

Action Plan from the first SPC Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries

Introduction

The first SPC Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries (RTMCF) took place at the Pacific Community's Headquarters in Noumea from 28 November to 1 December 2017.

The meeting was arranged to address some specific outcomes as agreed to by representatives at the Tenth Heads of Fisheries Meeting held in Noumea in March 2017.¹ It also links to the New Song² and the direction set out in this document, as well as assisting with providing much needed information for reporting to Forum Leaders under the annual Coastal Fisheries Report Card³. The overarching theme is to address data shortages in coastal fisheries in support of better resource management. The Forum Leaders have also tasked SPC with coordinating with national fisheries agencies, Council for the Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies and regional and national community groups, to strengthen support and resourcing for coastal fisheries management. Better data will also allow countries to report against the indicators under the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 14.⁴ The first RTMCF was intended to focus on specific issues, in this case coastal fisheries data, with input from member country governments and territory administrations. The make-up of the meeting was also intended to maximise country input through group discussions and plenary sessions. SPC views this as essential for longer-term planning and it can also be of considerable assistance to other agencies, regional non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and donors interested in national and regional coastal fisheries issues.

Agreed Action Plan

The following constitutes the agreed action plan from the meeting for both SPC and country members.

In this context, coastal fisheries and aquaculture data includes biological and environmental, economic and socioeconomic, monitoring control surveillance and enforcement, and fisheries management data and information.

The meeting recognises that to successfully progress data sharing, repository and standards, active cooperation and

engagement with SPC is required by Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) and partners. The meeting commits to provide SPC with ongoing support for the process and active engagement.

The meeting recognises the huge opportunities that technology offers in data collection, analysis and dissemination. It is important that we first identify the questions that we wish to answer and then identify the appropriate data collection methodology and supporting technology and systems, while remaining clear to keep data collection as simple and efficient as possible.

Data Standardisation Committee

Countries agree to the establishment of a Data Standardisation Committee (DSC) for coastal fisheries and aquaculture. The DSC should set regionally agreed minimum data standards for data collection and for each of the identified priority areas and meet at least annually.

SPC is tasked with:

- a) Drafting terms of reference, based on the discussions in this meeting.
- b) Based on the information gathered during the RTMCF, undertaking internal meetings to progress the strategic and technical approach, the first of which should be held by the end of 2017.

We, as country members, commit to, by the end of February 2018:

- a) Confirming the data focal point in each country.
- b) Providing SPC with all forms used for coastal fisheries and aquaculture data collection.
- c) Identifying key priority areas for data standards and communicate these to SPC.

The meeting suggests that countries investigate the options for setting up national data committees, including all authorities involved in coastal fisheries and aquaculture data collection.

¹ <http://www.spc.int/FAME/en/meetings/239>

² <http://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/b8hvs>

³ http://www.spc.int/DigitalLibrary/Doc/FAME/Brochures/SPC_2017_Coastal_Fishery_Report_Card.pdf

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg14>

The meeting requests non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other partners to share their own forms used for data collection with SPC by end February 2018.

Policy and/or legal development

SPC will explore the basic principles for working towards a regional framework for agreements and data sharing associated with coastal fisheries and aquaculture.

Countries will commit to providing SPC, where national laws allow, their examples of memoranda of understanding for data sharing by end February 2018. SPC will identify commonalities and appropriate structures for bilateral or multilateral data sharing agreements.

SPC will work with individual countries on a bilateral basis to develop appropriate data collection, analysis, sharing, dissemination, and usage arrangements.

SPC will develop robust internal policies related to research and ethics, and storing and protecting data.

SPC will ensure appropriate infrastructure is in place to safeguard country data held by SPC.

Data repository development

The meeting supports the development of the SPC Data Repository for archiving and searching datasets. We recognise that coastal fisheries and aquaculture data is a complex area and, as such, recommend a staged strategic process of development.

The discovery of the datasets is recognised as the initial priority. SPC will lead a stocktake exercise to identify all data related to coastal fisheries and aquaculture.

By January 2018, SPC will provide countries and other participants with a form to complete with the relevant information on the datasets required for the discovery process.

As a first step towards creating an operational repository, by the end of June 2018, we as country members task ourselves with:

- a) Undertaking a stocktake of our data collection systems, including metadata.
- b) Work with other relevant ministries to identify what data they hold relevant to coastal fisheries and/or aquaculture.
- c) Request from NGOs, research organisations and others within the countries that they also provide a stocktake of data held.

Countries hereby request NGOs and research organisations to participate in this stocktake exercise.

The meeting tasks SPC with identifying if and how the fisheries data repository and the Pacific Community Data Archive can be jointly established.

Data storage

Data stored by SPC, in repository and as a backup, should be held primarily in a secure cloud system.

SPC should determine and present to the Heads of Fisheries the cost implications of this.

SPC must ensure all data stored are protected from inappropriate use.

National collections

We as countries commit to:

- a) Working with our national statistics offices (NSOs) during the planning phase of a statistical collection to ensure that relevant information is collected and that the correct classifications are applied (e.g. fishing methods, vessels, fish classes).
- b) Proactively approach our NSO colleagues to discuss the collection of these data.

SPC should develop appropriate agreements with country NSOs to ensure that at least one SPC Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems staff member has full access to nationally collected raw data, similar to those in place with Statistics for Development Division.

SPC to work with countries to identify where powerful standard questions need to be added to national collections.

Dissemination

Funding dependent, SPC is tasked with developing mobile applications for dissemination of information and aggregate data or published sources. Countries commit to regularly updating the data upon which this information depends. SPC should not disseminate raw coastal fisheries and aquaculture data without country authorisation or other specified clearance procedure.

SPC to explore with countries, alternative options to printing for dissemination of information such as social media, radio and TV, and other applications.

SPC and countries to work with donors to secure funding for the development of fisheries and aquaculture-related school curriculum materials.

Training

We, as countries, request SPC to provide training for capacity building to cover data analysis, cleaning, collection and database management. We recognise this will be funding dependent.

We as countries commit to completing an audit of our training needs related to data and providing the results to SPC to assist in supporting future funding applications.

Funding and staffing

The meeting recognises that all requests require significant funding and support in both the short term and long term. With additional funding, SPC will be able to effectively complete many tasks within this action plan.

The meeting gratefully acknowledges and thanks Tuvalu for the funding offer for module development work.

The meeting recognises that regular meetings, such as a yearly RTMCF, are beneficial but costly.

We, SPC member countries, request our donor partners to provide SPC and countries with sufficient funding to successfully implement this action plan. We task SPC with preparing a budget to progress the work. We will support SPC and task ourselves with proactively identifying additional funding sources for this work.

We, SPC member countries, recognise that additional staff will be required to deliver on this action plan and note its complexity, understanding that the development of Tufman⁵ and Tails⁶ required three full-time positions over two years.

We, the participants to the meeting, agree that, without prejudice to the selection of topics of the next RTMCF, there should be an opportunity for countries and community representatives to present and discuss their experiences and provide an update on progress on this action plan. SPC and member countries should seek funding for this meeting.



Data collectors training in Vitawa Village, Ra, Fiji. Image: Philip James

⁵ <http://www.spc.int/oceanfish/en/ofpsection/data-management/spc-members/dd/140-tufman>

⁶ <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=spc.ofp.tails>