

Outputs of the Fourth SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting

The fourth SPC Heads of Fisheries (HoF) Meeting took place at SPC Headquarters in Noumea, from 28th August to 3rd September 2004. It was chaired on behalf of New Zealand by Matthew Hooper.

HoF is a regional meeting of Pacific Island countries and territories that covers the entire range of interests under the purview of national and territorial fisheries services. As such it plays a unique role in promoting dialogue and experience-sharing between island nations and territories, as well as guiding the work of the SPC's fisheries programmes. It complements the more sectorally-focussed, political role of the Forum Fisheries Committee, which has a primary emphasis on tuna fisheries management, whilst HoF covers aquaculture, coastal fisheries management and development and living marine resource science, and has a broad-ranging and relatively informal remit for discussion that can cover any arising issue of interest or significance to participants.

The following paragraphs constitute the points of consensus agreement of SPC member country and territory fisheries service heads on issues that arose during the meeting, and which the meeting felt necessary to document, either to help in the management of the SPC work-programme, to draw to the attention of a wider audience, or to signal agreement on issues that require attention by members themselves.

Output 1. *Bilateral coordination of monitoring* – The meeting requested regional assistance for countries in organising and implementing bilateral understandings between members to facilitate inter-zone observer activity coordination, particularly in the case of urgent needs not yet covered by the Niue Treaty.

Output 2. *PROCFISH/O extension* – Recognising the time that is likely to elapse before the Western And Central Pacific Highly Migratory Fish Stock Commission reaches full functionality, and the likelihood that the initial membership will consist almost entirely of Pacific Island states, Heads of Fisheries urged SPC to request the European Union to consider extension of the Oceanic component of the PROCFISH project (which currently ends in 2004). As well as a no-cost extension to the current project, based primarily on savings and contingencies, the meeting also strongly urged SPC to request an expansion of the project to also include the Pacific Island countries joining the ACP group under the Cotonou Agreement, and suggested that this could be accomplished by adding an oceanic component to COFISH in the same way as Oceanic and Coastal components were combined under PROCFISH

Output 3. *Coastal fisheries data confidentiality/sharing policy* – the meeting approved a set of data access guidelines for the Reef Fisheries Observatory (RFO) as Annex 1, based on the discussion by member country representatives within the PROCFISH Advisory Committee meeting.

Output 4. *Fisheries science capacity-building and regional assessments* – Heads of Fisheries recognised the analogies between the Reef Fisheries Observatory and the Oceanic Fisheries Programme, and the need for both units to maintain a strong focus on capacity-building and capacity-supplementation according to the capability of each country. The meeting also commended the strategy of promoting the domestication of fishery monitoring and fishery data systems, and the production of increasingly rigorous fishery assessments by the secretariat based on the best currently-available information. It endorsed the aim of the RFO to activate and build on existing national reef fisheries monitoring and assessment systems rather than replacing them.

Output 5. *Progressing PROCFISH/C* – Heads of Fisheries welcomed the outputs that are starting to emerge from the coastal components of the European Union-funded fisheries assessment projects and look forward to receiving advice useful for national coastal fishery management as well as future capacity-building activities.

Output 6. *Fisheries MPA review* - The meeting requested SPC to coordinate a review of the effectiveness, in terms of fisheries management, of Marine Protected Areas with fisheries management objectives, for discussion at HoF5 and for the information of member countries and territories. This review would also make clear the definition of the term “Marine Protected Area” itself.

Output 7. *Export commodity pricing information* - Recognising that the promotion of sustainability of fisheries requires the optimisation of usage as well as management of resources, the meeting noted the strong outstanding need for an “INFOFISH-style” service which assists countries in improving transparency of export pricing information to ensure that maximum value is obtained from coastal export fisheries by Pacific Island fishers.

Output 8. *HOF TORs* – the meeting approved terms of reference for HoF expressed in Annex 2 as amended by the meeting from the proposal in Working Paper 2.

Output 9. *Move towards functional integrated island/coastal management* – the meeting recognised that coastal fisheries management is not just about counting fish, assessing coral cover and consulting fishers, but also has to take account of other impacts and effects on nearshore fisheries, such as sewage contamination and ciguatoxicity, and urged SPC to find ways of helping countries to integrate coastal fisheries issues into effective whole-island or coastal zone management systems.

