

Information Paper 3

Original: English

## Progress implementing previous RTMCF action plans

The Third Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries is supported  
by the Australian Government and implemented by SPC



## Purpose

1. The purpose of this Information Paper is to outline progress made on implementing the RTMCF1 and RTMCF2 Action Plans.
2. One of the objectives of the two previous RTMCF was to capture the outcomes as agreed “Action Plans” for SPC FAME, SPC members, stakeholders and partners to implement. In reviewing progress against the two previous action plans it has become evident that the outcomes of the RTMCF need to be more clearly structured into very specific recommended actions, and be better targeted, especially now that the RTMCF is required to provide the SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting with clear outcomes and recommendations for their consideration (see *Information Paper 1: ‘Coastal fisheries and aquaculture – Regional governance framework, information flow and decision-making’*).
3. The RTMCF are asked to discuss and agree on the format for the RTMCF3 outcomes and actions.

## Action Plans – Progress since RTMCF2

### *Data repository and data storage*

4. An on-line data repository was developed in 2018 to assist in inventorying and storing information on coastal fisheries and aquaculture surveys, methodology and associated datasets.
5. The repository has been updated with metadata about recent surveys conducted jointly by SPC and country counterparts and from information collected by IT specialists during seven country visits in 2019 and this activity will continue in 2020. These corresponding datasets were backed-up and a copy held at SPC. You can contact SPC FAME if you need an account to access and contribute to the inventory of surveys and datasets for your organisation.
6. Four country visits provided the opportunity to update and restore connectivity of some servers that were sitting idle and re-enable these coastal fisheries databases.

### *Data dissemination*

7. The Heads of Fisheries agreed at the 9th conference that validated raw data from resource surveys conducted by SPC staff with country counterparts should become open access 5 years from completion of the survey. PROCFish/C and CoFish socio-economic survey datasets have been anonymised and transferred to the SPC Statistics Division for inclusion in the Pacific Data Hub microdata library.
8. Datasets for sea cucumber, giant clam and trochus surveys conducted jointly by SPC and country staff before 2015 will be published early 2020 in the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) and in the Pacific Data Hub, after a last quality check.
9. Countries, agencies and NGOs are encouraged to publish public reports and either actual data or metadata (to discover the existence of datasets) on the Pacific Data Hub and the coastal fisheries data repository.

10. Finally, country digital libraries have been established in five countries and populated with country specific documents collated from various sources, and which are not part of the SPC digital library (which only contains documents produced by, for or in collaboration with SPC).

### *Data governance*

11. SPC management procedures to ensure the availability, usability, integrity and security of data and services are being reviewed. The Pacific Data Hub platform currently hosts public data and information on SPC members and is in line with the SPC Privacy Policy. Data sharing agreements will have to be developed between all parties to regulate the use and exchange of data hosted by SPC.
12. The Pacific Community has been developing a web application called ReefLex, *Pacific Law and Policy Database for Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture*, to help users understand the legal framework for coastal fisheries and aquaculture management in 23 PICTs (22 SPC members and Timor Leste). As a legal research tool, it targets decision-makers, fisheries managers, specialists and researchers, as well as civil society. The application offers three main tools that allow users to (i) download the full text of laws and policies relevant to fisheries, aquaculture and coastal communities (about 1000 entries), (ii) compare regulations applied in each country to certain coastal marine species (e.g. size limits or closed seasons for groupers or sea cucumbers, or fishing gear restrictions), and (iii) access additional information and communication material, including 23 country profiles giving an overview of coastal fisheries and aquaculture governance in each PICT. This third tool is still under development, and graphic redesign of the website is underway to improve its usability. Information sources are acknowledged on the website, including synergies with FAO and USP, through their respective legal databases, FAOLEX and the Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute (PacLII).

### *Standardisation and simplification of data collection*

13. Efforts have been underway since RTMCF 1 to develop better systems and approaches to collection and storage of data in data-poor fisheries. While SPC members have agreed to establish a Data Standardisation Committee for coastal fisheries and aquaculture, there has been no consensus on its terms of reference and particularly on its membership. In addition, funding has not been secured at this stage for the establishment of such a committee. With *ad hoc* funding and based on informal expert communications, SPC has developed a methodology for coastal fisheries data collection in the Pacific that is currently being tested in country. The results of this new approach could be discussed in a wider expert consultation, funding permitting, for adoption throughout the region and possibly be formalised through endorsement by RTMCF and/or Heads of Fisheries. The expert consultation could also serve as a forum to define the ToR of a coastal fisheries and aquaculture Data Standardisation Committee.
14. Multiple reviews of fisheries data collections across the region have shown that too often the data collected is not sufficient to provide the detail needed to understand the state of coastal fisheries stocks. Regular, targeted data collection is absolutely pivotal to obtaining the necessary level of detail on what is being caught, how much is being caught, where is it being caught and how the fish stocks are responding. SPC's CFP has begun working with some countries to help design more effective and efficient fisheries sampling/monitoring programmes. This support encompasses introduction of e-data methodologies to improve data capture and storage processes. Re-design of market and creel survey programs to better capture patterns of fishery

