

Progress report on the

Outputs of the Fourth SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting

2006 notes on progress against the HoF4 outputs and recommendations are highlighted against each output in a box like this. All unboxed text is from the original 2004 paper.

The fourth SPC Heads of Fisheries (HoF) Meeting took place at SPC Headquarters in Noumea, from 28th August to 3rd September 2004. It was chaired on behalf of New Zealand by Matthew Hooper.

HoF is a regional meeting of Pacific Island countries and territories that covers the entire range of interests under the purview of national and territorial fisheries services. As such it plays a unique role in promoting dialogue and experience-sharing between island nations and territories, as well as guiding the work of the SPC's fisheries programmes. It complements the more sectorally-focussed, political role of the Forum Fisheries Committee, which has a primary emphasis on tuna fisheries management, whilst HoF covers aquaculture, coastal fisheries management and development and living marine resource science, and has a broad-ranging and relatively informal remit for discussion that can cover any arising issue of interest or significance to participants.

The following paragraphs constitute the points of consensus agreement of SPC member country and territory fisheries service heads on issues that arose during the meeting, and which the meeting felt necessary to document, either to help in the management of the SPC work-programme, to draw to the attention of a wider audience, or to signal agreement on issues that require attention by members themselves.

Output 1. *Bilateral coordination of monitoring* – The meeting requested regional assistance for countries in organising and implementing bilateral understandings between members to facilitate inter-zone observer activity coordination, particularly in the case of urgent needs not yet covered by the Niue Treaty.

The issue was raised at the recent Regional Observer Coordinator's meeting, but little progress has been made to date, pending the implementation of the GEF project. It is expected that this is an area that FFA would pursue through Component 2 (Law, Policy and Institutional Reform, Realignment & Strengthening) of the GEF-funded Pacific Oceanic Fisheries Management project.

Output 2. *PROCFISH/O extension* – Recognising the time that is likely to elapse before the Western And Central Pacific Highly Migratory Fish Stock Commission reaches full functionality, and the likelihood that the initial membership will consist almost entirely of Pacific Island states, Heads of Fisheries urged SPC to request the European Union to consider extension of the Oceanic component of the PROCFISH project (which currently ends in 2004). As well as a no-cost extension to the current project, based primarily on savings and contingencies, the meeting also strongly urged SPC to request an expansion of the project to also include the Pacific Island countries joining the ACP group under the Cotonou Agreement, and suggested that this could be accomplished by adding an oceanic component to COFISH in the same way as Oceanic and Coastal components were combined under PROCFISH

A no-cost extension of PROCFish/O to 28 February 2007 has been approved. The extension applies to both ACP (pre-Cotonou Agreement ACPs only) and OCT components and a work plan and budget for the extension have been approved. In addition, a new project (SciFish) is currently under development. SciFish will extend several PROCFish/O activities (fishery monitoring and ecosystem research & modelling) and will also have a strong emphasis on regional tuna tagging as a means to improve stock assessments. SciFish will be funded by the 9th EDF and therefore all current Pacific ACPs and OCTs will be potential beneficiaries of the project. The OFP is currently working with the EC/ACP unit in ForSec, the Fiji-based EC Delegation and the Noumea EC Office in the development of project documentation. Subject to approval, it is hoped that the project will begin before the end of 2006.

Output 3. *Coastal fisheries data confidentiality/sharing policy* – the meeting approved a set of data access guidelines for the Reef Fisheries Observatory (RFO) as Annex 1, based on the discussion by member country representatives within the PROCFISH Advisory Committee meeting.

This policy (see Annex 1 below) is in force and guides all SPC Coastal Fisheries Programme data transactions.

Output 4. *Fisheries science capacity-building and regional assessments* – Heads of Fisheries recognised the analogies between the Reef Fisheries Observatory and the Oceanic Fisheries Programme, and the need for both units to maintain a strong focus on capacity-building and capacity-supplementation according to the capability of each country. The meeting also commended the strategy of promoting the domestication of fishery monitoring and fishery data systems, and the production of increasingly rigorous fishery assessments by the secretariat based on the best currently-available information. It endorsed the aim of the RFO to activate and build on existing national reef fisheries monitoring and assessment systems rather than replacing them.

Considerable attention has been paid to science capacity building in the last 2 years. The new OFP/FFA GEF project (also see output 11) has very strong focus on national capacity building and the next phase of work for the RFO will be devoted primarily to supporting development of national capacity for monitoring coastal fisheries.

Output 5. *Progressing PROCFISH/C* – Heads of Fisheries welcomed the outputs that are starting to emerge from the coastal components of the European Union-funded fisheries assessment projects and look forward to receiving advice useful for national coastal fishery management as well as future capacity-building activities.

This was a general statement of guidance to the subproject, and has been taken aboard by staff, who no longer feel constrained in providing advice directly addressing coastal fishery management problems, and not just providing general fishery status information. Capacity-building will continue, and the next phase of the project, as mentioned in 4 above, will have national capacity building as its main focus.

