

SPC  
CS9.2099  
REG  
1996  
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SPC/Fisheries 26/Information Paper 32  
3rd August, 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

## **SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION**

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

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SPC/FFA WORKSHOP ON THE MANAGEMENT OF INSHORE FISHERIES**

**RESOURCES - July 1995**  
(Paper prepared by the Secretariat)

#### **BACKGROUND**

1. The SPC/FFA workshop on Pacific Island Inshore Resources Management that was held in Nouméa from 23rd June - 7th July 1995 at the SPC headquarters was attended by representatives from all SPC member countries except New Zealand, Nauru and the Northern Marianas Islands, with additional representation from the Maldives, the Caribbean and various institutions including SPREP, ICLARM, JICA and the FAO South Pacific Regional Aquaculture Project. South Pacific nation representation at the meeting was funded by the UNDP/FFA/SPC National Capacity-building and Support Project and the meeting was organised by the UK ODA-funded staff of the SPC Integrated Coastal Fisheries Management Project (ICFMaP). The manuscript proceedings of the papers presented at the workshop were published in the SPC Integrated Coastal Fisheries Management Series, Volumes 11 and 12, and the narrative of discussion from the workshop is now available in pre-publication form as a local World Wide Web document on the Commission's computer network.
2. Although the workshop was not originally designed to formally agree any priorities for regional action, a number of points arising were considered important enough by South Pacific representatives to be endorsed in the final session, and it was requested by the meeting that these should be reported to the next SPC Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries by the Secretariat, as well as to the Forum Fisheries Committee and the SPREP Governing Council by their respective representatives.

#### **Recommendations made and endorsed by the workshop**

- a) A special interest group and newsletter on live fish export fisheries (including both fish for food and organisms for aquaria) will be set up under the SPC Fisheries Information Project. Bob Johannes and SPC will collaborate to edit the first issue.

*Secretariat note: This has been actioned and the second issue of this newsletter has recently been published. It has also raised considerable interest outside the region, particularly in Southeast Asia which is experiencing great problems with cyanide fishing for groupers and other live food-fish for export, and in the environmental community.*

- b) One of the priorities for research in support of the improved management of live serranid export fisheries is a practical estimate of the percentage of the stock that can be sustainably harvested.

*Secretariat note: This is a general recommendation for the guidance of fish biological research priorities, and we understand that action was taken during the 1996 International Coral Reef Symposium in Panama to begin addressing this issue.*

- c) In view of the likely dependency of recruitment and replenishment of some reefs and reef-fisheries from distant areas, the regional importance of different "sinks" and "sources" of larvae need to be assessed on a national basis.

*Secretariat note: This is a broad area requiring considerable fundamental research, and will hopefully be addressed by several agencies and countries under the International Coral Reef Initiative. The SPC will help to coordinate and collaborate in aspects of this work, which will have a great bearing on the development of coral reef fisheries management in the region, particularly any management plans that involve protected areas or reserves.*

- d) A priority for research is the development of rapid appraisal techniques to assess the potential and status of coastal fisheries stocks in general. The following are major needs:-

- i) the development of basic estimates of the area of fishing grounds ("suitable habitat" or "biotope") for different species in each Pacific island;

*Secretariat note: Again, this is a general recommendation for the guidance of research priorities, and some information was presented at the 1996 International Coral Reef Symposium in Panama which will improve detailed knowledge of reef areas, and will be incorporated into ICLARM's REEFBASE. However, such information is not yet available for use in practical Pacific Island fishery stock estimation, and it is still unclear if current extra-regional research projects will actually provide information of use in this area.*

- ii) the collection of existing and new information on catch rates and yields of different species under different levels of fishing pressure, using different gear, in different areas, to improve indicative baseline information on the way that stocks respond to exploitation;

*Compendia of available information on Pacific Island catch rates have been published by the SPC Integrated Coastal fisheries management Project recently, and will be compiled into ICLARM's FISHBASE. However, this information is limited and there is a great deal of work remaining to be done, particularly the derivation of rigorous experimental fishing estimates using defined standards.*

- e) All marine species introductions and transfers to or from Pacific Islands should be based on the guidelines agreed by SPC member countries at the 1994 Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries and endorsed by the subsequent South Pacific Conference (and available from SPC). In all cases the precautionary principle should be followed in guiding decisions, and in all cases the onus should be on the introducer to meet all the costs incurred by the national Government in making a decision whether or not to allow an introduction.