resource use, and modification of existing reporting procedures to include more relevant information being collected from fishers. Continual training and capacity building for fisheries staff is also embedded in this support.

15. There has been a general recognition across the region that limited resources are hindering the capacity of coastal fisheries departments to collect quality data. To help improve this situation SPC's CFP has been working to simplify the core data requirements for obtaining an effective understanding of the health of coastal fisheries stocks. Abundance and size (length) at the species level have been identified as the most effective core pieces of data to be collected regionally for the long-term. CFP has been working on methodologies to enhance the ability of end-users to collect such data.
16. While fish sizes are already routinely collected in several countries, SPC's CFP has been trialling different methods and options for improving and speeding up the process of measuring, identifying and recording data from fish catches. A web/tablet system for regional use has been developed and trialled along with new methods for processing fishers' samples.
17. SPC CFP has been working with the SPC's Statistics for Development Division to ensure that the fisheries and aquaculture related questions included in national censuses can improve estimates of fish consumption, fish capture and aquaculture activity, most recently for the 2019 Nauru Mini Census.
18. Past Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES) conducted in the Pacific Islands region have under-estimated coastal fisheries production. In an attempt to gain better information, the SPC's Statistics for Development Division developed a new standardised HIES for the Pacific Islands Region in 2011. With advice from CFP, this new standardised HIES has additional questions on coastal fisheries resources. Unfortunately, even with this new standardised 'fisheries-friendly' HIES, estimates obtained often do not correlate well with other information sources. To interpret whether changes in coastal fisheries production from estimates derived from a HIES are due to changes in the rate of exploitation, other indicators of the status of coastal fishery resources, such as changes in the relative abundance and size of key species, needs to be collected. Of paramount importance is that all fish and seafood usage needs to be recorded for a particular household. There is also a need to ensure that fish and seafood that is given to pets and livestock, or wasted, are also recorded. If sampling only focusses on one species group, overall estimates of catch and harvest, consumption, gifting, and selling and buying will be underestimated. As HIES are conducted on a five-yearly cycle, it is also difficult to denote coastal fisheries production in the intervening years, even with adjustments for population increase, rises in inflation and changes in consumer price indices. If the emphasis on the use of HIES to determine coastal fisheries production is continued, strategic effort is required to provide validation of the results obtained from a HIES. One way to do this is to conduct socio-economic and fish landing surveys in the same areas at the same time as the HIES was previously conducted. Whilst there is no 'typical year' and there will be issues with disaggregating data from the overall HIES, a range of values obtained from other surveys could assist with proving if the results obtained from a HIES were reflective of what was actually occurring in the coastal fisheries sector. In part, this has been done through targeted and detailed creel surveys of fishers with results being used to calibrate the HIES survey questions and outcomes. The first major implementation of this approach has been undertaken across Kiribati where a HIES survey is currently underway.

19. The development of SPC's *Socioeconomic fisheries surveys in Pacific Islands: A Manual for the collection of a minimum dataset* was initiated at the 2003 HoF. This manual was further developed through the implementation of PROCFish/C and CoFish. To analyse and store the results of the survey data obtained from using this manual, a software programme, [SEMCoS](#) was constructed. The results generated automatically by SEMCoS are mainly based on average figures. Since its finalisation and public distribution in 2007, outside of its use by SPC, there has essentially been no usage of this manual by PICTs.