Output 6. *Fisheries MPA review* - The meeting requested SPC to coordinate a review of the effectiveness, in terms of fisheries management, of Marine Protected Areas with fisheries management objectives, for discussion at HoF5 and for the information of member countries and territories. This review would also make clear the definition of the term “Marine Protected Area” itself.

A great deal of background material has been collected but the final summary – the regional fisheries policy brief – has not yet been written. This has become a politically sensitive subject with strong national positions being taken within the international community, and SPC is a non-political organisation. We have thus hesitated to produce any final document so far. However, coastal fisheries advice is part of SPC’s mandate, and MPAs are often deployed with the stated intent of securing fisheries outcomes, so a carefully-worded policy brief will be produced shortly.

Output 7. *Export commodity pricing information* - Recognising that the promotion of sustainability of fisheries requires the optimisation of usage as well as management of resources, the meeting noted the strong outstanding need for an “INFOFISH-style” service which assists countries in improving transparency of export pricing information to ensure that maximum value is obtained from coastal export fisheries by Pacific Island fishers.

This recommendation identifies a regional gap that could be filled by any organisation capable of filling it – there are several CROP and non-CROP organisations whose mandates could encompass this. However, there appears to have been little progress so far. One attempt by SPC – through collaboration with the International Marinelife Alliance – collapsed along with that organisation, and SPC has not been given the resources to start up a standalone service, which would require extensive contacts in Asian ports. We are currently negotiating with a more reliable NGO partner to develop access to trade information, but we do not have a trade specialist on staff and currently lack the capacity to compile and produce bulletins on relevant species in relevant markets. Possibly the next phase of European Union regional development assistance will accommodate this.

Output 8. *HO F TORs* – the meeting approved terms of reference for HoF expressed in Annex 2 as amended by the meeting from the proposal in Working Paper 2.

These TORs are in force (refer Annex 2) and will guide this 5th HoF meeting.

Output 9. *Move towards functional integrated island/coastal management* – the meeting recognised that coastal fisheries management is not just about counting fish, assessing coral cover and consulting fishers, but also has to take account of other impacts and effects on nearshore fisheries, such as sewage contamination and ciguatoxicity, and urged SPC to find ways of helping countries to integrate coastal fisheries issues into effective whole-island or coastal zone management systems.

This is an extremely broad issue, and rather than just trying to add on projects to (for example) help countries monitor sewage contamination of coastal waters, SPC will try to help countries tackle the issue at its roots. This commitment is reflected in the new objective of the Coastal Fisheries Programme – to assist countries in applying the ecosystem approach to coastal fisheries and aquaculture. This is an approach that implicitly recognises these broader impacts. This work will develop over the course of the next 4 years, and we intend to make a trial application in Nauru in 2006, as part of the new cross-sectoral SPC country and territory engagement strategies.

Output 10. *Far western Pacific tuna fishery impacts* – The meeting noted that quantifying the impact of tuna fisheries in the far west of the Western and Central Pacific area, particularly Indonesian and Philippines waters, is critical to the assessment of Bigeye and Yellowfin tuna across the whole region. The multi-donor initiative that SPC has been coordinating to try and improve the quantity and quality of information coming out of this region was commended, and the results already starting to emerge were noted. Members also noted that the integration of the management of fisheries in this part of the region into the management of the entire range of stocks would be a major hurdle for the WCP Commission to tackle.

OFP continues to play a role in the Indonesia and Philippines Data Collection Project through the participation of Tim Lawson on the project Steering Committee. The project is now formally administered by WCPFC. Regarding estimation of fishing impacts in the far western area, the OFP is currently investigating a revised model structure that would allow for more spatially-specific estimates of the impacts of these fisheries.

Output 11. *National capacity-building in OFP work* - SPC members looked forward to further capacity-building assistance through the OFP particularly in understanding and incorporating scientific advice on region-wide stocks into management at the national level. The meeting recognised the role of the new GEF International Waters project proposal in supporting member country capacity to take effective part in WCP HMFS Commission processes. The meeting also recognised the role of the PROCFISH project in developing capacity for management of national fisheries within individual EEZs.

The GEF-funded Pacific Oceanic Fisheries Management Project was launched in October 2005. This joint SPC/FFA project will undertake capacity building in a number of areas. On the OFP side, we will focus on building national capacity in fishery monitoring and stock assessment. Our plans in these areas will be presented in the pre-HoF workshop.

Output 12. *Stock assessment capacity:* The meeting noted that OFP did not have capacity to produce full assessments of all 4 main tuna stocks on an annual basis and asked the secretariat to continue seeking funding to improve regional capacity for stock assessments within the OFP. The need to produce assessments for other species, such as striped marlin and swordfish, as well as the assessment of risk to critical bycatch species, from fisheries and other impacts, was also highlighted.

The OFP is now receiving funding for regional stock assessments from the WCPFC, and a new stock assessment position supported by this funding is currently under recruitment. This new position will provide a much-needed boost in regional stock assessment capacity and will hopefully allow expansion of assessment work to regularly cover species outside the immediate interest of the WCPFC. We note that the OFP, in cooperation with Australia and New Zealand, recently completed a preliminary assessment of striped marlin in the south-western Pacific. For the upcoming meeting of the WCPFC Scientific Committee, the OFP will be undertaking detailed regional assessments of yellowfin and bigeye tuna and presenting analyses of management options relating to these species and South Pacific albacore.

