

Regional workshop on CITES non-detrimental findings for marine-listed species

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.



Hundreds of species from the Pacific are listed under CITES (hard corals account for most of those) and are commonly traded from over 10 countries in the region. The CITES-listed species most commonly traded from the Pacific are stony corals and giant clams. These species are exported live for the aquarium trade¹ and dead (or shells) for the curio trade, and form the basis of commercial activities that generate revenues in both rural and urban areas. These species are also used for traditional and cultural purposes. Other species such as tree ferns, parrots and orchids are also traded but not as widely.

Not all Pacific Island countries are signatories to CITES. Those that aren't still need to comply with CITES documentation, which is demanded by importing countries. For example, although Solomon Islands exports a number of CITES-listed species, it has only recently joined the convention (2007). The Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Kingdom of Tonga still are not parties. Unfortunately, even when corals or clams are produced or harvested sustainably, exports are harder to monitor from non-party countries, sometimes resulting into trade bans generated by importing countries.

Pacific countries that are signatory to CITES.

Country	Signatory year
Australia	1976
Fiji	1997
France (including its Pacific dependents)	1978
New Zealand (including its Pacific dependents)	1989
Palau	2004
Papua New Guinea	1976
Samoa	2004
Solomon Islands	2007
United States of America (including its Pacific dependents)	1975
Vanuatu	1989

Presenting non-detrimental findings (NDF) is a process that must be carried out before exporting a CITES-listed species. Essentially, NDF is a science-based risk assessment that focuses on examining the harvest,

¹ Live rocks are also listed under CITES

SPC ACTIVITIES

population responses, measures and risks in order to determine whether or not removal of a species from the wild is detrimental. An NDF is achieved if population trends (or indicators), despite any harvesting of a species, are increasing or stable. Any risks should be effectively mitigated and addressed. However, in the Pacific region, there often is a lack of capacity to do so. As a result, CITES decided together with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and SPC, to hold a series of workshop related to CITES mechanisms used for marine species.

In August 2009, a regional workshop on managing sustainable fisheries for giant clams (*Tridacnidae*) and CITES capacity building was held in Fiji.² In May 2010, a workshop was held in Solomon Islands, training competent Pacific authorities (scientific and management authorities) on NDF. This meeting was attended by regional fisheries and environment department participants from 12 countries.³ Resource people from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the University of the South Pacific (USP) assisted SPREP and SPC in facilitating the workshop.

After general CITES presentations by Robert Boljesic and specific trade presentations provided by present parties, the focus was on providing NDF training. Helen Pippard from IUCN–Fiji took a lead role in the sessions and coordinated group work related to this topic. She also gave several technical presentations and steered working groups.

Essentially, NDF is a science-based risk assessment that focuses on examining the harvest, population responses,

measures and risks in order to determine whether or not removal of a species from the wild is detrimental. An NDF is achieved if population trends (or indicators), despite any harvesting of a species, are increasing or stable. Any risks should be effectively mitigated and addressed. Workshop participants were invited to gather in country or cultural region groups to work through NDF related to specific issues.

Further, a range of background and informative presentations were provided during the meeting. They can be downloaded from SPC's aquaculture website at: www.spc.int/aquaculture

Aquarium Arts (AA) — a large live fish and coral export facility — in Honiara, Solomon Islands generously allowed workshop participants onto its premises. AA is managed by Willie Veitch. Another company (Solomon Islands Marine Exports, a coral collecting company) jointly operates from AA facilities. Willie had prepared copies of unused CITES permits and an informal group discussion ensued between him and the participants. The group also toured the facility and learned about fish and coral handling prior to export. Paul Saelea from Solomon Islands Marine Exports showed his company's activities and some of the products it was shipping. Everyone gained knowledge and hands-on experience to what trading CITES-listed species really means.

The giant clam and NDF workshops are important steps forward to understanding CITES-based mechanisms for exporting marine life from Pacific Island countries and territories. Approximately 350,000 pieces of live coral and giant clams are exported from the region each year.^{4,5} In addition, several tonnes of coral skeletons and clamshells are also exported for the curio trade.



Group work on non-detrimental findings (NDF) topics.

² Kinch J. and Teitelbaum A. 2010. Proceedings of the Regional Workshop on the Management of Sustainable Fisheries for Giant Clams (*Tridacnidae*) and CITES Capacity Building 4–7 August 2009, Nadi, Fiji.

³ Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Marshall islands, New Caledonia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, the USA and Vanuatu



Participants to the workshop came from 12 different countries.

Live rocks are also listed under CITES and are exported in large quantities (1,000 t per year on average). Understanding the trade of these species will ensure that competent scientific and management authorities in the Pacific will improve the monitoring of the industry and ensure maximum benefits to communities and local businesses, while harvests and production are carried out sustainably.

For further information, please contact:

Jeff Kinch
SPREP Coastal Management Advisor
JeffreyK@sprep.org
Antoine Teitelbaum
SPC Aquaculture Officer
AntoineT@spc.int

A change at the helm of SPC's Aquaculture Section



SPC bids farewell to Ben Ponia, who was the Aquaculture Adviser for almost nine years. With the support of his staff, he put aquaculture back on the map in the Pacific. Ben was also able to compile the most accurate statistics on aquaculture production for the Pacific over the period 1998–2007⁶. Ben left

SPC to take up the position of Secretary of Marine Resources in the Cook Islands. All staff at SPC's Coastal Fisheries Programme wish Ben well in his new role, and look forward to working with him and his staff in the future.



Ben's replacement, Robert Jimmy from Vanuatu, is no stranger to many fisheries people in the Pacific. Robert was the Acting Director of Fisheries in Vanuatu for three years. Prior to this he was the Manager of the Research and Aquaculture Division in Vanuatu. Robert has a Master's degree in Aquaculture and Fisheries, as well as years of experience working in the aquaculture field. Coastal Fisheries Programme staff welcome Robert on board and look forward to working with him as he continues to take aquaculture in the Pacific forward.

⁴ CITES WCMC Database 2010

⁵ Teitelbaum and Friedman. 2008. Resurgence of cultured giant clams from the Pacific; current status and prospects for the aquarium market. Australasian aquaculture conference, Brisbane 2008.

⁶ Ponia B. 2010. A review of aquaculture in the Pacific Islands 1998–2007: Tracking a decade of progress through official and provisional statistics. Aquaculture Technical Papers, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Noumea, New Caledonia.