

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Seventh Heads of Fisheries Meeting

(28 Feb.–4 March 2011, Noumea, New Caledonia)

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HOF7 MEETING OUTCOMES

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The seventh SPC Heads of Fisheries (HoF) Meeting took place at SPC Headquarters in Noumea, from 1st to 4th March 2011.

HoF was chaired on behalf of Papua New Guinea by Mr Leban Gisawa.

HoF is a regional meeting of the heads of SPC member country and territory fisheries departments, or their deputies, covering the entire range of interests for which they have responsibility and on which the SPC Division of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) provides advice and assistance. As such, the HoF meeting plays a unique role in providing strategic guidance to both the Coastal Fisheries Programme (CFP) and the Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP) of FAME.

The following outcomes constitute the main points of consensus agreement among delegates that the meeting felt necessary to document, either to guide the management of the FAME work programme, to draw to the attention of other regional agencies and development partners, or to signal agreement on issues that require attention by members themselves, and to inform SPC CRGA.

SPC Heads of Fisheries:

SPC FAME Division Overview & 2010 Report

- responded favourably to the overview of recent CFP and OFP activities and the proposed work plans for 2011, noted the completion of the Future of Fisheries study, welcomed major new projects like SciCOFish, Devfish-2, and planned research on the impact of Climate Change on coastal and offshore fisheries, and noted the positive response and changes implemented by the FAME Division in response to the recommendations made in the 2010 review of the Division,

SPC FAME Sustainable Funding Mechanisms

- fully supported a classification of FAME services into ‘ongoing’ and ‘fixed term’, and endorsed the selection of ‘ongoing’ services as those requiring recurrent or sustainable funding,
- noted the need for significant increases in recurrent funding, both immediate and particularly in 2014/15 and recommended that more sustainable programme funding is a top priority,
- endorsed an approach by FAME management to the European Union to explore options for sustained financing of regional fisheries programmes under the next round of EU funding (EDF11), as part of the broader SPC initiative,
- noted that project funding often limits the availability of FAME services to some SPC members,

Coastal fisheries

- requested that deep-sea snapper fisheries receive a level of attention more in keeping with their economic significance and supported this becoming the subject of joint work by CFP and OFP. They endorsed efforts by SPC to seek funding to build capacity in snapper fishery management.
- recognized the work of CFP to assist with development of successful pilot projects in sport fishing as a sustainable new high-value use of coastal fishery resources with good potential in PICTs, and of new products like fish silage to utilize fish-waste from processing plants, noting the scope for transfer and replication of these projects in other PICTs,
- strongly supported the substantial amount of work being done by SPC in training on nearshore FAD deployment and FAD fishing technologies, recognizing that nearshore artisanal fisheries make a vital contribution to food security and livelihoods which FADs can further enhance by making these fisheries more accessible, reducing fuel costs, increasing sea safety, and diverting near-shore fishing effort away from reef fisheries resources,
- supported the continuing work of SPC to prepare and disseminate training and awareness-raising materials in support of sea safety for small boat operators, and called for an assessment within PICT contexts of recent advances in sea safety technologies such as tracking devices,
- called for economic analyses of various nearshore fisheries and mariculture activities like baitfish production, and noted with appreciation the recent appointment within CFP of an officer with expertise in conducting economic feasibility studies and business management training for fisheries and aquaculture,
- called for more attention to training in fish-handling to meet quality standards and in post-harvest processing for value-adding in fisheries and aquaculture, and noted with appreciation the imminent appointment of an officer for post-harvest development and exports,
- noted with appreciation the assistance of SPC, jointly with FFA, toward national reviews of fisheries legislation among PICTs given that such reviews are a major exercise, and requested that in future alternative approaches be tried (where appropriate) to partition such reviews step-wise into priority sub-sectors like statutory and legislative support for Community-Based Fisheries Management,
- noted the departure from SPC of Mr Steve Beverley and expressed appreciation for his many years of service to PICTs in the area of fisheries development.

Aquaculture

- reaffirmed that the decision on whether or not to introduce exotic species or new strains of previously introduced species for aquaculture is a national responsibility,

- noted the importance of considering carefully the potential benefits and risks of any such introduction, including an appropriate risk assessment,
- agreed that, for the time being and until more scientific knowledge is available, further introduction and spread of tilapia to countries and catchments where it is not yet established should be discouraged, and that a priority be placed firstly upon research to determine whether Nile tilapia introduced for aquaculture to areas where Mozambique tilapia is long-established will cause any significant new effects on biodiversity,
- agreed that there be review of the potential for the use of indigenous, rather than introduced, species for aquaculture, but affirmed that a complete prohibition on any new introductions is not consistent with international practices of food production,
- strongly supported the proposal to develop a regional framework for management of aquatic animal health and bio-security in support of sustainable aquaculture development,
- noted that fish feed is a key constraint to aquaculture development in PICTs and supported further work in this area.