Output 13. *Artisanal, subsistence and recreational oceanic fisheries:* The meeting recognised that, whilst information on artisanal, subsistence and recreational oceanic fisheries is currently not particularly significant in producing overall assessments of oceanic species regional stock status, information on such fisheries is essential for national fishery management purposes and determining potential interactions between industrial and small-scale fisheries, and urged members to seize all opportunities, including those offered by SPC, to improve the availability of information on smaller-scale fisheries for oceanic species.

HoF members may wish to report on progress here. At the regional end, different options for collecting this type of data are being explored. The development of the PROCFish/CoFish socioeconomics manual is nearing completion, and this could be used by countries to conduct surveys to at least get a general idea of domestic small-scale pelagic fishery catches. A catch and effort logbook could also be developed by SPC, however, this would need the full support and commitment of members for its implementation in the artisanal, subsistence and recreational oceanic fisheries sector on a country by country basis.

Output 14. Aquaculture development: HoF pointed out that aquaculture will become an increasingly important component of food security for many SPC members. Small scale aquaculture and domestication of indigenous species particularly those which can be integrated with traditional practices has widespread applicability. The meeting acknowledged the practical utility of the aquaculture components of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing and suggested that SPC should assist members to put this into practice through the development, with the involvement of national stakeholders, of national codes of good aquaculture practice, under agreed regional standards.

Much of the SPC orientation is still towards small scale aquaculture applicable to remote communities, in particular *Kappaphycus* seaweed and tilapia farming. A project to trial the domestication of the native freshwater macrobrachium shrimp integrated with traditional farming of swamp dalo has been instigated in Vanuatu and Wallis & Futuna as a showcase for the concepts of integration and domestication.

Output 15. Feed formulation: Feed sourcing is a common bottleneck inhibiting the efficiency of the aquaculture sector. HoF urged SPC to coordinate regional efforts to promote the adoption of local farm-made feeds and facilitate the development of cost-effective formulated feeds, making maximum use of locally available materials.

Feed inputs is a common bottleneck for aquaculture and much international research for alternative sources of protein and farm operated mills is being undertaken and tracked by the section. Through an ACIAR funded mini-project the SPC has assisted in a baseline survey and nutrient analysis of local feed ingredients in PNG and Fiji; organised a feed formulation workshop; designed a feed formulation for tilapia and macrobrachium shrimp and ran feed trials at Nandruloulou Aquaculture Research Station in Fiji Islands; applied feed trials will be tested in Lake Yonki in PNG.

Output 16. Introduction and movement of aquatic organisms: Heads of Fisheries recognised that the unmanaged introduction and/or translocation of aquatic organisms is a continuing concern, particularly with regard to marine invasive species. The meeting encouraged initiatives by SPC and its collaborators to assist members to address this concern.

Aquatic organism introduction and movement is an issue that also affects fisheries, particularly the aquarium trade, but the aquaculture sector is where most of the problems currently lie, and the SPC aquaculture section has now taken the lead in this issue. A comprehensive pre-proposal for a biosecurity regime was drafted in 2005. So far it is unfunded – it would be a major commitment for any single donor – but there are promising indications and it may be possible to develop multi-donor support for this urgent initiative. Some specific project activities include a model Import Risk Analysis for (1) marine prawns imported from Brunei to Fiji, emphasising pathogen risks and (2) macrobrachium rosenbergii from Fiji to Cook Islands emphasising ecological (i.e. invasiveness) risks. The SPC is participating in the NACA Asia-Pacific Animal Health Working Group which is proposing to strengthen capacity for quarantine protocols. The attention of HoF is drawn to the important role that its predecessor, the Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries, has already played in the development and endorsement of certain regional standards for aquatic organism transfer and quarantine (see <http://www.spc.int/coastfish/Reports/IFRP/Intro/QTINE2.pdf> and <http://www.spc.int/coastfish/Reports/IFRP/Intro/introd.htm>) .

Output 17. Coastal fisheries management – the meeting urged SPC to pursue funding to enable all of the coastal fisheries management strategies, as agreed by HoF from year to year, to be effectively pursued. The meeting also pointed out the need to avoid confusion by integrating all Coastal Fisheries Programme sectional goals and activities fully into the overall Coastal Fisheries Strategic Programme Plan.

The Coastal Fisheries Management Section has been remarkably successful in developing a funding base for the implementation of the wide-ranging coastal fisheries management strategies. Funding to implement some of the strategies have been provided particularly by the Commonwealth Secretariat. Assistance in financing regional workshops were also provided by FAO, US Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council in Hawaii, and through the French Pacific Fund. Recently, the Government of Iceland has offered to assist in funding other regional training and national training attachments.