Output 10. *Far western Pacific tuna fishery impacts* – The meeting noted that quantifying the impact of tuna fisheries in the far west of the Western and Central Pacific area, particularly Indonesian and Philippines waters, is critical to the assessment of Bigeye and Yellowfin tuna across the whole region. The multi-donor initiative that SPC has been coordinating to try and improve the quantity and quality of information coming out of this region was commended, and the results already starting to emerge were noted. Members also noted that the integration of the management of fisheries in this part of the region into the management of the entire range of stocks would be a major hurdle for the WCP Commission to tackle.

Output 11. *National capacity-building in OFP work* - SPC members looked forward to further capacity-building assistance through the OFP particularly in understanding and incorporating scientific advice on region-wide stocks into management at the national level. The meeting recognised the role of the new GEF International Waters project proposal in supporting member country capacity to take effective part in WCP HMFS Commission processes. The meeting also recognised the role of the PROCFISH project in developing capacity for management of national fisheries within individual EEZs.

Output 12. *Stock assessment capacity:* The meeting noted that OFP did not have capacity to produce full assessments of all 4 main tuna stocks on an annual basis and asked the secretariat to continue seeking funding to improve regional capacity for stock assessments within the OFP. The need to produce assessments for other species, such as striped marlin and swordfish, as well as the assessment of risk to critical bycatch species, from fisheries and other impacts, was also highlighted.

Output 13. *Artisanal, subsistence and recreational oceanic fisheries:* The meeting recognised that, whilst information on artisanal, subsistence and recreational oceanic fisheries is currently not particularly significant in producing overall assessments of oceanic species regional stock status, information on such fisheries is essential for national fishery management purposes and determining potential interactions between industrial and small-scale fisheries, and urged members to seize all opportunities, including those offered by SPC, to improve the availability of information on smaller-scale fisheries for oceanic species.

Output 14. *Aquaculture development:* HoF pointed out that aquaculture will become an increasingly important component of food security for many SPC members. Small scale aquaculture and domestication of indigenous species particularly those which can be integrated with traditional practices has widespread applicability. The meeting acknowledged the practical utility of the aquaculture components of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing and suggested that SPC should assist members to put this into practice through the development, with the involvement of national stakeholders, of national codes of good aquaculture practice, under agreed regional standards.

Output 15. *Feed formulation:* Feed sourcing is a common bottleneck inhibiting the efficiency of the aquaculture sector. HoF urged SPC to coordinate regional efforts to promote the adoption of local farm-made feeds and facilitate the development of cost-effective formulated feeds, making maximum use of locally available materials.

Output 16. *Introduction and movement of aquatic organisms:* Heads of Fisheries recognised that the unmanaged introduction and/or translocation of aquatic organisms is a continuing concern, particularly with regard to marine invasive species. The meeting encouraged initiatives by SPC and its collaborators to assist members to address this concern.

Output 17. *Coastal fisheries management* – the meeting urged SPC to pursue funding to enable all of the coastal fisheries management strategies, as agreed by HoF from year to year, to be effectively pursued. The meeting also pointed out the need to avoid confusion by integrating all Coastal Fisheries Programme sectional goals and activities fully into the overall Coastal Fisheries Strategic Programme Plan

Output 18. *FAD programme management*. In response to the specific needs expressed by several countries, the meeting suggested that SPC should produce a guide for the management of national Fish Aggregation Device programmes (monitoring, maintenance, funding options, design improvements including assessment of the efficiency of subsurface FADs etc), and seek the resources to assist members, on request, in implementing such programmes.

Output 19. *Options paper on maritime security*. The meeting asked that SPC collaborate with FFA in producing a joint briefing paper on the implementation of international agreements on heightened port security, suggesting options for implementation and mitigation of impacts upon fisheries. This report should take account of existing security-related measures covering international fishing vessels, including VMS, vessel registration and other compliance procedures already in place, and would provide a series of options based on the level of risk at different levels of fisheries, and taking into account any additional costs, including exploring the prospect of coastal states obtaining assistance in implementing additional fisheries-related security requirements from the leaders of the ISPS initiative. The meeting directed that any measures additionally recommended should not unnecessarily overburden low-risk subsectors, particularly purely domestic vessels.

