

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

**Informal consultation with Heads of Fisheries**

*(4 June 2012, Noumea, New Caledonia)*

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**Outcomes**  
**SPC Informal Consultation with Heads of Fisheries**

Secretariat of the Pacific Community  
Noumea, New Caledonia



## Outcomes

### SPC Informal Consultation with Heads of Fisheries

1. Ray Tulafono, the representative from American Samoa, opened the meeting with a prayer. DDG Richard Mann gave the welcoming speech, detailing the objectives of the HoF meeting and highlighting the discussion points: the strategic plan; FAME's annual report; a proposal to strengthen sea cucumber fisheries; and a proposal for improved capacity building in oceanic fisheries science. Kautoa Tonganibeia from Kiribati was appointed chair of the meeting.

#### Internal mid-term review of FAME Division strategic plan 2010–2013

2. The Director of FAME presented on the strategic plan, including results of an internal mid-term review. The internal review highlighted that some of the high-level objectives were outside the control of the SPC FAME programme and that a number of OFP and CFP objectives need to be revised to better frame the sections' work and result areas and capture project-based activities developed in recent years.
3. Members noted the minor modifications to the FAME strategic plan objectives to enhance plan delivery and generally endorsed suggested changes. These will be submitted to CRGA for final approval.
4. Areas of specific interest and concern noted by members included:
  - need for improved implementation of regional management actions (e.g., to address bigeye tuna overfishing) on the basis of the scientific advice provided by SPC. While implementation of management measures is outside of SPC's remit, SPC strives to provide clear and tangible scientific advice to support key management partners and individual members in their management decisions;
  - continued development of collaborative work between the OFP and CFP as appropriate, building on the shared activities through the artisanal tuna statistics and deepwater snapper assessment projects;
  - food security in regional and coastal communities. It was noted that indicators for this priority have been developed through individual projects developed since the initial plan was written;
  - collaboration with existing Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) programmes to minimise duplication of effort when developing MCS capacity in coastal fisheries. The need to learn and draw on the experience from the activities of other regional and national organizations was noted as was the need to develop collaborative partnerships with these;
  - need for different national departments to work collaboratively on issues pertaining to climate change;
  - need for improved capacity building activities in member countries and territories. The young professional training scheme is currently underway to help address this, noting the issues encountered in securing the release of applicants from national fisheries departments for the programme.

## **FAME Division annual report and work plan for 2012**

5. The activities of the FAME Director's office, Coastal, and Oceanic fisheries in 2011 were summarized by the director and programme managers. Overall the director noted good progress on existing projects in all 3 of FAME sections and implementation of new initiatives. Countries acknowledged SPC's continued support and assistance.
6. Planned objectives for 2012 were also listed, and activities already underway or completed were highlighted. It was noted that the work of FAME is increasingly dependent on project-based funding, which limits activities to specific topics, duration, countries served, and outcomes.

### ***Coastal Fisheries***

7. Interest was raised for individual country involvement in nearly all CFP technical capacity building activities scheduled for 2012. It was noted that funding sources may limit the support to certain countries/territories. Specific areas included:
  - database and server development. Related to this it was noted that a regional symposium was scheduled for the week of the 11th June in the Cook Islands on Information Management Systems. There may be potential links particularly to the OFP national database work;
  - review of legislation in coastal fisheries, linking with FFA on oceanic fisheries;
  - economic cost/benefit studies on FADs;
  - squid fishing trials, which require access to in-country vessels (pending the outcome of planned trials in New Caledonia);
  - coastal resources survey work;
  - FAD fishery development, noting the need for country input (financial and in kind);
  - market and creel surveys;
  - support to stakeholders (e.g., sports fishermen's associations), noting the importance of ensuring stakeholder inputs into fisheries management;
  - aquaculture/mariculture development and associated environmental concerns;
  - training local guides in sports fishing;
  - deployment of temperature loggers and assessment of coastal resources for climate change monitoring (noting that while beyond the scope of the current project, if countries have their own resources, there may be capacity for countries to receive relevant training and develop complementary data monitoring processes and have their data included in future analyses).
8. It was suggested that some ground rules for requesting assistance from the CFP may be needed, with potential matching contribution requirements (financial, practical) from member countries.

### ***Oceanic Fisheries***

9. SPC members noted the value of OFP in supporting sustainable tuna management. Areas of priority action noted by members were:
  - issues arising from the interaction between inshore and offshore operations and the need for fine scale information on fish movements to allow estimates of such interactions. Descriptive work on this at the national level is planned by OFP. In addition, small-scale acoustic tagging around FADs in specific countries to examine residence time may be feasible, although funding sources external to those currently available would need to be secured;

- support for more national stock assessments to support a ‘bottom-up’ allocation model, while noting the need to keep overall exploitation of the stocks within sustainable limits (better information on fish movement would probably be needed to provide such assessments with confidence);
- presentation of tuna stock assessment results in simple terms to inform stakeholders (including fishermen). OFP noted that a summary of stock status is presented in easily digestible form in the relevant policy brief. Members’ attention was also drawn to the annual tuna fishery assessment report, available for download from ([http://www.spc.int/DigitalLibrary/Doc/FAME/Brochures/Policy\\_Brief14\\_12.pdf](http://www.spc.int/DigitalLibrary/Doc/FAME/Brochures/Policy_Brief14_12.pdf));
- importance of observer databases and data management systems. OFP underscored this priority and highlighted the long term strategy to assist countries to process and manage the data themselves, while maintaining SPC as a long-term repository for all observer data for the region;
- development of IT minimum standards (including bandwidth) to facilitate long term cost-savings through remote access system maintenance.