On the latter part of the recommendation, the appointment of a Coastal Fisheries Programme Manager and the adoption of the Ecosystem Approach to coastal fisheries and aquaculture as the primary objective of new Coastal Programme Strategic Plan sets the stage for more complete integration of the activities of the section with the broader programme. Regional Coastal Fisheries Management Strategies need to be reviewed, in order to both address the broader ecosystem approach, and to decide how the various activities to assist countries in applying the ecosystem approach should be cohesively addressed by the different sections of the Coastal Programme. The discussion at this HoF meeting will be an important part of this programme refocussing process.

Output 18. *FAD programme management.* In response to the specific needs expressed by several countries, the meeting suggested that SPC should produce a guide for the management of national Fish Aggregation Device programmes (monitoring, maintenance, funding options, design improvements including assessment of the efficiency of subsurface FADs etc), and seek the resources to assist members, on request, in implementing such programmes.

The Fisheries Development Section compiled a FAD manual at the completion of the FAD research project, implemented in Niue and the Cook Islands. This manual outlines a guide for the management and maintenance of FADs as well as the development of FAD programmes using a new and improved mooring and buoy system. The use of submerged FADs is also covered, however, there is very little information available on these devices. The Section continues to have the human resources for providing assistance with members' FAD programmes, but has been unsuccessful in attracting any funding for materials or FADs themselves. See <http://www.spc.int/coastfish/Sections/Development/FDSPublications/FDSManuals/NewFAD/NewFAD.pdf>

Output 19. *Options paper on maritime security.* The meeting asked that SPC collaborate with FFA in producing a joint briefing paper on the implementation of international agreements on heightened port security, suggesting options for implementation and mitigation of impacts upon fisheries. This report should take account of existing security-related measures covering international fishing vessels, including VMS, vessel registration and other compliance procedures already in place, and would provide a series of options based on the level of risk at different levels of fisheries, and taking into account any additional costs, including exploring the prospect of coastal states obtaining assistance in implementing additional fisheries-related security requirements from the leaders of the ISPS initiative. The meeting directed that any measures additionally recommended should not unnecessarily overburden low-risk subsectors, particularly purely domestic vessels.

In September 2005 the Regional Maritime Programme published a report completed by consultant Tony Martin on foreign fishing vessel security issues in the Pacific Islands region. Due to the lack of reliable data, it was difficult to quantify the extent of the security risk posed by these vessels in areas such as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, people smuggling, trafficking in persons, illegal immigration, smuggling of weapons and drugs, prostitution, money laundering and corruption. See <http://www.spc.int/coastfish/Reports/HOF5/FFVsecurity.pdf>

This report proposes specific measures to mitigate the security risks posed by foreign fishing vessels including wider use of existing information for monitoring vessels' locations and their activities and, in due course, an ILO-based system for seafarer identification. The measures, with some modification, reflect some of the provisions of the maritime security regime (the ISPS Code) for international merchant shipping that might usefully be applied to the fishing sector for border management control purposes.

On a broader front, it is proposed that the Pacific Islands region participate in efforts to improve the regulation of the commercial fishing sector by the adoption and implementation of international maritime safety and labour standards. There is also a

need for regional and national fisheries management organisations, maritime administrations and those having responsibility for border management initiatives, to further strengthen and develop their levels of communication and cooperation in implementing port state and flag state control in its broadest sense.

Output 20. CITES and fisheries – The meeting asked the Secretariat to keep Heads of Fisheries informed about any developments concerning CITES and fisheries, particularly live reef fisheries, and to maintain liaison on these issues with the CITES Secretariat and other relevant implementing agencies.

As far as we are aware, there have been no major developments in CITES issues of concern to HoF since the last HoF meeting. We have maintained informal contact with TRAFFIC Oceania, and occasionally review summaries of information that they compile on certain fished organisms of relevance to the Pacific Islands region. The marine species of the Pacific that are currently listed under CITES are all in the Appendix II listing. This means that these species are not threatened for extinction but are endangered. The trade of these species is legal but under regulations. In the source country, an export permit from the National CITES Authorizing Committee or for cultured Appendix II species, a captive breeding certificate is required. For importing countries, a CITES Import Permit is necessary if required by the law of that country. The list of species include:

- Invertebrates: all species of giant clams (*Tridacna spp.*), Queen conch (*Strombus gigas*), Pearl oysters (*Pinctada spp.*), and 2000 species of corals.
- Finfish: Northern bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*), Southern bluefin tuna (*Thunnus maccoyii*), Hump head wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*), Whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), Basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*), Great white shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*), and Sea horse (*Hippocampus spp.*)
- Others: Cetaceans, Turtles, and Sea crocodiles

For the recently listed hump head wrasse, an important live reef food fish trade species for the Hong Kong and Southern China markets is getting additional stricter legislation in Hong Kong (coming into effect within a couple of months) to support the CITES regulations. The legislation will require not only an import license (showing certificate issued by the source country and also showing that the species has been exported sustainably through Non-Detrimental Finding) but will also need a possession licence in Hong Kong, and a re-export licence which must be issued before re-export if fish are exported again (Note: A lot of hump head wrasse going into Hong Kong go through to China and for CITES purposes Hong Kong and China mainland are treated as two separate countries).