Output 20. *CITES and fisheries* – The meeting asked the Secretariat to keep Heads of Fisheries informed about any developments concerning CITES and fisheries, particularly live reef fisheries, and to maintain liaison on these issues with the CITES Secretariat and other relevant implementing agencies.

Output 21. - Heads of Fisheries signalled the need for more economic analysis of domestication prospects for individual members in order to implement the directive by Forum leaders to increase the return to Pacific Island countries from the utilisation of the resource within the region. The meeting also directed that the proposed EU/FFA/SPC “DEVFISH” project should build upon existing national fishery development plans, where available.

Output 22. *Guidelines for assessing and handling social and other aspects of tuna industry domestication*. Whilst recognising the currently limited capacity of the SPC Marine Resources Division in this area, the meeting requested the secretariat to coordinate the compilation of information and options to assist governments in assessing and handling social and other aspects of tuna industry domestication that are often not fully accounted for in economic development plans, including social and health impacts on populations through associations between HIV/AIDS and STD transmission via the fishing industry. The secretariat was also asked to consider the feasibility of developing regional guidelines, to assist governments in managing these issues, and to pay particular attention to the need to develop methodologies for costing these impacts in development plans.

Output 23. *Joint focal points for living and non-living marine resource issues* – Heads of Fisheries drew attention to the need for regional agencies working in different ocean sectors to develop a member focal-point contact mechanism that would allow more efficient communication between national stakeholders and regional agencies regardless of the primary focal sector of each regional agency. Linkages that enabled Heads of Fisheries to obtain access to regional oceanographic, and shallow-water mapping, services were particularly encouraged.

Output 24. *Fisheries information networking* – The Meeting welcomed the announcement of the forthcoming EU-funded Programme for Strengthening Fisheries Management in ACP countries (ACP Fish II). The Meeting endorsed the recommendation of the project's feasibility study that the Pacific node of the ACP Fish II regional facilitation Unit be based at SPC headquarters. HOF 4 also noted that the Secretariat should consult with European Commission regarding the timeframe for implementation of the project.

Output 25. *Preferred options for continuation of SPC In-service Fisheries Officer Training Course* – The Meeting endorsed the revised course programme that had been implemented from the start of 2004. In considering the financial constraints associated with the withdrawal of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Meeting supported a proposal from the Secretariat to run the course every two years, with an increased number of participants (dependent on funding). The Meeting urged SPC to consult with established course donors to ensure the continuation of funding at a level that enables SPC to offer selected private sector focussed short courses in the years when the Fisheries Officers course was not offered.

Output 26. *USP/SPC Memorandum Of Understanding on Fisheries* – Heads of Fisheries approved of the improved collaboration between the two CROP agencies and the prospect of improved linkage and feedback between USP marine programmes and Pacific Island sustainable fisheries management interests that was signalled by the proposed MOU. The Meeting recommended that the “definition of current work areas” should be expanded to include the role of HoF itself in advising USP and SPC on regional fisheries capacity-development priorities.

Output 27. *Safety at sea for small fishing vessels* – Heads of Fisheries reviewed and endorsed the outcomes of the recent FAO/SPC regional expert consultation on sea safety in small fishing vessels. While recognising that sea safety is most effectively pursued at the national and local level, Heads of Fisheries welcomed external assistance, provided that this was very clearly targeted at the practical implementation of national initiatives. The meeting urged SPC to approach FAO and IMO for potential assistance to member countries to facilitate sea-safety strategies and improvements in sea accident data recording and analysis. The meeting also recommended that SPC establish a Sea-Safety Special Interest Group bulletin and provide information to its members covering electronic location solutions to improve search and rescue operations.

Output 28. *International issues* – Heads of Fisheries noted that an SPC member representative, in the person of Glenn Hurry of Australia, will chair the next FAO Committee on Fisheries, and welcomed the enhanced opportunity that this appointment provided to discuss issues of regional concern within the international fisheries agenda. The meeting directed SPC to continue recording and reporting to member countries on issues arising out of international meetings and processes concerning fisheries, and asked for copies of the next draft of the Integrated Strategic Action plan under the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy to be conveyed to Heads of Fisheries as soon as possible.

