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Outputs based budget and sustainable funding requirements for the FAME Division March 2011

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Introduction

1. The reliance of the Fisheries Programmes on relatively short-term project funding for the delivery of services was raised as an issue at the last full Heads of Fisheries. This reflects the situation for the whole of SPC – while the reliance of different programmes and sections varies, the whole organisation derives most of its financial resources from projects.

2. For example in the 2010 revised budget for FAME, Core funding, which is derived from member contributions, accounts for 6% of the total – at present this is the only funding which is guaranteed for the long term, noting that it is eroded by inflation and that members have not agreed to an increase for some years.

3. **Programme funding,** which comes from voluntary contributions from Australia, New Zealand and France has provided a relatively stable source of support for the organisation as a whole – allocated between Divisions in line with the approved budget. In the past five years or so, programme funding overall has risen in line with inflation; but not all Divisions have benefitted equally as funding has been targeted towards new initiatives. Currency fluctuations and the fact that these contributions are, at best, covered under a 3 year agreement, means that the future security of this funding cannot be guaranteed. Currently no agreements are in force, but two of the three members have agreed to at least maintain funding levels in 2011. Programme funding provided 25% of resources for FAME in 2010.

4. WCPFC funding for core scientific services (data management, stock assessment and evaluation of management options and measures) is covered under a 3-year service agreement with indicative budgets beyond this period and can be considered relatively secure as long as the services are sourced from SPC. Nevertheless annual budgets can be quite hotly debated so cannot be regarded as entirely secure, and the funding is only applicable to certain services provided by the Oceanic Fisheries Programme. This accounts for 6% of FAME funds (about 9% of OFP funding).

5. **Project funding** makes up the remaining 61%, and ranges from one-off grants to cover a short training course or workshop to some major 4 year programmes with a substantial budget and employing several staff. The EU is currently the largest provider of project funding to FAME.

6. While project funding is entirely appropriate, and very welcome, for many SPC activities, there have been difficulties with services that need to be sustained long-term; and with funding which is only applicable to certain member countries. There are also some additional costs in developing, reporting and monitoring a series of separate projects for various development partners, each with different requirements.

7. To address these issues which are similar across SPC as a whole, CRGA in 2009 directed that a subcommittee on sustainable financing should be established. A consultancy to develop a strategy was also carried out, reporting back to the sub-committee in late 2010 with some preliminary findings. In general progress has been disappointing, with much of the effort focused on identifying the parts of the work programme that are deserving of sustained funding – 'core' or 'recurrent' activities – and costing these.

8. Ultimately it is up to SPC members to decide which services they want to see retained in the long term; and which could be handed over or phased out after a fixed period of time and are thus more suited to project funding. Heads of Fisheries are invited to consider this matter, and their recommendation will be passed on to the CRGA sustainable financing subcommittee. A spreadsheet providing an assessment by FAME staff, based on the outputs of the strategic plan and estimating funding requirements from 2011-2015, is provided as an annex to this paper for consideration. The main findings are summarised below.

Considerations for sustainable financing

9. Most of the services provided by FAME to member countries have been delivered over many years, are highly regarded by members, and the demand is increasing. With a few exceptions, there are not many areas in which services can be devolved outside the programmes that deliver them at present. The programmes are either promoting a standardized approach (FADs, inshore resource assessments), or dealing with a regional shared resource (Tuna), or addressing trans-boundary issues (biosecurity, export standards) which necessitate a regional effort.

10. Various criteria have been proposed for deciding which services need to be delivered in a sustained manner. One set, which have been used as criteria to identify services that should be provided by regional organisations, are identified in the column of the spreadsheet headed 'Type of Function' from the following:

- 1. Economies of Scale
- 2. Development and synchronisation of standards across the region
- 3. Regional leadership, strategic engagement and advocacy
- 4. Capacity building / supplementation and skills transfer
- 5. Policy analysis, research and development
- 6. Systems for data collection, analysis, reporting and information dissemination

However, nearly all FAME activities meet at least one of these criteria, and often more.

11. Another approach has been to consider the impact on member countries if the service cannot be provided, because funding is interrupted. For example if tuna fisheries data cannot be entered, then a huge backlog will develop and severely limit the capacity of OFP to provide timely information and up-to-date stock assessments. This could have greater consequences than a temporary halt in other services that might seem more 'exciting'.

12. Perhaps the most important consideration, however, is the time-scale of the activity. Projects should have a fixed duration and clear exit strategy – the activity is completed or handed over; while recurrent funding is reserved for activities that are ongoing. The attached spreadsheet identifies in the column headed 'nature of service' whether this is an ongoing requirement or for a fixed duration.