Progress against HoF4 outputs

Output **21.** - Heads of Fisheries signalled the need for more economic analysis of domestication prospects for individual members in order to implement the directive by Forum leaders to increase the return to Pacific Island countries from the utilisation of the resource within the region. The meeting also directed that the proposed EU/FFA/SPC “DEVFISH” project should build upon existing national fishery development plans, where available.

This is primarily for the attention of FFA, but OFP is also involved in the “bio” part of the joint bioeconomic model development which will be instrumental in helping countries make informed objective decisions about the prospects for domestication. The guidance of the meeting concerning the need to take account of existing national fishery development plans has been taken aboard by the DEVFISH project staff. DEVFISH is currently undertaking an economic evaluation of management strategies in the longline fishery, with case studies of four countries in the region. A study on the economic benefits of domestication of purse-seine fisheries and associated onshore processing will start soon. Following the completion of data collection and analysis, the project will be ready to provide assistance in preparing national action plans for the development of domestic tuna fisheries as requested by member countries.

Output 22. *Guidelines for assessing and handling social and other aspects of tuna industry domestication.* Whilst recognising the currently limited capacity of the SPC Marine Resources Division in this area, the meeting requested the secretariat to coordinate the compilation of information and options to assist governments in assessing and handling social and other aspects of tuna industry domestication that are often not fully accounted for in economic development plans, including social and health impacts on populations through associations between HIV/AIDS and STD transmission via the fishing industry. The secretariat was also asked to consider the feasibility of developing regional guidelines, to assist governments in managing these issues, and to pay particular attention to the need to develop methodologies for costing these impacts in development plans.

As recognised by Output 22 itself, SPC currently has limited capacity to address this clearly-identified regional gap, and has not been able to progress it, at least to the level of proposing regional guidelines for agreement by government. However, we understand that the new GEF project will enable FFA to help countries take better account of these social issues in industrial fishery development planning.

In previous years, the contribution of the Fisheries Management Section was mainly on Gender issues that formed part of National Tuna Management and Development Plans. However, the section now concentrates on community aspects of coastal fisheries.

Output 23. *Joint focal points for living and non-living marine resource issues* – Heads of Fisheries drew attention to the need for regional agencies working in different ocean sectors to develop a member focal-point contact mechanism that would allow more efficient communication between national stakeholders and regional agencies regardless of the primary focal sector of each regional agency. Linkages that enabled Heads of Fisheries to obtain access to regional oceanographic, and shallow-water mapping, services were particularly encouraged.

This meeting output was aimed at the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific, and at central government coordinating mechanisms. It is hoped that the Pacific Plan will go some way towards improving the efficiency and multisectorality of linkages between CROP agencies and government focal points, but it is likely to be some time before we see definite improvement on the ground. So far, the only element of the Pacific Plan to actually be funded is the coordinating unit.

Output 24. *Fisheries information networking* – The Meeting welcomed the announcement of the forthcoming EU-funded Programme for Strengthening Fisheries Management in ACP countries (ACP Fish II). The Meeting endorsed the recommendation of the project's feasibility study that the Pacific node of the ACP Fish II regional facilitation Unit be based at SPC headquarters. HOF 4 also noted that the Secretariat should consult with European Commission regarding the timeframe for implementation of the project.

The project has not yet been implemented. The feasibility study was completed in December 2003 and submitted that month to AIDCO (EuropeAid Cooperation Office), the part of the European Commission responsible for administering development aid projects funded by the Commission. AIDCO has been through an extensive reorganization process in the past 2 years and the processing of the ACP Fish II proposal has suffered considerable delays in being processed. In the meantime there has been a reallocation of approximately Euro 20 million from previous European Development Funds to fisheries and this sum has been added to the funding for ACP Fish II and the projects associated with it. As the original envisaged financial allocation was Euro 11.5 million, AIDCO has decided to appoint consultants in 2005 to advise on how to allocate the additional funds within the framework of the ACP Fish II proposal. It is expected that the project will start in late 2006 or early 2007.

Output 25. *Preferred options for continuation of SPC In-service Fisheries Officer Training Course* – The Meeting endorsed the revised course programme that had been implemented from the start of 2004. In considering the financial constraints associated with the withdrawal of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Meeting supported a proposal from the Secretariat to run the course every two years, with an increased number of participants (dependent on funding). The Meeting urged SPC to consult with established course donors to ensure the continuation of funding at a level that enables SPC to offer selected private sector focussed short courses in the years when the Fisheries Officers course was not offered.

As agreed at HoF4, the revised Fisheries Officers course is being run again in 2006 (ten trainees from seven PICs are currently studying at the New Zealand School of Fisheries). Despite the fact that the course was not implemented in 2005, the number of applications for the current course was very low, making it impossible to increase the number of trainees. A two-week course targeting the managers of medium-to-large size fisheries enterprises was run in October 2005.

