

Promoting the exchange of knowledge on aquatic biosecurity in the Pacific

With the aim of improving capacities and procedures in the field of aquatic biosecurity and aquatic animal health management in French Polynesia, the Aquaculture Section of the Pacific Community, in collaboration with veterinary and fisheries authorities in New Caledonia, organised an exchange between veterinary services in French Polynesia and the biosecurity authority in New Caledonia in July 2019.

The exchange between the two territories focused on visiting the different biosecurity control points in New Caledonia that control the introduction and dissemination of exotic pathogens and exotic animal species.

Visits were organised to biosecurity control points at the airport, commercial port, post offices, cargo area, and the biosecurity and quarantine facility.

Possible collaborative approaches between the two French territories in matters of diagnosis, control, prevention and treatment of diseases of aquatic animals were discussed by veterinary and biosecurity officials, with a special emphasis on the diagnosis, control and reporting of notifiable diseases affecting shrimp farming.

One of the main aspects of future collaboration between French Polynesia and New Caledonia is the use of the services offered by the New Caledonian national veterinary laboratory in the implementation of the French Polynesian epidemiological surveillance programme for aquatic animals. It should be noted that the New Caledonian national veterinary laboratory is currently accredited to analyse most of the regional notifiable diseases for aquatic animals.

In addition, the competent authorities from both territories agreed to collaborate in the development of specific guidelines for aquatic animal welfare in aquaculture. These guidelines will address issues related to animal welfare during production (e.g. stocking densities, farming systems, manipulation), transportation (e.g. transportation type and duration, manipulation) and slaughtering.

To conclude, although regional capacities and skills in the field of aquatic biosecurity are still limited, countries and territories are trying to learn from each others' experiences. Exchange visits and training sessions are key to protecting aquatic environments and production systems in the Pacific Islands region, and keeping them safe from the introduction and spread of exotic pathogens and exotic aquatic animal species.

For more information:

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New Caledonia's national veterinary services could assist French Polynesia in the development and implementation of a national epidemiological surveillance for the shrimp sector. (Image: Michel Bermudes, SPC)