Oceanic fisheries

- supported the work planned by OFP in conjunction with members on several emerging issues such as port sampling for artisanal tuna fisheries, tuna ecosystem modelling information requirements, and tuna tagging to support research on impacts of climate change on tuna distributions,
- supported the concept of Issue Specific National Reports (ISNRs) for providing advice to countries on issues of national interest and concern, agreed on the proposed approach for prioritising topics for ISNRs, and suggested that SPC consider including coastal fisheries issues within the ISNR framework,
- expressed concerns over the status of tuna stocks in the region, and the need for management action at the regional, sub-regional (PNA) and national level that augments WCPFC measures, and noted specific concerns about the potential for localised depletion of albacore,
- recognised the value of TUMAS for assisting with decision-making on tuna fisheries management and development, and supported the continued development of the TUMAS software,
- noted the value of the new National websites for assisting countries to produce reports for the Scientific Committee meeting of the WCPFC,
- recognised with appreciation the support provided by OFP in national-level fishery monitoring and data management, including artisanal fisheries, and endorsed the continued support and training in this area, including the introduction of new databases (e.g. TUFART) as they become available,

- supported the continued work from OFP on spill sampling to provide better estimates of species composition and size distribution of purse seine catches,
- acknowledged the importance of the OFP Stock Assessment Workshops for national fisheries staff to gain an understanding of the data and analyses underpinning stock assessments and to actively and effectively engage in WCPFC meetings,
- recognised the additional workload involved in completing 4 stock assessments scheduled for 2011, but noted that extra resources are to be provided by WCPFC so that the additional work will not adversely impact other areas of the OFP work programme,
- recognised the importance of observer training workshops in providing the required number of observers to meet WCPFC requirements, and noted the substantially large volume of observer data that has been generated by the increased observer coverage which is causing problems for data management, and the urgent need for additional resources to address this issue,
- noted the need for PICTs to provide additional support where possible for ancillary observer training courses (e.g. first aid), stressing the value of using national maritime institutes, to allow existing funds to be dedicated to training more observers, debriefers and observer trainers,
- noted the increased level of resources that are now available online but noted that local internet bandwidth needs to be assessed to determine its adequacy,
- noted the departure from SPC of Dr Don Bromhead and expressed appreciation for his many years of national-level support to PICTs,

Maritime boundaries

- noted that maritime boundary development is a country-led, multi-disciplinary (technical, legal, and diplomatic) and multi-stakeholder process of lasting sovereign importance that is critical and increasingly urgent not only for fisheries but for all marine resources governance, and encouraged SPC to be proactive in providing advice to PICTs on ways to accelerate national level processes for maritime boundaries delimitation,
- encouraged the support of fisheries managers and their respective governments for the processes to delimit maritime boundaries being run by SPC SOPAC Division and its collaborating partners and other national and international initiatives to the same effect,

Spawning aggregations

- recognized the general need for management of spawning aggregations of high-value reef fish through a range of measures that include mapping and seasonality of exploited aggregations,

closed-area or closed-season protection, and monitoring of spawning aggregations as indicators of high-value reef fisheries status and effectiveness of management measures,

CEAFM Workshop outcomes

- endorsed the approach to promote and facilitate interagency cooperation and collaboration at national and regional level to further develop legal frameworks in support of CEAFM, accelerate the introduction of suitable adaptive management approaches, and seek appropriate levels of resourcing at national level for CEAFM implementation,
- noted that the CEAFM approach will strengthen existing community-based management programs and facilitate improved engagement between Fisheries and Environmental Departments and NGOs, and articulated the need to engage with resource developers in other sectors when developing approaches to implementing CEAFM,

Fisheries training

- agreed that the joint University of Wollongong- SPC initiative for a Masters course in Oceanic Fisheries Management is suited to supply Pacific Island Fisheries agencies with upskilled staff and, noting both the difficulty for continued availability of fisheries staff for all course activities throughout the degree and the limited number of scholarship opportunities available for the fisheries sector among PICTs, called for scholarship opportunities to be explored and if possible expanded, and for such courses to be offered in-country via Distance Learning mode as far as is practicable,
- noted the continued commitment of the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology to regional fisheries training in collaboration with SPC, and their expanded range of facilities and training opportunities that include mariculture hatchery, sea safety, fish capture, post-harvest processing, fisheries observer, marine engineering and navigation.
- noted the consultation document tabled by the New Zealand Aid Programme announcing a Pacific Fisheries Training Programme proposed for the various countries that New Zealand engages with in the Pacific, about which feedback and comments are sought on its relevance to the Pacific,

Climate Change

- noted the update provided for the fisheries and aquaculture vulnerability assessment project through a series of presentations from lead authors summarising the key findings to date,

- considered the companion Summary for Policy Makers and in Discussion Groups reviewed an example PICT summary. The example was tailored to a single country (Solomon Islands) and groups were asked to provide feedback on the approach, the structure and the information presented for fisheries managers,
- supported the general structure of the example PICT summary and the level of information provided. Groups provided useful comments on improving specific content that was collated and will be used to improve the drafting of the Summary for Policy Makers,
- supported the efforts of the CFP in implementing the Monitoring the Vulnerability and Adaptation of Coastal Fisheries to Climate Change project, including the focus on capacity building,
- noted the progress made in assessing the possible impacts of climate change on tuna stocks and fisheries, and supported the initiatives to further enhance tuna and climate change modelling, including the collection of specific data on tuna tagging and tuna diet.

Presentations by other organisations

- thanked FFA and WCPFC for the continued close links and positive working relationship with the OFP at SPC, and noted the availability for short-term attachments of PICT staff to projects at WCPFC, and the possibility of attachment at Deputy Executive Director level for a period of up to one year,
- noted the proposed increased engagement by FAO in Pacific coastal fisheries and aquaculture stemming from PICT participation at FAO international fisheries meetings in 2010 and 2011, , requested FAO to increase dialogue with eligible countries to develop priority areas of activity for possible FAO support in the Pacific, and supported the proposal for SPC and FAO to jointly to develop a regional strategy along with other national, regional and international stakeholders to achieve better communication, prioritisation, coordination and avoidance of duplication for development assistance in aquaculture to PICTs.