The Fisheries Training Section also addressed the recommendation made at HoF3 in relation to the SPC Fisheries Officers training course (“*The meeting suggested that, given the uncertainty of funding and the need to maintain momentum, that SPC urgently investigate with the New Zealand School of Fisheries ways of ensuring delivery of the SPC Fisheries Officer training course for a further cycle, and that SPC investigate, with NZSF, USP and other institutions, mechanisms for articulating the components of the short course into longer-term diploma and degree courses, and of promoting capacity within the region itself to provide fisheries training*”). In line with that recommendation, and in the context of a restructuring of USP’s Marine Studies Programme courses, a recent meeting with USP and NMIT staff looked at options for the future delivery of Fisheries Officers training in the region. It has been agreed that, from 2007, the USP Certificate in Sustainable Fisheries would replace the existing SPC/Nelson Fisheries Officers course. The content of USP’s Certificate course will match as closely as possible the SPC/Nelson course curriculum which had been thoroughly reviewed and modified in 2002. SPC will continue to offer a practical fishing course (possibly on a bi-annual basis) to those Fisheries Officers requiring an exposure to the fishing techniques currently used in the Pacific region.

Output 26. *USP/SPC Memorandum of Understanding on Fisheries* – Heads of Fisheries approved of the improved collaboration between the two CROP agencies and the prospect of improved linkage and feedback between USP marine programmes and Pacific Island sustainable fisheries management interests that were signalled by the proposed MOU. The Meeting recommended that the “definition of current work areas” should be expanded to include the role of HoF itself in advising USP and SPC on regional fisheries capacity-development priorities.

USP has not yet formally agreed to the MOU, as there were apparently some unresolved questions about whether this could be a model to extend to agreements between other parts of USP and SPC, but the MOU continues to guide the relationship between the SPC Marine Resources Division and marine-related programmes of USP, and the process of developing the MOU itself was a very useful exercise in clarifying the linkages between our respective work-programmes. As may be judged by the number of USP staff present at every HoF, USP welcomes the advice of HoF on sectoral priorities.

Output 27. *Safety at sea for small fishing vessels* – Heads of Fisheries reviewed and endorsed the outcomes of the recent FAO/SPC regional expert consultation on sea safety in small fishing vessels. While recognising that sea safety is most effectively pursued at the national and local level, Heads of Fisheries welcomed external assistance, provided that this was very clearly targeted at the practical implementation of national initiatives. The meeting urged SPC to approach FAO and IMO for potential assistance to member countries to facilitate sea-safety strategies and improvements in sea accident data recording and analysis. The meeting also recommended that SPC establish a Sea-Safety Special Interest Group bulletin and provide information to its members covering electronic location solutions to improve search and rescue operations.

SPC has continued to play an active role in the promotion of sea safety in the region. Following requests from Kiribati, Samoa, and Fiji, staff of the Fisheries Training Section have facilitated national meetings of sea safety stakeholders which identified current priorities for actions. Subsequently, SPC has assisted those countries with the development of project proposals to FAO. As a result, an FAO TCP on sea safety is likely to be implemented in 2006 with some supportive input from SPC.

The Sea Safety Special Interest Group was established immediately after HoF4, with the first bulletin published early in 2005. The bulletin is distributed in both electronic and paper form. In 2005, samples of a sea safety comic book aimed at the general public and school kids was distributed to Fisheries departments. Wider distribution of the book to its target audience remains to be done and assistance from HoFs is necessary. Other sea safety resource materials recently produced by SPC include some awareness-raising posters in Samoan and Tokelauan.

The Regional Maritime Programme coordinated a Search and Rescue (SAR) training course in early March 2006, aimed at improving SAR operations in SPC member countries and territories.

Output 28. *International issues* – Heads of Fisheries noted that an SPC member representative, in the person of Glenn Hurry of Australia, will chair the next FAO Committee on Fisheries, and welcomed the enhanced opportunity that this appointment provided to discuss issues of regional concern within the international fisheries agenda. The meeting directed SPC to continue recording and reporting to member countries on issues arising out of international meetings and processes concerning fisheries, and asked for copies of the next draft of the Integrated Strategic Action plan under the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy to be conveyed to Heads of Fisheries as soon as possible.

SPC attended the FAO COFI meeting 12 months ago and noted that, despite the comparatively few member countries represented at the meeting, there were some very useful Pacific Island contributions to the global discussion. As yet there is no structured development of Pacific Island regional positions on issues at COFI, nor perhaps any issues currently on the table that require it, but SPC and FFA will continue to stand ready to provide regional secretariat support should that be needed within the global fisheries debate.

Regarding the Integrated Strategic Action Plan under PIROP – there has been no further draft of the Plan, and the whole exercise has been somewhat overtaken by the development of the Pacific Plan. It is SPC's view that the next steps under the umbrella of the PIROP should come under the heading of "Developing national ocean policies", and we would note that the Cook Islands and Fiji have both decided to take steps in this direction.

Output 29. General capacity building – It was proposed that one of the primary tasks of the SPC Director of Marine Resources before HoF5 would be, with the cooperation of national and territorial fisheries heads, to put together a comprehensive database of SPC member capacity, building on the information that will have already been collected for the Forum members. A questionnaire will also be circulated after HoF4 to provide some initial guidance.