### **Special topic “A proposed regional approach to improved management of sea cucumber fisheries”**

10. Noting the current overexploitation of sea cucumber resources in most member countries, thereby foregoing an important source of income for communities, CFP presented proposed activities toward their sustainable management. These included two studies to be focused on four member countries of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) with support from ACIAR. The plan for those studies, namely to examine: (i) historical levels of sea cucumber production and estimate benefits lost due to poor management systems; and (ii) how fees and taxes or other economic measures could help regulate sea cucumber fisheries, was put forward to HoF for comments and endorsement.
11. Members noted the importance of sea cucumbers across much of the region. While the studies were proposed for four Melanesian countries, their scope may be extended to other SPC members, notably Tonga, pending agreement of MSG members. The outcomes of the studies will be made available to all SPC members. Beyond these studies, interested parties are encouraged to collaborate on areas of mutual interest. In addition, SPC support for the development of national management plans would be forthcoming on request.
12. Five key areas were noted for further attention: stock assessments; development of management plans; enforcement/monitoring and compliance; exchange of views and experience with investors in the trade; and marketing information and intelligence. It was further requested that these five areas be incorporated into future SPC activities. SPC ([ianb@spc.int](mailto:ianb@spc.int)) volunteered to act as a focal point for the sharing of information on markets, investors and pricing information.
13. Additional areas of importance were raised:
  - alternative sea cucumber processing options. One member noted that frozen products, rather than dried, would help preserve mangroves as these were commonly exploited for fuel to dry bêche-de-mer. Other members noted that dried products may be a preferred option for exports, to maximize benefits to local society. It was noted that an updated manual on sea cucumber processing has been proposed and SPC could translate it into French;

- risk analysis of new sea cucumber species' introduction for aquaculture purposes;
- scientific research on biological parameters of sea cucumbers to support assessments and management;
- role of precautionary approaches (including closed areas) in sustainable management of the resource;
- importance of communicating fisheries and research findings in a format directly relevant to management;
- need to engage with NGOs in raising awareness of the ecological and livelihood role that sea cucumbers play, while noting that they are not a particularly iconic group of species.

### **Special topic “Building capacity in oceanic fisheries science”**

14. Shelton Harley gave a quick presentation on five key activities proposed by SPC designed to build capacity at the regional level in stock assessment approaches. Participants were asked whether they are in agreement with the proposed initiatives and for these to be submitted for funding. Members expressed their general support for capacity building in stock assessment of country personnel as outlined in the proposal.

15. A few points were raised:

- potential relevance of course material to national NGOs as well as fisheries staff;
- short term need for the continuation of the OFP stock assessment workshops along with attachments at SPC to develop national skills;
- longer term interest in developing links with regional Universities to provide an accredited qualification;
- support for medium- to longer-term attachments to strengthen the stock assessment skill set among scholarship students (either during or after their study programmes);
- difficulty in obtaining funding support for OFP personnel to deliver training (compared with support for attendance of participants at these workshops).

16. SPC will make required amendments to incorporate observations made by Heads of Fisheries.

### **AOB**

17. SPC OFP presented a summary of the US Pelagic Fisheries Research Programme, which has provided SPC with funds to support activities of regional and national relevance over a long period of time, and which is likely to end in the near future. SPC will email a draft letter of support for continuation of the programme to its members for their consideration for forwarding to the relevant US authorities.

### **Timing of next HOF meeting**

18. The next HoF meeting was proposed for the first week of March 2013.

## **Seminar on fish waste utilization**

19. A one-day seminar on fish waste utilization was jointly organized by SPC and the IFREMER on June 11, following a week of meetings with Heads of Fisheries (HOF) in Noumea. This gave opportunity to have an international audience of around 50 people from numerous countries, gathering representative from public and private sectors. HOF and representatives from fishing associations from numerous PICTs, regional stakeholders, private sector, government and non-government organizations and experts in fish waste utilization all attended and contributed to fruitful discussions and information sharing. These discussions led to developing some recommendations (action items) for improving the situation of fish wastes utilization in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories.
20. The four key recommendations are:
  - i. prepare a policy brief about fish waste and its potential uses;
  - ii. conduct a regional survey to determine the distribution and use (or lack of) of fish waste currently produced in the region;
  - iii. acquire a multi-product mobile fish waste processing plant to demonstrate processing techniques throughout the region and to gather data for research and development programmes; and
  - iv. research the potential for utilisation of fish waste in aquafeed.
21. The role of public policies was underlined as an important factor to achieving better utilization of waste (or reduced waste) in the region.