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TWENTY-SIXTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES (Noumea, New Caledonia, 5 - 9 August 1996)

COUNTRY STATEMENT

TOKELAU

Introduction

Tokelau comprises three small atolls, made up of low lying islets of varying sizes, with a total land area of 12.2 square kilometres. The soil is generally infertile, made up mostly of coral rubble and sand.

The fishery resources of Tokelau are of great importance to the residents. Since they are the major source of protein food available, people are making extensive use of the resources in both the lagoon and the immediate surrounding ocean.

Fisheries in Tokelau comes under the Director of Natural Resources and Environment with only one Fisheries Advisory Officer implementing each project in collaboration with each of the Council of Elders.

Trochus

Trochus niloticus was transplanted to Fakaofo from Fiji and Cook Islands in 1986 and 1987 respectively. In 1989, *T. niloticus* was then introduced to the other two atolls, Atafu and Nukunonu.

Recent observations showed that the transplantation operation on Fakaofo has been successful, as juvenile trochus can be found in many places. On Atafu and Nukunonu (the latest transplantation sites), there is still no sign of juvenile trochus although evaluation surveys have been conducted.

To ensure that there is trochus on Atafu and Nukunonu, the department is planning a transplanting of trochus from the available stocks on Fakaofo to Nukunonu and Atafu some time in September this year. Both the department and the communities are monitoring this project very closely.

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)

In 1993 six FADs were deployed around Tokelau waters through funding from Tokelau's Project Development Fund (PDF) under the Forum Fisheries Agency, and technical assistance from the South Pacific Commission. In the meantime, two FADs have been lost, with one being recently replaced and the remaining replacement planned for September this year.

Giant Clams

A ban on the harvesting of clams for export was introduced by the Council of Elders as a response to the large quantities of *Tridacna maxima* and *T. squamosa* being sent overseas.

After an evaluation survey in 1989 to determine the population of clams in Tokelau, it was recommended that a site on each of the three atolls be conserved for nursery purposes. This recommendation has been implemented on all three atolls, and the clam population seems to be stabilising.

Resource Assessment and Fishery Management Planning

A request to the South Pacific Commission's Integrated Coastal Fisheries Management Project for assistance in carrying out a reef fish stock assessment is now awaiting implementation. Tokelau seeks SPC's confirmation as to implementation timing which was planned for May 1996. The aim of the project is to produce a reef and lagoon fisheries management plan for one atoll that would be based on traditional measures but backed up where appropriate by provision of more formal measures. After a trial period this could be adapted as appropriate to the other two atolls in the group.