DMR confesses to not having been able to achieve this comprehensive database of SPC member capacity. Although, at the time of HoF4, it had been expected that a great deal of information about existing capacity within Forum member countries would have been collected in order to develop the Pacific Plan, this turned out not to be the case, and a different methodology was used to identify the main capacity gaps and capabilities in the region. The fisheries information-gathering exercise could still have gone ahead separately, building up information about national and territorial fisheries institutional capacity from scratch, using a questionnaire approach, but the Director must plead lack of personal capacity himself here. It is one of his personal objectives for 2006 to make substantial progress on this work, and it will fit naturally with another job: the review of the long-term outcomes and impacts of SPC's work in fisheries over the past 50 years.

COASTAL FISHERIES REPOSITORY DATA MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

General principles:

In general, SPC understands that any information held in regional databases and repositories is held in trust on behalf of the member country/territory to which the information refers, or otherwise on behalf of the provider of the information.

In general, SPC shall make information available in as easily-available and timely a fashion as possible for the purpose of improving the management of Pacific Island fisheries and improving understanding of the basic principles underlying Pacific Island fisheries ecosystems and resource-use systems.

The following guidelines shall assist the SPC Director of Marine Resources in the application of the above principles. These guidelines may be modified by Heads of Fisheries by consensus agreement either in or out of session.

Guidelines:

“Detailed agreements”: The general principles above may be amplified by specific agreement between information stakeholders concerning the acquisition or provision of information, provided that the rights of all relevant stakeholders in that information are taken into account.

“Desensitisation”: Any quantitative information released will normally be aggregated, averaged, or otherwise stripped of sensitive components. Very specific, personal, or commercially-sensitive information will not be released or made available by SPC without the specific agreement of relevant information stakeholders.

“Statute of limitations”: all data in SPC databases that was acquired some years previous to request for release or usage shall be considered free of encumbrance and may be used or made available subject to the above provision for protection of privacy, commercial interest and other sensitivities determined by the Director General.

“Individual ownership”: Any information gathered by an individual member of the SPC staff during the implementation of the SPC work programme is subject to this policy and is not considered to be in any way the property of an individual member of staff.

“Joint ownership”: Cases where data is jointly gathered or acquired between SPC and a non-SPC collaborating researcher or institution will normally be covered by a specific agreement. In other cases it is generally understood that data resulting from collaboration would be processed and results made available to SPC members as quickly as possible. SPC would avoid any commitments which might not result in timely information release of benefit to the practical fishery management responsibilities of SPC members.

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“Cost recovery”: SPC reserves the right to charge for compilation, and for retrospective recovery of any data released from the database to a third party, if this would require resources additional to the agreed work-programme. Compilation of data to fulfil official requests by SPC members is by definition part of the work-programme.

Definitions and notes:

Information held in the repository may be either textual information (reports etc) held as “electronic documents” or quantitative information held in highly structured databases.

“Information stakeholder” means a person or entity to whom an item of information has value or significance. This might include the interviewee in a questionnaire survey, the owner of a boat providing catch returns, the agency collaborating or contributing to the collection or analysis of the information, or the government of the area concerned.

In this policy, it should be understood that “SPC” is the collective sum of its member countries and territories. Any “ownership” ascribed to “SPC” is actually ascribed collectively to member governments and administrations, and is ultimately at the collective disposal of those members.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE HEADS OF FISHERIES MEETING

- 1) These terms of reference are made by the SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting for the guidance of future meetings.
- 2) The intention of these Terms of Reference is not to be prescriptive, nor to limit the potential scope of discussion by future meetings within the purview of national and territorial fisheries administrations, but to provide a basic framework that will enable continuity between meetings, and define a common understanding of the obligations of the Secretariat and participants:

Purposes of the SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting:

- 3) The purposes of the SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting are to:
 - a) provide a forum for discussion¹ between SPC members of issues under the purview of national and territorial fisheries² administrations, particularly those issues not subject to discussion in other regional fora;
 - b) provide a bilingual interface for dialogue between Pacific Island countries and territories³ on fisheries issues of common interest;
 - c) provide guidance to SPC fisheries work programmes by generally communicating areas of national and territorial activity, interest, and priority, and specifically commenting on Secretariat plans and activities;
 - d) agree any regional fisheries issues or priorities for conveyance, as necessary, for the attention of other organisations and SPC governing processes.

Convention of the meeting

- 4) HoF is a meeting of representatives of SPC member country and territory fisheries administrations, but CROP⁴ and other organisations which work on issues of relevance to Pacific Island fisheries administrations are also welcome to contribute expertise and opinions to the discussion.
- 5) The Secretariat for the Meeting is the SPC Marine Resources Division

¹ Although the word “political” is not precisely defined, it should be noted that SPC is constituted as a non-political organisation, and fora may exist in other organisations for such discussions. It should however also be noted that the discussion of issues that some may deem “political” would not infringe on the SPC constitution, provided that no political decision is made by the meeting;

² It should be particularly noted that the “fisheries” sector includes both fisheries and aquaculture;

³ Note: SPC has 11 members (10 from 2005 onwards) that are not Pacific Islands Forum members, and four of these members do not have English as an official language;