Output 29. *General capacity building (carried forward with amendments from HoF3 for continued action)* – It was emphasised that a basic principle of the SPC Marine Resources Division should continue to be to work towards reducing member dependency on regional programmes, and promoting the evolution of competencies at the national level wherever appropriate. It was recommended that the next HoF meeting should include a session on local capacity development in fisheries, including the development of a regional inventory of capacity in a range of issues from oceanic fishery assessment to coastal fisheries development and management, and aquaculture. HoF itself will work towards identifying what capacity should be developed or maintained at the regional level and each country or territory would of course decide what capacity should be a priority for developing at national level in each country and territory;

In the meantime, and in the absence of effective national capacity in any area, the secretariat is encouraged to allow flexibility in its coastal and oceanic fisheries programmes to assist members in addressing these.

Note on progress of above output: Since HoF3, there has been a major initiative by the regional community to review and revamp the whole regional agency system, arising from the review of the Pacific Islands Forum. This is primarily aimed at realigning CROP with member country needs and priorities, and the draft SPC/FFA overview of the fisheries sector for this regional exercise is available to HoF as Background Paper 6. Also FFC decided in May 2004 to strategically develop a new Strategic Plan for the Forum Fisheries Agency, and the new WCP Tuna Commission will open its doors in December. It may be better to wait for these changes to be accomplished and for these reviews to gather their data about national capacity and needs before embarking on a gap-filling HoF inventory through the SPC system.

However, it is proposed that one of the primary tasks of the SPC Director of Marine Resources before HoF5 would then be, with the cooperation of national and territorial fisheries heads, to put together a comprehensive database of SPC member capacity, building on the information that will have already been collected for the Forum members. A questionnaire will also be circulated after HoF4 to provide some initial guidance.

Note: This list of recommendations is to signal points of consensus agreement of SPC member country and territory fisheries service heads on certain issues raised during the 3rd SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting, and identified by the Chair. These recommendations do not constitute a complete report of the meeting, nor do they constitute a complete work-programme for SPC (the SPC Strategic Programme Plans

HoF4 Outputs

should be consulted for this) but are intended for the guidance of all with a stake or an interest in Pacific Island fisheries. Some of these recommendations identify gaps in regional support, or identify newly-arising problems and priorities, or simply identify agreement on a course of action. Other agencies apart from SPC are invited to note these issues raised by Pacific Island countries and territories, and warmly invited to assist the region in addressing them, either in concert with SPC, or within their own capacity, as appropriate.

Annex 1

Coastal Fisheries Repository Data Management Guidelines

General principles:

In general, SPC understands that any information held in regional databases and repositories is held in trust on behalf of the member country/territory to which the information refers, or otherwise on behalf of the provider of the information.

In general, SPC shall make information available in as easily-available and timely a fashion as possible for the purpose of improving the management of Pacific Island fisheries and improving understanding of the basic principles underlying Pacific Island fisheries ecosystems and resource-use systems.

The following guidelines shall assist the SPC Director of Marine Resources in the application of the above principles. These guidelines may be modified by Heads of Fisheries by consensus agreement either in or out of session.

Guidelines:

“Detailed agreements”: The general principles above may be amplified by specific agreement between information stakeholders concerning the acquisition or provision of information, provided that the rights of all relevant stakeholders in that information are taken into account.

“Desensitisation”: Any quantitative information released will normally be aggregated, averaged, or otherwise stripped of sensitive components. Very specific, personal, or commercially-sensitive information will not be released or made available by SPC without the specific agreement of relevant information stakeholders.

“Statute of limitations”: all data in SPC databases that was acquired some years previous to request for release or usage shall be considered free of encumbrance and may be used or made available subject to the above provision for protection of privacy, commercial interest and other sensitivities determined by the Director General.

“Individual ownership”: Any information gathered by an individual member of the SPC staff during the implementation of the SPC work programme is subject to this policy and is not considered to be in any way the property of an individual member of staff.

