



14th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting
14–17 June 2022



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Outcomes of the Fourteenth SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting

FAME Secretariat

Background

1. The 14th SPC Heads of Fisheries (HOF14) meeting was held from the 14th to 17th June 2022 in Noumea New Caledonia. The meeting was held in a hybrid format, with those members and observers able to travel to SPC Headquarters participating in person, and with participants unable to travel due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions joining remotely via the Zoom platform.
2. Twenty-four members participated in the meeting, with Australia, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Wallis and Futuna joining the meeting in-person, and American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Palau, Tokelau, Tuvalu, United States of America and Vanuatu joined online. A total of 198 participants registered and attended the meeting.
3. HOF is a regional meeting of the heads of SPC member country and territory fishery agencies, covering the entire range of interests for which they have responsibility for, and for which the SPC Division of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) provides scientific and technical assistance, and enhances member's capacity and capability. The HoF meeting plays a unique role in providing strategic guidance to FAME.
4. The meeting was chaired by Mr Sompert Gereva, Acting Director of the Vanuatu Fisheries Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity.
5. The meeting was opened by the SPC Director General Dr Stuart Minchin, who noted that sustainability of fisheries remains a top priority for the organisation. The SPC Director General also remarked the importance of regaining face-to-face contact between SPC and its members as the region emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic.
6. The outcomes outlined here are the main points of consensus among delegates that the meeting felt necessary to document in order to: guide the resourcing and management of the FAME work programmes; draw to the attention of CROP agencies, development partners and donors; signal agreement on issues that require attention by members themselves, and; inform the upcoming Regional Fisheries Ministers' Meeting (RFMM), SPC Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA), and the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meetings.
7. The Heads of Fisheries, thanked FAME for their work on the business plan, prioritisation and results reporting, and commended the inclusive approach adopted to ensure that FAME has clear guidance to meet the needs of members

SPC Strategic Plan 2022–2031

8. Heads of Fisheries:
 - a) *Acknowledged* and *thanked* the Director General for his presentation on the new SPC Strategic Plan 2022–2031. It was noted that SPC Divisions will contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan across all Key Focus Areas (KFAs) identified and that the

FAME Business Plan, under preparation, includes proposed actions supporting each of the seven KFAs.

FAME draft Business Plan 2022–2027

9. Heads of Fisheries:

- a) *Reviewed* the draft FAME Business Plan 2022–2027 (Working Paper 3), *noted* the extensive consultation process undertaken by FAME during the drafting stage, and appreciated the strategic foresight and direction taken that comprehensively captures members' needs and priorities, including those expressed through the regional frameworks and strategies.
- b) *Highlighted* areas for enhancement and recognised it as a living document.
- c) *Endorsed* the draft Business Plan 2022–2027 for FAME to commence implementation.

FAME priorities and emerging work areas for 2022

10. Heads of Fisheries:

- a) *Reviewed and endorsed* the FAME priority work areas for 2022 and the emerging work areas outlined (Working Paper 2).
- b) *Requested* FAME take note of the priorities identified during the meeting. In particular, the following thematic areas were emphasised:
 - i. continue to support and expand regional collaboration and partnerships and increasing collection of and pooling of coastal fisheries data to improve application to data-limited fisheries and coastal ecosystem management;
 - ii. design and testing of effective anchored and drifting bio-degradable fish aggregating devices (FADs), and support for drifting FAD management options;
 - iii. review of community-based fisheries policies and impacts on locally-led sustainable management;
 - iv. enhancement of existing tablet-based data collection through the addition of financial and/or business planning tools for artisanal fishers;
 - v. assistance for assessing, analysing and developing locally led sustainable management of healthy of coral reefs and coral reef fisheries;
 - vi. climate change as a driver of impacts to ecosystems, fisheries and aquaculture;
 - vii. fish handling and value-adding for increased revenue from community-based fisheries;

- viii. post-pandemic prioritisation of in country support through staff and the use of local consultants, noting the need to factor in staff and travel constraints when updating the FAME priority work areas; and
 - ix. notwithstanding the above, continue development of tools and approaches to deliver support remotely.
- c) *Invited* FAME to continue ensuring that priorities are adjusted and aligned to both regional and member plans and needs as more members start to open their borders in the post-COVID recovery.

FAME results reporting 2021

11. Heads of Fisheries:

- a) *Reviewed* and *noted* results achieved by FAME, especially during the COVID-19 crisis, against the objectives of the FAME business plan 2016-2021 (Working Paper 1).
- b) *Noted the* need to report on and improve the integration of work across CROP (Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific) agencies.
- c) *Acknowledged* the updates made to the interactive results dashboard, that enables members to explore results by country or territory, donor and business plan objectives (www.famerresults.org) and noted the shift to outcomes-based results monitoring and reporting against the draft FAME Business Plan 2022–2027.

Regional priorities in aquaculture

12. Following the endorsement from the 13th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting (HoF13), a consultative Regional Aquaculture Assessment has been conducted on the needs and priorities of PICTs to address numerous challenges that continue to deny the Pacific region the long-term benefits that can be derived from the development of sustainable aquaculture. These challenges are limiting the extent the aquaculture sector can contribute to employment, food security, livelihoods, environmental protection, fisheries and ecosystem enhancement, and economic growth.