### *Gender and human rights-based approaches*

20. At the 11<sup>th</sup> HoF held earlier this year, the *Pacific handbook for gender equity and social inclusion in coastal fisheries and aquaculture* was launched. This handbook has five modules focussed on Gender, Gender Mainstreaming, Aquaculture, Fisheries, and Women in Fisheries. There are four additional modules being developed, these are focussed on Community Engagement, Coastal Fisheries Management, Livelihoods, and Oceanic Fisheries, and should be available by the 12<sup>th</sup> HoF (March 2020).
21. Under the PEUMP and MFAT programmes, Gender and Fisheries Assessments are being conducted. To date, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Fiji (inland aquaculture) and FSM have had assessments completed, with Cook Islands currently in progress. Future assessments are programmed for Tonga and RMI. These assessments will also involve training in Human Rights Based Approaches.
22. SPC, in collaboration with WCS, is preparing a legal study on gender and human rights in coastal fisheries and aquaculture. The study, which covers 6 PICTs – Kiribati, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, is funded under the MFAT Coastal Fisheries Governance Project. The objective of the study is to identify in national legislation any barriers and constraints to the implementation of gender and human rights-based approaches in coastal fisheries and aquaculture. The comparative study aims at providing options for addressing and removing those barriers and constraints in legislation, as a fundamental step in enabling the adoption of gender and human rights-based approaches.

### *Saving lives: safety at sea*

23. SPC CFP continues to conduct some sea safety training during FAD programme and fishing technology training. SPC no longer purchases safety grab bags for distribution. Due to limited funding, only minimal sea safety activities are currently possible.

### *Managing sea cucumber fisheries*

24. The Coastal Fisheries Working Group (CFWG) developed a *Call to Leaders: Most urgent actions required for sustaining or increasing the contribution of coastal fisheries to our communities*, which was reviewed by the 11<sup>th</sup> HoF and was presented to the Special Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting (July 2019), but it was not endorsed by the Ministers for transmission to the Leaders.
25. SPC's CFP under the PEUMP Programme has been undertaking sea cucumber surveys and training of staff in appropriate methodologies across a number of countries. The approach taken has been consistent with the theme of simplifying methodologies to ensure there is more efficient

and effective collection of data. Training and general capacity building has been focussed on providing the necessary help for initiating surveys with freshly trained teams continuing by themselves to complete more extensive sea cucumber assessments. Follow up mentoring, training and support is providing through short-term attachments to SPC and email exchange of documents and/or advice.

26. The recent listing of black and white teatfish species under CITES Appendix II has meant that from late August 2020, exporting of such species can only be done after a non-detriment finding (NDF) assessment has been made. This assessment requires detailed data on the status of the wild stock of these species. SPC's CFP has been providing advice to PICT's throughout the listing process and is preparing documentation to obtain support for further assistance to member countries who will undertake the NDF process.
27. As part of the PEUMP Programme, the SPC Fisheries Information Section worked on the production of animated videos to strengthen local capacity to manage marine resources and promote sustainable fishing practices: a six-minute educational video that details the survey methodology used to conduct independent assessments of sea cucumber stocks, and a series of animated videos that highlight information on habitats, nutrition, life history of five key marine species, including sea cucumber, and the methods used to manage them. Both tools are designed to be easily understood, using graphics, icons and voice-over illustrations. They will be available in English in December 2019 and will be adapted into local languages upon request.

### *Aquaculture and biosecurity*

28. A regional aquatic biosecurity action plan has been produced and is soon to be approved. The document provides a regional framework for the harmonisation, development and implementation of coherent aquatic biosecurity policies at both regional and national levels. The plan has four core objective areas and focuses on governance, improving best practices, strengthening implementation of standardised import risks analysis procedures and in training and cooperation. Details of the *Regional Action Plan on Aquatic Biosecurity* can be found in RTMCF3 Information Paper 5.
29. The SPC CFP continues to provide technical assistance to a number of member countries in updating national aquaculture development and management plans, as well as the development of commodity specific policies and strategies, such as pearls and seaweed. Capacity development continues to be provided to government and farmers in the area of feed, seed and broodstock management, with support to farm clusters and associations to strengthen community impacts, such as oyster community farmers in Fiji, tilapia cluster farmers in PNG and national pearl farmers association in Tonga. Additional support is provided to 12 aquaculture enterprises in mentoring and training and this spreads across six countries and two territories. Increasing interest in capacity development through south-south exchange programmes has demonstrated to be beneficial, especially on sea cucumber aquaculture where practitioners from different member countries were able to learn from each other and increase networking. Development of national aquatic biosecurity plans and capacity development to members has contributed to the regional approach to aquatic biosecurity. This includes the collection of live aquatic samples to test for known aquatic diseases to ensure countries are free from notifiable listed diseases. At the end of 2018, all 12 PICTs that were required to submit annual reporting to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), were up to date with their national reporting requirements. Strengthening

of national aquatic biosecurity standards has also enabled access to export markets for a number of countries.