

SPC/Inshore Fish. Res./BP.10  
12 March 1988

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION**

**WORKSHOP ON PACIFIC INSHORE FISHERY RESOURCES**

(Noumea, New Caledonia, 14 - 25 March 1988)

**THE REGULATION OF FISHERIES IN KIRIBATI**

by

C.C. Mees  
Fisheries Division  
Tarawa, Kiribati

During 1987 a report entitled "A Review of Fisheries Surveys Conducted in South Tarawa From 1976-1987" was produced (a copy of which is available at this workshop). One of the suggestions made in this report was that Tarawa Lagoon and South Tarawa reef were near to or at the point of 'Maximum Sustainable Yield'. This would indicate the need to implement some kind of Fisheries Management Policy (or 'Regulation of the Fishery'). However, any decision is bound to have political consequences owing to the reliance upon the reef and lagoon fisheries especially by subsistence fishermen. Furthermore there is a possibility that the catch estimates are overestimates in which case the fishery could still grow before problems are encountered. Exactly what to do next is a difficult question to answer, and as may be seen from the Paper prepared by Yeeting very few fisheries regulations presently exist. Following are some ideas which it is hoped will stimulate discussion at this workshop. Perhaps some participants will have already experienced similar problems, and their experiences will be an invaluable guide. It is intended that ultimately they will form the basis of discussion for the formulation of a future management policy of the (South) Tarawa fishery. Not all of the suggestions will necessarily be practical in the Tarawa situation, and certain strategies will be easier to implement than others, but all are worthy of discussion. It should be noted that none of these ideas necessarily reflect Government of Kiribati policy and are those of the author. Suggestions towards the formulation of a management policy for the (South) Tarawa fishery are that the Fisheries Division:

- (1) Immediately investigates possibilities for controlling/managing the amount of fish taken from the lagoon (ie. controlling fishing power). This could include:

- limiting the length of nets per fishing unit,
  - imposing meshsize controls (probably not practical in a mixed species fishery)
  - licencing all boats (not just those above 7m as at present) and controlling the number allowed to fish.
  - limiting the maximum size of vessel allowed to fish in the lagoon.
  - Imposing catch quotas
  - limiting the number of licenced fish vendors (except ocean fishermen)
  - Having closed areas/seasons/days of the week.
  - Prohibiting the sale of certain species
  - Limiting the number and type of gears sold on South Tarawa.
- (2) Immediately begin a public awareness campaign to inform the people of Tarawa of the possibility of overfishing in the future if the fishing effort continues to increase at the present rate, and to warn in advance of any new measures that Government may impose to limit this increase. The campaign should also highlight the potential alternatives to the lagoon and shallow reef fisheries.
- (3) Actively promote ocean fishing activities: eg. increase deployment of FADs; improve skiff design, or alter FAO KIR canoe design since it is not favoured by tuna fishermen and establish why FAO design is not favoured - it may not be a design problem, simply a conservative resistance; give priority for ice to ocean fishermen; tax lagoon fish sales etc.
- (4) Encourage, through the extension programme and media campaign, the use of FAO canoes in more ocean fishing activities, and place less emphasis on the use of these canoes in the lagoon where their rapidly increasing number is a cause for concern due to

their significantly greater fishing power than a local canoe: Limit their number in any one lagoon / licence them for use only in

- (5) Develop the use of underutilised resources: eg. deep bottom resources, oceanic gill netting etc.
- (6) Encourage exports from outer islands to Tarawa to relieve pressure on the Tarawa fish stocks whilst providing a source of income to outer island fishermen. (Overfishing is not considered to be a problem on the outer islands owing to the relatively small populations and limited fishing power-boats/gears.).
- (7) Begin case studies on catch rates achieved by different vessels fishing in the lagoon.
- (8) Conduct experimental fishing trials on target species to establish catch rates and biological parameters: eg. Te Bun (*Anadara maculosa*), Te Morikoi (*Lethrinus nebulosus*), Te Ikari (*Albula vulpes*).
- (9) Aquaculture: increase emphasis on food fish production rather than baitfish; Investigate new species; investigate the possibility of rearing juveniles for reseeding the lagoon.
- (10) Investigate stock enhancement methods - artificial reefs. reseeding the lagoon.