13. Heads of Fisheries:

- a) *noted* the progress made by FAME in implementing recommendations from the 13th SPC Heads of Fisheries,
- b) *agreed* with the report's conclusion that "Aquaculture has great socio-economic value and economic potential within the PICTs region but remains largely under-developed.",
- c) *agreed* to provide feedback to FAME within 2 weeks of the end of HoF14 on identified key issues, objectives, constraints, or omissions, and provide any further points on the contents of the draft Regional Aquaculture Assessment to inform development of the Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy,

- d) *accepted* that the Regional Aquaculture Assessment represented a fair account of the current status of the aquaculture in the region.
- e) *agreed to* use the regional aquaculture assessment as a guide on members' priority issues and needs in aquaculture to help inform the development of a Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy, and
- f) *requested* SPC to prepare a revised proposal on the process, stakeholder consultations, and timeline to develop a new Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy outlined in Working Paper 6, taking into account feedback received during HOF14. The revised process should be disseminated to members of HOF14 [by 15 July 2022] for an intersessional decision.

FAME's work programme on climate impact on Pacific fisheries and Ocean ecosystems

14. Heads of Fisheries:

- a) *noted* the progress made in the last 12 months to implement the FAME work programme on climate change, including the New Zealand-funded [Climate Change and Tuna Fisheries] project and the initiation of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade funded "Assessment of Climate Change Vulnerability of Pacific Ocean Resources – 10-year update", and *acknowledged* the potential additional support from New Zealand to scale up work on climate change,
- b) *re-emphasised* the endorsement from HoF13 for the increasingly urgent upgrade of the Pacific Marine Specimen Bank Laboratory Infrastructure for oceanic and coastal species, and [the urgent] need for a Regional Fisheries Research Vessel as critical assets for implementing the work programme,
- c) *noted* the need to expand climate change impact and mitigation support to members for coastal fisheries and aquaculture and *highlighted* existing activities in the region that could be built upon,
- d) *noted* with thanks and *acknowledged* that the costs involved in developing the funding proposal for the Green Climate Fund (GCF) "Adapting tuna-dependent Pacific Island communities and economies to climate change" regional tuna programme over a 2-year period were being met through grants from the GCF and the Minderoo Foundation,
- e) *welcomed* the idea to establish a Technical and Advisory Group and GCF Oversight Committee,
- f) *requested* SPC to develop a Terms of Reference for both the Technical and Advisory Group and GCF Oversight Committee, and
- g) *agreed* to allocate at least one senior staff member within each national fisheries agency to be the focal point for liaison with SPC, Conservation International (CI) and other project partners regarding all activities associated with development and delivery of the climate change programme detailed at HoF14.

15. Heads of Fisheries:

- a) *acknowledged* the need to facilitate the development of the GCF Funding Proposal in particular, and the wider regional activities on climate change presented to HoF14 more generally,
- b) *noted* the amount of work involved in the large number of technical studies to be implemented by SPC, FFA and FAO, and the numerous environmental and social studies to be conducted by the selected consulting company,
- c) *agreed* to collaborate with CI, SPC, and other project partners and the consultants to facilitate stakeholder engagements for several of the studies required by the GCF,
- d) *agreed* to assist consultants to identify practical national and regional financing mechanisms, and supporting policies, to sustain increased access to tuna for domestic food security and operate the Advanced Warning System following completion of the GCF regional tuna programme,
- e) *noted* the interest from Minderoo Foundation's Sustainable Fisheries Program to participate within the Technical Advisory Group for the GCF regional tuna programme, and undertook to respond to SPC within 2 weeks on this issue, and
- f) *agreed* to appoint national representatives for the GCF Oversight Committee within 2 months for development of the GCF Funding Proposal, and to identify both the roles and responsibilities of the Committee and its members and the preferred modality for Committee meetings.

Reports from the Fourth Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture and from the First Community-Based Fisheries Dialogue

16. Heads of Fisheries received a report on the Fourth Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries (RTMCFA4) and the First Community-Based Fisheries Dialogue (CBFD1) meeting.

17. Heads of Fisheries:

- a) *noted* the Outcomes and Actions Report from the 4th Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture (RTMCFA4), provided as *Background Paper 2* and outlined in *Working Paper 5*,
- b) *noted* with appreciation the Outcomes Report from the First Community-Based Fisheries Dialogue (CBFD1), provided as *Background Paper 3* and outlined in *Working Paper 5*,
- c) *considered* and endorsed recommendations 17(a), 21(a), 21(b), and 30(a) from the RTMCFA4 to HoF14. With regards 17(a), members *noted* the need for technical assistance to ensure e-data collection systems and that systems be compatible with existing systems. With regards recommendation 21(b), members *requested* that this be at the discretion of national fisheries authorities, and that relevant data sharing policies be applied. With

regards recommendation 36(a), SPC was requested to act upon the final recommendation from HoF14 Regional Priorities in Aquaculture session as the way forward. HoF14 noted the request to consider new names for the RTMCFA under recommendation 39(a), and undertook to advise SPC within two weeks after HoF14, and

- d) *considered* and endorsed the three specific recommendations from the Cbfd1 to HoF14.

Member request management procedures

18. Heads of Fisheries:

- a) *noted* with appreciation the effort by FAME to further improve and enhance the management of members' requests through the development of the member request tracking system,
- b) *noted* the criteria and procedures established and the process by which a formal request for assistance should be submitted by members (e.g., Directors and above, as per member's internal procedures) and responded to by FAME,
- c) *noted* that FAME will internally track informal technical requests in the system, and
- d) *noted* that the procedures and member request tracking process would be further enhanced after feedback from members on its functionality and ease of use.

Specific outcomes for the Third Regional Fisheries Ministers' Meeting

19. Heads of Fisheries:

- a) *tasked* the Secretariat to liaise with members to develop a concise brief for the 3rd Regional Fisheries Ministers' Meeting on key outcomes from the 14th SPC Heads of Fisheries meeting, and present that to the RFMM officials meeting.

Closing

- 20. Heads of Fisheries adopted the Fourteenth SPC Heads of Fisheries Outcomes document.
- 21. The meeting was closed by Mr Cameron Diver, Deputy Director General, SPC.