On Monday 28 February, the steering committee meetings of three European Union-funded projects — SciCOFish, DevFish2 and Scifish — took place, with the participation of fisheries representatives from 14 Pacific Island countries, Timor Leste and three French territories.

On Tuesday 1 March, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's seventh Heads of Fisheries Meeting began and will continue for four days. The biennial SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting provides technical oversight of all SPC work in the field of fisheries and aquaculture, as well as an opportunity to discuss in detail topics of special interest. It also creates a forum for other agencies, organisations, companies and individuals with an interest in fisheries in the region to hold discussions with Pacific Island fisheries representatives and specialists, as well as with each other. Although there are many regional meetings on tuna, this meeting provides a unique opportunity for heads of Pacific Island fisheries to discuss inshore fisheries issues and problems together.

### **Focus on climate change**

Beside sessions on a number of topical issues including maritime boundaries, aquatic biosecurity and reef fish spawning aggregations, a special one-day session on climate change and fisheries will be held on Thursday 3 March. SPC is currently finalising a climate change engagement strategy. It is well known that Pacific Island countries and territories are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Media attention has focused on sea-level rise in atoll countries, but the changes to surface climate and the ocean in the tropical Pacific will also affect marine resources in many other ways. The meeting will discuss:

1. The projected changes to surface climate and the ocean, based on different scenarios for greenhouse gas emissions;
2. The effects of these expected changes on the habitats that support fisheries and aquaculture in the region (the open ocean, coral reefs, mangroves and seagrasses, and rivers and estuaries);
3. The projected effects on the distribution and abundance of the fish and invertebrates underpinning oceanic fisheries, coastal fisheries, freshwater fisheries and aquaculture in the Pacific Community;
4. The implications of alterations to fish stocks due to climate change for economic development, government revenue, food security and livelihoods throughout the region;
5. The management measures and policies needed to capitalise on the opportunities, and reduce the threats expected to occur as a result of climate change; and
6. Gaps in knowledge and the research required to fill them.

SPC is coordinating the production of a comprehensive assessment of the vulnerability of fisheries and aquaculture to climate change in the 22 Pacific Island countries and territories based on information compiled by teams of experts. The one-day session will provide an opportunity for several of the experts to present many of the key results of the project.

For more information, please contact Mike Batty, Director, Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystem Division ([MikeB@SPC.int](mailto:MikeB@SPC.int))

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Speaking at the opening of the Heads of Fisheries meeting, Mike Batty (left), Director of SPC's Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division, and Chairperson, Leban Gisawa of Papua New Guinea's National Fisheries Authority (Image: Jipé LeBars)