Services suitable for project funding

13. Examples of services suitable for project funding include many of the capacity building activities. The intention of these projects is that capacity is built in-country and activities are continued at the national level.

14. In coastal fisheries this includes aquarium fish management – resource assessments are completed and management arrangements developed for implementation at the national level; climate change monitoring – systems are set up and continued by national fisheries administrations; support to fishing industry associations – which should become self-sustaining; and of course project administration that is specific to a particular project.

15. In oceanic fisheries the build-up of capacity in national observer programmes is a major project funded activity. With the training of trainers, observer programmes should become self sustaining in the medium term. SPC would then fall back to a more limited role of ensuring that regional standards are maintained. Similarly the major tagging projects have all had a fixed duration with clear targets to be achieved in the time-span. While there is certainly a case for this type of project to be repeated, it is not envisaged for recurrent funding.

Services suitable for recurrent funding

16. Services suitable for recurrent funding include those in which there is a clear ongoing need for the service and where there is no efficient 'hand-over' strategy. When the impact of stopping the service on member countries is particularly serious, these have been prioritised. A good example is the maintenance of the regional database of tuna fishery statistics – no other organisation has the mandate or desire to take on this service, but it is essential both for other work of OFP (such as the stock assessments) as well as providing information to member countries directly.

17. A basic level of support in key areas – aquaculture, coastal fisheries management, national oceanic fisheries assessments – is required in the long term and merits recurrent funding. Note that some areas of capacity building also seem to be a long term process, where the technology is advancing and where staff turnover means that there is a continuing need to re-train and provide support. The development of national tuna databases, and work on FAD deployments provide examples.

18. Some level of programme management will also be required for the foreseeable future, particularly coordinating the wide range of activities and funding sources necessary to deliver the range of services.

Gaps in recurrent funding

19. Perhaps not surprisingly, the analysis shows the need for an increase in recurrent funding, both immediately and over the next five years. This is because: there is a need to 'inflation proof' services that have recurrent funding but will inevitably increase in cost over time; and

there are a number of activities that are currently project funded which are required on an ongoing basis.

20. These gaps have been highlighted in the spreadsheet showing the funds required to sustain activities when current project funding is exhausted. While there are some immediate requirements, many of these are currently supported by EU projects which end in 2014 or 2015.

A possible solution

21. The sustainable financing strategy is an SPC-wide initiative and will review a wide range of options including increases in member contributions, economies and cost-savings, and developing novel sources of funding. This clearly goes beyond the responsibility of Heads of Fisheries, and will require much further consideration.

22. Without pre-judging the results of this study, one possible solution for the Fisheries programmes is to explore with the European Union a possible longer term approach to financing than the current model of 3-4 year projects. The reasons for this suggestion are:

- The EU is generally moving towards an approach of sector-based budget support with ACP countries, and may be interested in a similar approach for regional assistance; project requirements are already more flexible than in the past under contributions agreements which allow the use of the organisation's own procedures;
- The EU is the largest supporter of SPC fisheries projects, and has provided funding since the Lome III agreement;
- Continued assistance to the sector under the regional programme seems likely as fisheries is one of the few resources important to all countries and territories eligible for EU funding, and also reflects EU member interests and priorities.

Conclusions and recommendations

23. The Division has undertaken an analysis of the services provided to member countries based on the Strategic Plan developed by Heads of Fisheries in 2009 and incorporated this into a 5-year outputs based budget. This exercise identifies the services that require sustainable or recurrent funding, as part of an SPC-wide exercise to develop a sustainable financing strategy.

24. Based on this, there is:

- an immediate need for additional recurrent funding of 700,000 CFP units;
- a requirement to build in an increase in recurrent funding to cover inflation estimated at 5% per year; and
- a need to shift from project to recurrent funding for a number of key activities in 2014/15 when current projects come to an end, requiring about 2.7 million CFP units per year.

25. Heads of Fisheries:

- 1. Are invited to consider the classification of services into 'ongoing' and 'fixed term' and, subject to any changes that they agree, endorse the selection of 'ongoing' services as those requiring recurrent or sustainable funding.
- 2. Note the need for significant increases in recurrent funding, both immediate and particularly in 2014/15.
- 3. Endorse an approach by FAME management to the European Union to explore options for sustained financing of regional fisheries programmes under the next round of EU funding (EDF11), as part of the broader SPC initiative.

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