



Stakeholder workshops on managing live reef food fish fisheries in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

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The live reef food fish trade (LRFFT) is a high-value, reef-based fishery that is characterised by a boom-and-bust cycle with one area after another being overfished in Southeast Asia, the western Pacific and parts of the Indian Ocean. The trade is driven by the demand for live reef fish, especially in Hong Kong, Taiwan and southern China. It has resulted in the overfishing of large grouper and wrasse species, especially through targeting fish spawning aggregation sites, and has encouraged the use of destructive fishing methods, such as the use of cyanide.

The LRFFT has been identified as one of the critical issues to be addressed within the “Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security” (CTI; see <http://www.cti-secretariat.net>), of which Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Solomon Islands are members. The Coral Triangle Regional Plan of Action commits members to regional action and specifically agrees to the full application of the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) management and to achieving effective management and a more sustainable trade in live reef fish.

Both the National Fisheries Authority (NFA) in PNG and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) in the Solomon Islands have completed consultative stakeholder workshops to help guide the management of the LRFFT in those countries. These workshops were facilitated by The Nature Conservancy and the World Wildlife Fund’s Coral Triangle Network Initiative, with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the US Coral Triangle Support Partnership (<http://www.uscti.org>). Both workshops followed a similar format, and fisheries officers from each country participated in the other’s workshop to ensure complementary management across the two countries.

The “National Fisheries Authority Stakeholder Workshop on the Management of the Live Reef Food Fish Trade in Papua New Guinea” was held in Port Moresby, 7–9 July 2009. The purpose of the consultative stakeholder workshop was to review and update the existing National Live Reef Food Fish Fishery Management Plan (2003), bringing together



Participants of the National Fisheries Authority Stakeholder Workshop on the Management of the Live Reef Food Fish Trade in Papua New Guinea, 7–9 July 2009, Port Moresby (photo by Jeff Kinch).

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37 representatives of government (national, provincial and local), fishing industry, community and non-governmental organisations.

The “Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Stakeholder Workshop on the Management of the Live Reef Food Fish Trade in the Solomon Islands” was held in Honiara, 4–6 August 2009. The purpose of the consultative stakeholder workshop was to review and update the draft National Management and Development Plan for the Live Reef Food Fish Fishery (2003), bringing together 49 representatives of government (national, provincial and local), fishing industry, community and non-governmental organisations.

For both workshops the review process applied the principles of EAF management and evaluated the plans against the International Standard for the Trade in Live Reef Food Fish.

The workshops employed a four-stage process to allow all participants to contribute fully. Given participants’ wide range of experiences with the LRFFT — from extensive to minimal — a series of background papers and presentations was provided. Participants were broken into three “peer” groups — community, provincial and national — to identify the issues of concern based on, and relevant to, their particular groups’ experiences of the LRFFT. The groups identified key issues of concern in three broad areas: ecological, socioeconomic and governance. To prioritise these issues each group was asked to undertake a simple risk assessment process, and then suggest management actions for the highest priority issues.

Using the information from the background presentations, combined with the discussion and prioritisation of the range of issues identified as being associated with the LRFFT, workshop participants then reviewed the current National Live Reef Food Fish Fishery Management Plan, in the case of the PNG workshop, and the draft National Management and Development Plan for the Live Reef Food Fish Fishery, in the case of the Solomon Islands workshop. Participants suggested specific revisions to the respective management plans and provided recommendations to the fisheries agencies concerning the broader operation and management of the live reef food fish fisheries in PNG and Solomon Islands.