“Joint ownership”: Cases where data is jointly gathered or acquired between SPC and a non-SPC collaborating researcher or institution will normally be covered by a specific agreement. In other cases it is generally understood that data resulting from collaboration would be processed and results made available to SPC members as quickly as possible. SPC would avoid any commitments which might not result in timely information release of benefit to the practical fishery management responsibilities of SPC members.

“Cost recovery”: SPC reserves the right to charge for compilation, and for retrospective recovery of any data released from the database to a third party, if this would require resources additional to the agreed work-programme. Compilation of data to fulfil official requests by SPC members is by definition part of the work-programme.

HoF4 Outputs

Definitions and notes:

Information held in the repository may be either textual information (reports etc) held as “electronic documents” or quantitative information held in highly structured databases.

“Information stakeholder” means a person or entity to whom an item of information has value or significance. This might include the interviewee in a questionnaire survey, the owner of a boat providing catch returns, the agency collaborating or contributing to the collection or analysis of the information, or the government of the area concerned.

In this policy, it should be understood that “SPC” is the collective sum of its member countries and territories. Any “ownership” ascribed to “SPC” is actually ascribed collectively to member governments and administrations, and is ultimately at the collective disposal of those members.

Annex 2

Terms of Reference of the Heads of Fisheries Meeting

- 1) These terms of reference are made by the SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting for the guidance of future meetings.
- 2) The intention of these Terms of Reference is not to be prescriptive, nor to limit the potential scope of discussion by future meetings within the purview of national and territorial fisheries administrations, but to provide a basic framework that will enable continuity between meetings, and define a common understanding of the obligations of the Secretariat and participants:

Purposes of the SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting:

- 3) The purposes of the SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting are to:
 - a) provide a forum for discussion¹ between SPC members of issues under the purview of national and territorial fisheries² administrations, particularly those issues not subject to discussion in other regional fora;
 - b) provide a bilingual interface for dialogue between Pacific Island countries and territories³ on fisheries issues of common interest;
 - c) provide guidance to SPC fisheries work programmes by generally communicating areas of national and territorial activity, interest, and priority, and specifically commenting on Secretariat plans and activities;
 - d) agree any regional fisheries issues or priorities for conveyance, as necessary, for the attention of other organisations and SPC governing processes.

Convention of the meeting

- 4) HoF is a meeting of representatives of SPC member country and territory fisheries administrations, but CROP⁴ and other organisations which work on issues of relevance to Pacific Island fisheries administrations are also welcome to contribute expertise and opinions to the discussion.
- 5) The Secretariat for the Meeting is the SPC Marine Resources Division
- 6) The venue for the meeting will normally be SPC Headquarters in New Caledonia, in order to avoid adding the cost of venue-hire and travel of interpreters, translators, and other members of the Secretariat to the cost of the meeting. However, the meeting may be held in any SPC member country or territory if these additional costs are covered.

¹ Although the word “political” is not precisely defined, it should be noted that SPC is constituted as a non-political organisation, and fora may exist in other organisations for such discussions. It should however also be noted that the discussion of issues that some may deem “political” would not infringe on the SPC constitution, provided that no political decision is made by the meeting;

² It should be particularly noted that the “fisheries” sector includes both fisheries and aquaculture;

³ Note: SPC has 11 members (10 from 2005 onwards) that are not Pacific Islands Forum members, and four of these members do not have English as an official language;

⁴ CROP is the Council of (intergovernmental) Regional Organisations in the Pacific and includes the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the University of the South Pacific (USP), the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS);

HoF4 Outputs

- 7) Each meeting will approve its own Chair. The Chair of SPC fisheries meetings has rotated alphabetically between SPC members in series from the first SPC Regional Fisheries Conference in 1952, through 26 Regional Technical Meetings on Fisheries, to the 3rd Heads of Fisheries Meeting in 2003 and this rotation will continue to be the norm. However, the rotation may be interrupted if any member offers to provide the venue, and incremental costs, for the meeting. At any venue other than the SPC Secretariat, the host will normally provide the chair.
- 8) Attendance by national and territorial fisheries representatives at the meeting is entirely voluntary. However, provided budgetary provision is made by the SPC Governing Council either from SPC assessed contributions⁵ or from programme funding or special projects, travel costs or part thereof will be provided to enable the attendance of one representative from each island member country and territory to the meeting. The travel costs of the Chair of the meeting will be additionally funded.
- 9) The meeting shall be convened on a date that takes into account the convening of other meetings involving SPC member fisheries representatives and minimises inconvenience to the greatest possible number of members⁶.