⁴ CROP is the Council of (intergovernmental) Regional Organisations in the Pacific and includes the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the University of the South Pacific (USP), the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS);

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- 6) The venue for the meeting will normally be SPC Headquarters in New Caledonia, in order to avoid adding the cost of venue-hire and travel of interpreters, translators, and other members of the Secretariat to the cost of the meeting. However, the meeting may be held in any SPC member country or territory if these additional costs are covered.
- 7) Each meeting will approve its own Chair. The Chair of SPC fisheries meetings has rotated alphabetically between SPC members in series from the first SPC Regional Fisheries Conference in 1952, through 26 Regional Technical Meetings on Fisheries, to the 3rd Heads of Fisheries Meeting in 2003 and this rotation will continue to be the norm. However, the rotation may be interrupted if any member offers to provide the venue, and incremental costs, for the meeting. At any venue other than the SPC Secretariat, the host will normally provide the chair.
- 8) Attendance by national and territorial fisheries representatives at the meeting is entirely voluntary. However, provided budgetary provision is made by the SPC Governing Council either from SPC assessed contributions⁵ or from programme funding or special projects, travel costs or part thereof will be provided to enable the attendance of one representative from each island member country and territory to the meeting. The travel costs of the Chair of the meeting will be additionally funded.
- 9) The meeting shall be convened on a date that takes into account the convening of other meetings involving SPC member fisheries representatives and minimises inconvenience to the greatest possible number of members⁶.

Operating guidelines

- 10) Each HoF meeting will agree its own agenda and any presentations to be heard at the meeting. The agenda should be circulated well in advance, including proposals for presentations from other organisations, to allow adequate and reasonable time for feedback by HoF members on the content of the agenda.
- 11) A basic principle underlying the meeting is to maximise discussion and to minimise the number of agenda items and length of presentations. As a general guideline, individual presentations should each be less than 20 minutes in duration and be clearly relevant to the business of the meeting or the interests of the fisheries sector in the Pacific Islands.
- 12) Although HoF is a meeting of SPC member fisheries administrations, there is no formal restriction on the presence or speaking rights of any organisation. If any issues do require more restricted discussion, under exceptional circumstances a closed session may be convened by the Chair, or an autonomous subgroup may be convened outside the meeting to report either to HoF or to other processes as appropriate.
- 13) All discussion within the main HoF meeting shall take place through the Chair.

⁵ It may be noted that current practice of the SPC Governing Council is for funding from SPC assessed contributions to be provided for the convention of designated SPC sectoral meetings every third calendar year.

⁶ In recent years, the traditional date for the meeting has been in August – a date which minimises interference with the other main regional fisheries body: the Forum Fisheries Committee meeting, in May.

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- 14) Each SPC member delegation to the Heads of Fisheries meeting will be clearly defined by the SPC Official Contact, and any interventions or statements made on behalf of a member should be clearly seen by the chair to be authorised by the head of that member delegation
- 15) Working papers will be conveyed to HoF members by internet at least two weeks before the start of the meeting, except in exceptional circumstances such as the need to incorporate material arising from events taking place just before the meeting. All other papers will be made available on the meeting website as they arise, and all written papers will be provided to members on arrival at the meeting venue.

Reporting

- 16) The official report of the meeting will consist of a concise set of outputs, each agreed by a consensus of all representatives present at the meeting. These outputs will encapsulate the decisions and significant conclusions of the meeting, and may be for the benefit of other organisations, the international community, or the general public, as well as for the guidance of SPC. The Outputs of the meeting will be normally agreed as the final act of the meeting, but in unusual circumstances some may be agreed out of session by correspondence.
- 17) A record of discussion of the meeting, if required by any participant, will be provided in audio format. However, certain sessions of the meeting, particularly round-table discussions by members, may be summarised in writing and circulated after the meeting for comment and correction before any publication or release.
- 18) The Chair will produce a report on the meeting for the benefit of the SPC Governing Council. This report will normally be confined to issues of interest or relevance to SPC Governing Council processes, including any recommendations to the Council with significant core- or programme-budgetary implications or concerning administrative issues outside the purview of the SPC Director of Marine Resources, and will normally be presented to the Council by the Chair in person.

Out-of-session consultation

- 19) Although HoF is not a standing committee in the same way as the Forum Fisheries Committee, and although it is necessary for the Secretariat to maintain contact with SPC national and territorial fisheries representatives on a bilateral basis and for collective consultation to occur only during the Heads of Fisheries Meeting, HoF representatives may also need to collectively consult with the Secretariat and with each other from time to time. Modern technology has made regular intercommunication amongst 27 countries and territories relatively affordable, and an email list server⁷ will be maintained at SPC for this purpose.

Amendment

- 20) These Terms of Reference can be amended by agreement by any future SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting and are also subject to any framework provisions that are agreed by the SPC Governing Council to apply to all SPC Sectoral Meetings (such provisions currently include guidelines for the application of SPC's bilinguality policy).

⁷ The address is currently SPC-HOF@lyris.spc.int. This is a closed list and only includes HoF participants and their alternates. An email sent by any member to this address will automatically be copied to all other HoF participants and the Secretariat.