PNG workshop participants recommended that:

1. NFA require any LRFFT operators to undertake training of local fishers in the best practices for capture and handling of live food fish, and to ensure that such a requirement is included in any memoranda-of-understanding (MOU) between the operator and local fishers and as a condition in the operator’s license.
2. The development and management of the LRFF fishery in PNG be based on the policy of “user pays”.
3. NFA require an independent service provider to conduct basic legal and financial awareness training for communities prior to their entering into a LRFF fishery MOU with operators.
4. NFA conduct the following research on the LRFF fishery as a matter of priority:
 - a. stock assessments of target species, and impact assessments of non-target species and habitat;
 - b. socioeconomic issues, especially:
 - i. cost-benefit analysis
 - ii. rate of return to villagers
 - iii. potential income streams
 - iv. benefit-sharing opportunities
 - c. initiate a detailed independent viability assessment of the LRFF fishery in PNG, focusing on:
 - i. economic viability
 - ii. social viability
 - iii. biological viability
 - d. initiate a study to identify possible alternative income generation options to the LRFFT, including assessment of “live fish” versus “fresh/chilled/frozen fish” market options.
5. NFA develop and implement a community-based fishery management (CBFM) programme that incorporates fisheries management approaches and training that are appropriate to the management of local fisheries, including the LRFF fishery.
6. NFA modify the existing funding mechanisms to allow improved access to funds to develop local-level fisheries.
7. NFA require all MOUs developed between land-owners and LRFFT companies to be reviewed by provincial authorities prior to signing.

Solomon Islands workshop participants recommended that:

1. MFMR reduce the complexity of the current draft LRFF fishery management plan, and review and incorporate the recommendations of the workshop. The management plan should be concise and easy to understand and implement.
2. MFMR conduct a review of the effectiveness of the LRFF fishery management plan one year after it has been adopted and implemented.
3. MFMR, as a matter of priority, seek a legal person to:
 - a. undertake a national review of the status of provincial fisheries ordinances, including

reference to the LRFF fishery and the current revision of the Fisheries Act.

- b. review, revise and make clear the consultative procedures for licensing between national, provincial and local authorities in respect of the LRFF fishery before issuing any licenses.
4. MFMR incorporate the use of fees and/or bonds as a part of the licensing process to address impacts and grievances resulting from the LRFF fishery, in particular:
 - a. restoration and/or compensation for impacts due to the use of destructive fishing methods;
 - b. exploitation of fishers through inappropriate or unfair agreements;
 - c. cultural and social impacts, such as “one-year marriages”;
 - d. other impacts from the LRFFT operations.
5. MFMR actively seek financial and technical resources and support for capacity building, training and awareness programmes in support of the LRFF fishery. MFMR should:
 - a. maximise the use of local expertise in fish spawning aggregation (FSA) monitoring to build MFMR, Provincial and community capacity to monitor FSA and target species throughout the country;
 - b. seek assistance for training for enforcement officers and vessel observers;
 - c. request or propose to the Solomon Islands’ National CTI Coordinating Committee the allocation of resources and technical assistance for completing and implementing the LRFF fishery management plan;
 - d. consider funding activities from the recurrent budget.
6. MFMR hold a stakeholder workshop (including provincial fisheries officers and administrators) immediately after the adoption of the LRFF fishery management plan as a part of the implementation process.
7. MFMR establish a multi-stakeholder technical advisory taskforce to consider and advise MFMR’s Director on LRFF fishery issues.
8. MFMR provide Renbel Province (and other provinces that are currently being approached by LRFFT operators) with appropriate assistance and information on the LRFF fishery as a matter of urgency.
9. As a *high priority*, MFMR contract a detailed *independent* viability assessment prior to any potential new LRFF operations commencing. The assessment should consider:
 - a. biological viability (target and non-target species assessments)
 - b. economic viability
 - c. social viability
10. MFMR coordinate, fund and build capacity for FSA and target species surveys and monitoring, building on the existing expertise in country (also see Recommendation 5).
11. MFMR develop and maintain a database and relevant records related to the LRFFT, and include data and information acquisition as a key license condition.

The results of the two workshops are being used by PNG’s NFA and Solomon Islands’ MFMR in the revision of their respective management plans for the live reef food fish fishery.



Participants in the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Stakeholder Workshop on the Management of the Live Reef Food Fish Trade in the Solomon Islands, 4-6 August 2009, Honiara (photo by Andrew Smith).