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Country Statement – Niue



NIUE COUNTRY STATEMENT

NATIONAL FISHERIES SECTOR

The artisanal fisheries in Niue remain small consisting of small scale commercial, semi-commercial and subsistence operations operating out of small aluminum dinghies and traditional outrigger canoes. Vessels consist mainly of 12 to 18 foot aluminum dinghies powered by 8-60 HP outboard motors. There are a small number of larger 8-9 meter aluminum cats and a smaller tri-hull vessel also. The number of domestic licensed vessels ranges annually between 25-35 vessels with a slow increase of larger dinghies being the general trend. In comparison there is an estimated 60-80 traditional outrigger canoes operating in the fisheries.

Trolling for pelagic species is the predominant method of fishing used by boats with less effort seen on bottom fishing, drop-lining, and vertical longlining. The outrigger operations involve mainly drop-line fishing for pelagics and bottom fishing for demersal reef and reef associated species. Shore based fisheries include hook and line, occasional gill netting, reef gleaning, and diving and spearfishing. Shellfish, bivalves, and crustaceans are heavily targeted for local consumption. Many of the inshore fisheries resources targeted through the latter fishing methods are showing signs of overfishing. Size and daily catch limits have been set for some resource species. The assessment and management of these inshore resources remains a concern area.

Recent developments (last 18 months) in the Tourism Industry has seen increased interest and developments in a Sport and Game fishing fishery, with the three largest local vessels operating as Sport and Game Charter operations as well as commercial fishing operations in the tourist off season. Local charter operators and residents have established an IGFA affiliated Sport Fishing Club (Niue Island Sport Fishing Club). Estimates of total catch within both offshore and inshore fisheries remains difficult due to a continued lack of catch information. Provision of data is not compulsory and continues to be difficult to acquire. All catches are generally sold and consumed locally with no commercial exports currently happening. The only fish leaving the island is with visiting friends and relatives leaving the island.

FISHERIES DEVELOPMENTS

Aquaculture

In 1994 a feasibility study was carried out with the assistance of FFA and ICLARM on the potential for farming of freshwater prawns and crayfish, and the establishment of a giant clam hatchery. The basic conclusions reached at that time were that such initiatives would be costly to set up and run and not economically viable. Since that time the only aquaculture related activity carried out has been the introduction of trochus in 1992 and late 1996. Despite a number of searches there is no indication to date to suggest that the transplanted trochus stocks have been successful.

F.A.D'S

The government Fisheries Division continues to operate an on-going FAD programme in support of the local small-scale pelagic fisheries and the Sport and Game-fishing fishery. The programme has maintained between 4 and 8 FAD's in the water over the last 3-5 years. There are currently 7 FAD's in the water with a further 7 scheduled for deployment over the next 12 months. The programme has had varying success with productivity of FAD's however the offshore FAD's have been consistently the more productive. The longevity of FAD's have ranged from weeks to just over 5 years. FAD's were previously serviced on a

monthly bases but now bi-monthly due to material changes and cost constraints. The design of FAD's has been modified slightly from the traditional SPC catenary curve design to suit our conditions. Catch information remains a problem area in trying to estimate the productivity and benefit from the FAD's to the fishermen.

Resource Assessment and Management

A Tuna and Billfish Management Plan was formulated with the assistance of FFA Fisheries Management Adviser Ms Ana Willock in early 1998. The plan covers tuna's, billfish, wahoo, some sharks, and other by-catch species. The plan establishes a policy framework within which Niue can pursue its national objectives and strategies in regard to these resources.

In late 1998 with the requested assistance of SPC, Inshore Fisheries Scientists Mr Pierre Labrosse and Mr Being Yeating assisted in carrying out a baseline survey for the first Marine Reserve area in Niue. Underwater visual census surveys were carried out both in the reserve area and a reference site 8-10 kilometers down the coast. The results and final report of the survey are in the completion stages with SPC. It is envisaged that similar reserve areas in which all fishing is prohibited will be established at strategic points in appropriate villages.

In early 1999 with the requested assistance of SPC, the OFP and Mr Kieth Bigalow assisted Niue through the development of a National Fisheries Assessment. The assessment reviews the current condition and exploitation of tuna resources in Niue and in the Pacific. The report considers existing fisheries, historical fishing activities, oceanographic factors and provides some information on pelagic fish biology. The report will be of significant assistance in respect to Niue's Tuna and Billfish Management Plan.