Operating guidelines

- 10) Each HoF meeting will agree its own agenda and any presentations to be heard at the meeting. The agenda should be circulated well in advance, including proposals for presentations from other organisations, to allow adequate and reasonable time for feedback by HoF members on the content of the agenda.
- 11) A basic principle underlying the meeting is to maximise discussion and to minimise the number of agenda items and length of presentations. As a general guideline, individual presentations should each be less than 20 minutes in duration and be clearly relevant to the business of the meeting or the interests of the fisheries sector in the Pacific Islands.
- 12) Although HoF is a meeting of SPC member fisheries administrations, there is no formal restriction on the presence or speaking rights of any organisation. If any issues do require more restricted discussion, under exceptional circumstances a closed session may be convened by the Chair, or an autonomous subgroup may be convened outside the meeting to report either to HoF or to other processes as appropriate.
- 13) All discussion within the main HoF meeting shall take place through the Chair.
- 14) Each SPC member delegation to the Heads of Fisheries meeting will be clearly defined by the SPC Official Contact, and any interventions or statements made on behalf of a member should be clearly seen by the chair to be authorised by the head of that member delegation
- 15) Working papers will be conveyed to HoF members by internet at least two weeks before the start of the meeting, except in exceptional circumstances such as the need to incorporate material arising from events taking place just before the meeting. All other

⁵ It may be noted that current practice of the SPC Governing Council is for funding from SPC assessed contributions to be provided for the convention of designated SPC sectoral meetings every third calendar year.

⁶ In recent years, the traditional date for the meeting has been in August – a date which minimises interference with the other main regional fisheries body: the Forum Fisheries Committee meeting, in May.

HoF4 Outputs

papers will be made available on the meeting website as they arise, and all written papers will be provided to members on arrival at the meeting venue.

Reporting

- 16) The official report of the meeting will consist of a concise set of outputs, each agreed by a consensus of all representatives present at the meeting. These outputs will encapsulate the decisions and significant conclusions of the meeting, and may be for the benefit of other organisations, the international community, or the general public, as well as for the guidance of SPC. The Outputs of the meeting will be normally agreed as the final act of the meeting, but in unusual circumstances some may be agreed out of session by correspondence.
- 17) A record of discussion of the meeting, if required by any participant, will be provided in audio format. However, certain sessions of the meeting, particularly round-table discussions by members, may be summarised in writing and circulated after the meeting for comment and correction before any publication or release.
- 18) The Chair will produce a report on the meeting for the benefit of the SPC Governing Council. This report will normally be confined to issues of interest or relevance to SPC Governing Council processes, including any recommendations to the Council with significant core- or programme-budgetary implications or concerning administrative issues outside the purview of the SPC Director of Marine Resources, and will normally be presented to the Council by the Chair in person.

Out-of-session consultation

- 19) Although HoF is not a standing committee in the same way as the Forum Fisheries Committee, and although it is necessary for the Secretariat to maintain contact with SPC national and territorial fisheries representatives on a bilateral basis and for collective consultation to occur only during the Heads of Fisheries Meeting, HoF representatives may also need to collectively consult with the Secretariat and with each other from time to time. Modern technology has made regular intercommunication amongst 27 countries and territories relatively affordable, and an email list server⁷ will be maintained at SPC for this purpose.

Amendment

- 20) These Terms of Reference can be amended by agreement by any future SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting and are also subject to any framework provisions that are agreed by the SPC Governing Council to apply to all SPC Sectoral Meetings (such provisions currently include guidelines for the application of SPC's bilingual policy).

⁷ The address is currently SPC-HOF@lyris.spc.int. This is a closed list and only includes HoF participants and their alternates. An email sent by any member to this address will automatically be copied to all other HoF participants and the Secretariat.