

Solomon Islands firmly supports aquaculture through policy framework

Robson Hevalao¹

The potential and importance of the aquaculture sector for improving economic growth and food security in Solomon Islands is highlighted in various key government policies. For instance, the ‘Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2016–2035’ states that ‘fisheries and aquaculture will be developed to improve the social and economic livelihoods of all Solomon Islanders.’ And, aligning with the National Development Strategy, the ‘Democratic Coalition for Change Government Policy’ specifies that ‘development of the aquaculture sector aims to create a robust environment targeting good governance, food security, socio-economic, and strengthen public, private partnerships.’

The Solomon Islands Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) is mandated to oversee the development of aquaculture in the country. In 2019, MFMR adopted its first national fisheries sector strategic policy: the ‘Solomon Islands National Fisheries Policy 2019–2029’. Aquaculture is one of the three key strategic policy focus areas highlighted under that policy. Prior to that, an important operational-level policy document specifically on aquaculture was adopted in 2018: the ‘National Aquaculture Development and Management Plan 2018–2023’. The aquaculture development and management plan is a roadmap for operationalising objectives related to aquaculture contained in higher policy documents such as the National Development Strategy, Democratic Coalition for Change Government policy, and national fisheries policy.

A three-day stakeholder consultation workshop was held from 10–13 July 2019 by MFMR, with key stakeholders from the tilapia and seaweed farming sector to review and develop a Tilapia Action Plan and a Seaweed Action Plan. These two action plans, when approved, will further streamline, clarify and operationalise the higher policy objectives contained in the MFMR policy map (Fig. 1).

The action plans will help ensure that farmers benefit from government services related to aquaculture. In his introductory remarks, the MFMR Undersecretary of General Services emphasised the importance of developing action plans, and noted that tilapia and seaweed farming make a significant contribution to income, food security, livelihoods and living standard of Solomon Islanders, especially those living in rural communities.

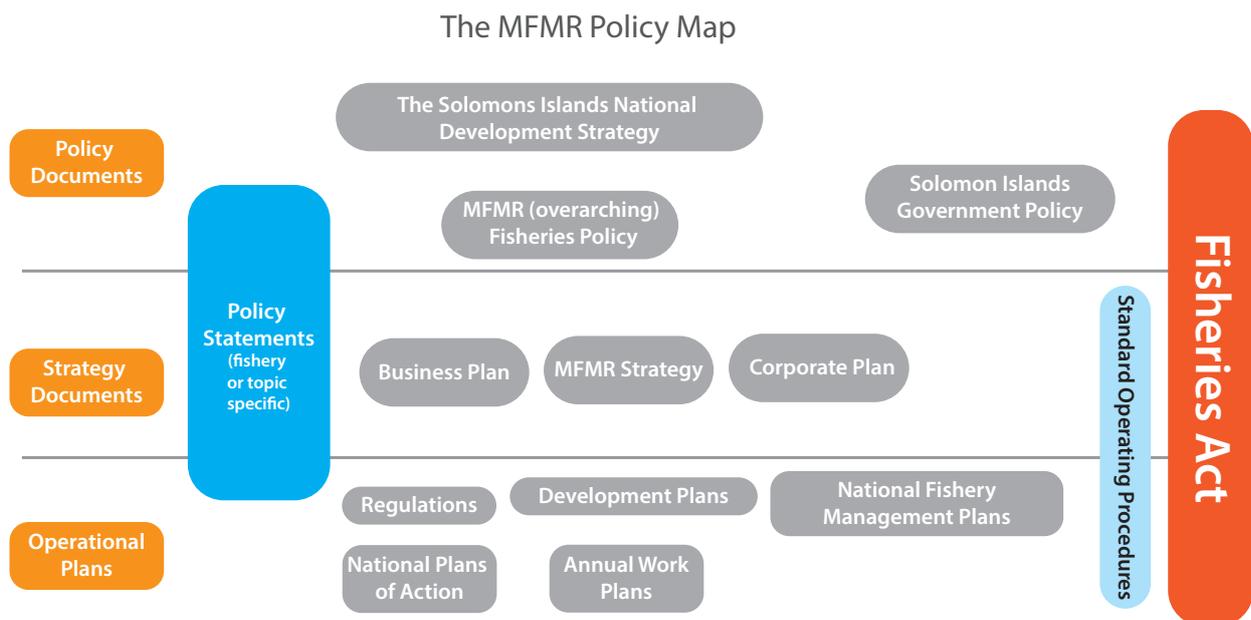


Figure 1: MFMR policy map (Solomon Islands National Fisheries Policy 2019–2029).

¹ Pacific Islands Fisheries Professional (Management and Policy). Email: robsonh@spc.int

Being involved as a Pacific Islands Fisheries Professional

As a policy officer with MFMR, I was part of a team assisting with the development of MFMR aquaculture policies and their linkage to higher overarching government policies. In February 2019, I joined the Pacific Community (SPC) as a Pacific Islands Fisheries Professional (PIFP), and was part of the SPC team that went to Honiara in July for the three-day stakeholder consultation workshop. It allowed me to improve my understanding of the difference between a strategic policy document and an operational-level document.

On reflection, since I have been at SPC as a PIFP within the Coastal Fisheries Management, Science and Livelihoods Section, I have clearly improved my skills in preparing for and conducting stakeholder consultations; and in formulating, updating and reviewing coastal fisheries and aquaculture management policies and plans.

I would like to point out that as an MFMR Policy Officer and PIFP, I am very proud of the efforts made by the Solomon Islands Government and MFMR to highlight the importance of aquaculture in national key policy documents. I am also very proud to be part of a team at SPC that works hand-in-hand with MFMR towards the vision of a healthy aquaculture sector that improves the social and economic livelihoods of all Solomon Islanders.



Tilapia farm ponds in Solomon Islands. (Image: Tim Pickering, SPC)



Seaweed farming in Solomon Islands (Image: Gideon Tiroba)

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