Women in Fisheries

Within the last 2 years Niue has had considerable assistance from SPC women's fisheries section. SPC Women Fisheries Development Adviser Mrs Patricia Tuara has assisted in the running of two workshops, the first on training women in post harvest processing and marketing, and the second in shell craft and marketing. This assistance was well received by the fisherwomen in Niue who have subsequently asked government for the inclusion of a women fisheries officer into the Fisheries Division.

Longline Fishery Developments

In 1997 FFA assisted in carrying out a study into the options available to Niue in terms of development of a longline fishery. The study looked at all aspects of what is needed to establish and support a longline fishery. The report also considered options such as joint venture operations. Although the findings of the study were not overly encouraging we continue to look at these and other options as new developments happen. One of the near future focuses is on trialling small-scale horizontal longlining similar to that currently being done in the Samoan Alia fishery.

In 1998, Offshore Fisheries Capture Section Master Fishermen Lindsay Chapman and Steve Beverly assisted in the planning and running of a number of short vertical longline workshops for the local fishermen in Niue. Although weather conditions were not favorable the workshops produced promising results. A number of participants have continued on to construct longlines and fish using this method around the FAD's.

Marine Safety

No fatal accidents at sea have been recorded in relation to boat fisheries, however there have been four recorded drownings over the last three years related to free diving and canoe fishing. Two of these latter cases are suspected to have had an alcohol factor involved to some extent. Introduction of an English and Niuean translated pamphlet of the Domestic Fishing Regulations (1996), annual surveying and licensing of all vessels for safety equipment and sea worthiness, and the prosecution of regulation offenders, has led to an improvement and general acceptance of better safety standards by boat fishermen.

LEGISLATION

In 1995 a review of the domestic fisheries legislation led to the combining of the Niue Island Fish-Protection Act 1991, the Sunday Fishing Prohibition Act 1980, the Niue Island Fish-Protection Ordinance 1965, No.32, and the Safety at Sea Act 1980, into the Domestic Fishing Act 1995. Current fisheries legislation includes;

- Domestic Fishing Act 1995
- Domestic Fishing regulations 1996
- Territorial Sea and Exclusive Economic Zone Act 1996

Legislation currently in pipeline includes;

- Prevention of Marine Pollution Bill 1998
- The Fisheries (Vessel Monitoring System) Regulations 1999
- Declaration of Anono as a Marine Reserve Pursuant to Section 7 of the Domestic fishing act 1995
- *Port State Enforcement legislation - Prohibition on Import of illegally caught fish into Niue.*

In 1998 FFA assisted with a review of the status of the domestic legislation of Niue in preparation for ratification of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Government is currently considering recommended additions and amendments to align Niue's legislation with UNCLOS.

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT CONSTRAINTS

The main current problems experienced in management of fisheries in Niue include; a lack of catch information from the various fisheries, a lack of information on the status of resource stocks (mainly inshore), limited capacity to carry out assessment of resources including on-going monitoring of these. Most of these problems stem from limited manpower available to cover the wide range of fisheries areas and tasks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and MFN would like to acknowledge the valuable assistance from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. In particular we would like to acknowledge the Director of Marine Resources, Mr Tim Adams for recognition of our needs and for planning and providing of technical staff to assist with this work. Acknowledgement is also given to the Section Managers/Heads, the technical staff, and any other support staff who have provided input into Niue's work. We look forward to continuing this important link with SPC in the future. DAFF would also acknowledge the Director of the FFA, Mr V.Uherbelau and his staff for the work of FFA noted above.

FUTURE FOCUS

The future areas of focus for fisheries are;

- Inshore fisheries resource assessment, planning and management
- Data collection for Inshore and Offshore Fisheries
- Basic training of locals in fishing as a means of employment and income earning
- Exploration into increasing use of offshore pelagic resources through the trialling of small-scale horizontal longlining similar to the Samoa Alia fishery.
- Further development of Women's involvement in fisheries

It is envisaged that varying levels of technical and financial assistance will be required in some of these areas in the future. It is hoped that SPC will continue to be able to offer assistance in these areas.