

New information sheets on marine species

SPC has been working with the Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) Network to produce a series of information sheets on marine species used for food and livelihoods in the Pacific Islands region.

Sixteen information sheets are in the process of being designed and printed. The sheets cover eight fish groups and eight invertebrates. Fish include groupers, rabbitfish, emperorfish, parrotfish, reef snappers, trevallies, mullets and surgeonfish. Invertebrates include sea cucumbers, giant clams, trochus, mangrove crabs, lobsters, coconut crabs octopus and green snails. These sheets are expected to be available in October 2011 and information sheets on other species may be prepared, depending on demand.

The information sheets will be available individually or as a kit that consists of all sheets with a guide to using the sheets. Each sheet provides information on the species' distribution, habitat(s) and feeding, lifecycle and reproduction, fishing methods and fisheries management options.

The purpose of the information sheets is to assist fishing communities, and people working with them, by providing information on species of interest and advice on appropriate fisheries management options.

Community-based fisheries management involves fishing communities taking a key role in managing the fisheries resources on which they rely for both food security and livelihoods. To do this, communities require technical information and advice on the resource species involved. The information sheets provide this basic information and the guide to the sheets discusses many topics of interest to fishing communities.

Are time-consuming and often expensive scientific surveys always needed? The guide to the information sheets provides advice on how an assessment on the "health" of community fisheries can be based on information from local fishers.

What does fisheries management mean in fishing communities? The main aim of fisheries management, whether by communities or national fisheries authorities, is to ensure that fishing is sustainable. If management is successful, seafood will continue to be available for local fishers, both now and in the future. In all cases, this means allowing adult fish to live long enough to breed and produce small fish, many of which will grow and be available for capture in future years. The guide and information sheets discuss how this can be done.

What fisheries management measures are appropriate in community fisheries? Many methods or "tools" are available to manage fisheries and the guide to the information sheets summarises these. Many of these have been applied by Pacific Island fishing communities for hundreds of years. Not all management measures work equally well with all species, and each information

sheet discusses the measures that are most appropriate.

Will a fish reserve or no-take area really work? Establishing a fish reserve is just one of the tools available to manage fisheries. Local people who require a daily supply of seafood are most interested in whether or not a fish reserve will result in increased catches in nearby local fishing areas. But not all species will increase in numbers because a fish reserve has been established. The information sheets discuss this problem for each of the species groups.

How can we tell if management is working? Whatever management tools are used, it is necessary to determine whether they are achieving what they are meant to. From a community's viewpoint, the most appropriate indication of this is whether management measures are improving or sustaining catches in the managed area. The information sheets provide the optimum management measures for each species group.

What needs to be discussed in fishing communities? The guide to the information sheets offers some valuable suggestions on discussion topics that can help communities decide which management option(s) will be the most beneficial. Such discussions are essential in all community-based resource management approaches to ensure that the best use is made of local and traditional knowledge.

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