*Secretariat note: This recommendation was made by national representatives at the meeting for the guidance of member countries government officers to assist in decision-making, particularly when pressured by commercial or external interests.*

f) For largely export fisheries, such as trochus and bêche-de-mer, a comprehensive and up-to-date source of intelligence is needed on the status and forecast for their markets, particularly in East and South East Asia. This trade seems to be too small for international agencies to devote much effort to, but is extremely significant to many of the small nations of the Pacific and thus to regional agencies.

*Secretariat Note: The Secretariat would like some guidance from RTMF whether or not, in the absence of other initiatives, this is an issue that can, or should, be taken up by SPC, although it may also be covered by discussion of Working Paper 5 (Institutional Future of the Coastal Fisheries Programme).*

g) There is a need for a regional organisation to consider maintaining a register of international entrepreneurs and operators engaged in marine product exporting from the Pacific Islands, to improve the ability of national fisheries managers to appraise the likely compliance of companies engaged in commercial coastal fisheries;

*Secretariat Note: Again, the Secretariat would like some guidance from RTMF whether or not, in the absence of other initiatives, this is an issue that can, or should, be taken up by SPC, although it may also be covered by discussion of Working Paper 5 (Institutional Future of the Coastal Fisheries Programme).*

h) The possibility of developing a set of regional seafood quality standards should be investigated, and an appropriate plan of action for introducing modern quality assurance procedures, such as HACCP or QMP, for Pacific Island nation exports should be developed;

*The Integrated Coastal Fisheries Management Project, through the SPC Fisheries Post Harvest Section, is developing options and possibilities to address this recommendation. The issue is also introduced in Working Paper 5 (Institutional Future of the Coastal Fisheries Programme) as a more directed and formal programme.*

i) When addressing the sustainable management and development of coastal fisheries, the broader management aspects need also to be taken into consideration, preferably within the general framework of the Integrated Coastal Management concept.

Some of these broader aspects include, but are not limited to:-

- i) Habitat degradation or destruction
- ii) Coordination and cooperation with other sectors (including Government, the private sector and local communities)
- iii) The major rôle that women play in carrying out coastal fisheries in the Pacific Islands, and thus the need to assess their catches, take into account their impacts, and to harness their knowledge and community decision-making potential;
- iv) The concepts of co-management and governance

*Secretariat note: this was a general recommendation for the guidance of all organisations, both regional and national. The SPC Coastal Fisheries Programme includes these principles in all of its work and the Integrated Coastal Fisheries Management Project and the Women in Fisheries Development Section is actively addressing them.*

j) Pacific Island fisheries managers should always consider the possibility of the complete ban in their armoury of management tools, particularly if pre-emptive action can be taken in time to stop people investing in equipment. Candidates might include:-

- i) a ban on the use of any kind of underwater breathing apparatus for certain types of fishing;
- ii) banning the use of fishing methods that damage or reduce the carrying capacity of the environment;
- iii) a ban on certain commercial export fisheries, particularly those that take the same species as a local food fishery. Local subsistence nutrition, and the development of foreign exchange earnings through non-extractive uses of resources may be a better national economic option.

*Secretariat note: These were recommendations by national fisheries managers for the benefit of national fisheries managers, to aid decisions, particularly when under pressure from commercial or political interests.*

3. The recommendations are reproduced above in their final form, after several drafts and considerable discussion of the concepts and wording during this final session. It was stressed by the meeting that these recommendations were not necessarily for the sole guidance of the South Pacific Commission, but for all national and regional organisations of the Pacific Islands region to follow up or implement, as appropriate.

4. The representative of the Federated States of Micronesia suggested that all present would like to see the results elevated to a higher level of attention, and the opportunity given to all organisations to incorporate relevant points into their work programmes. Moses also said that it was not often that Pacific Island countries were able to get together to talk about inshore and national fisheries issues, since almost all of the regional fisheries meetings were concentrated on the management of the region's tuna stocks, and that it would be beneficial to hold a meeting of this kind regularly, say, every three years.

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