

Original: English

Paper reference:	Working paper 4
Title:	Aquaculture needs, priorities, and future directions in the Pacific Islands
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Summary/short description/key points:

The 13th Heads of Fisheries endorsed the process for SPC to undertake a regional assessment of the needs, priorities and future directions on aquaculture in the Pacific islands. The output from the regional aquaculture assessment and its recommended future directions and priorities would form the basis for consultations with members towards the development of a regional aquaculture futures direction. The process for undertaking the regional aquaculture assessment is now underway.

Recommendations:

Given that the process is underway toward a regional assessment of aquaculture needs, priorities and future directions in the Pacific islands, members are invited to:

- a) **Note** the work already in progress for a regional aquaculture assessment, in line with the 13th HoF Outcome 13 on future priorities for Pacific aquaculture development.
- b) **Endorse** the proposal in this paper that the expected output from the study will be presented at the 14th HoF for discussion, and that a draft regional aquaculture strategy will be developed by SPC and presented to RTMCF4 for review before being presented to HoF15 for endorsement.

Aquaculture needs, priorities, and future directions

Background

1. Emerging issues and constraints such as the global COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted markets and supply chains for most primary productions including aquaculture in most Pacific Island Countries and Territories. There has been a shift in focus from export to domestic markets within the Pacific region. Aquaculture businesses struggle and national food security needs and priorities have also changed and continue to change. In addition, the way SPC delivers its technical support to its members have also been severely affected. It is therefore timely to take stock of where PICT aquaculture is now, and what direction(s) it should take from here, to remain resilient and to meet the expectations of Pacific peoples.
2. FAME provides aquaculture advice, technical support and assistance to SPC PICT members in the region under Objective 3 of the current FAME Business Plan¹ “Support the sustainable development of aquaculture”, with the following sub-objectives: enhanced regional and national capacity in aquaculture policy and planning to establish clear priorities for aquaculture meeting current and future needs; provide technical and analytical support for aquaculture to support production and economic sustainability; enhanced management of aquatic biosecurity risks.
3. At the 13th SPC Heads of Fisheries (HoF) Virtual Meeting held between the 1-4 June 2021, Working Paper 5 (WP5) *Future priorities for Pacific aquaculture development* was presented. As part of this session, a technical working group session was organised for delegates to provide feedback on (i) current aquaculture activities that FAME should continue doing to support SPC members as the region transitions to the COVID-recovery phase in the next 1–3 years, (ii) key new directions in aquaculture important to members that FAME should be considering for the future, and (iii) broad topic areas in aquaculture that members suggest that should be addressed in the terms of reference for a regional aquaculture review. The 13th HoF Outcome:
 - i. Endorsed for SPC to address members’ on-going and immediate needs and priorities for the aquaculture sector.
 - ii. Endorsed the process for FAME to identify and prioritize the region’s medium and long term (5–10 years) aquaculture needs in the post-COVID era, taking into account the input from the breakout session.
 - iii. Supported the development of a new regional strategy, based on the identified medium – and long-term aquaculture needs, to guide and support members’ aspirations and build upon the region’s strengths and experiences.
 - iv. Agreed for a draft regional aquaculture strategy to be prepared for review by RTMCF4 and presented for endorsement by HoF14

¹ Donato-Hunt C., Opa T. 2021. Division of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems - Business Plan 2016–2020, version 3.2. Noumea, New Caledonia: Pacific Community. 18 p. (<https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/u85tw>)

4. A study is currently underway to assess the needs and priorities of the aquaculture sector in the Pacific Islands region, that would provide recommendations for future directions over a medium to long term (5–10 year) horizon with the aim to refresh and, if necessary, re-set the future priorities and direction of Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Programme's aquaculture advise and support to members through the development of a Pacific Regional Aquaculture Futures Strategy. Specific tasks of the study will undertake:
 - a) A review and assessment of literature and available reports on the aquaculture sector relevant to the Pacific region, the opportunities, the impacts and the issues.
 - b) Consultations with PICT fisheries/ aquaculture agencies, farmers, private sector and other key aquaculture stakeholders to identify emerging issues, innovations, or threats important to PICT members that the region should be considering in terms of medium and longer-term strategic priorities.
 - c) An assessment of the members' capacity involved in aquaculture, including challenges faced by the aquaculture sector in PICTs in terms of current capacity, supply-chains and markets, policy, legal, financial, technical, business skills and socio-cultural issues, public-private arrangements, and provide recommendations on how to address these constraints.
 - d) An assessment of PICT members' immediate and on-going needs that FAME could support, including specific needs as members transition towards the post-COVID-19 pandemic phase.
 - e) An assessment of the potential for sub-regional cooperative arrangements and/or centralised hubs to play roles that increase capacity and delivery of services in areas with commonality of needs among PICT members, such as identify aquatic biosecurity infrastructure and central distribution centres for broodstock including public private partnership facilities hat exists in the region and identify members who may have the capacity to undertake, and to benefit from, such roles.
5. Given the shorter timeframe between the 13th HoF and the 4th RTMCFA, the expected output from the study cannot be presented for review at the 4th RTMCFA. The expected output of this work will be a Regional Aquaculture Assessment report that examines the needs and priorities for SPC PICTs on aquaculture. The report would recommend a consultative process for development of a regional aquaculture strategy, propose what areas should be included in a strategy, and outline what the strategy would look like.

Recommendations

6. Given that the process is underway toward a regional assessment of aquaculture needs, priorities and future directions in the Pacific islands, members are invited to:
 - c) **Note** the work already in progress for a regional aquaculture assessment, in line with the 13th HoF Outcome 13 on future priorities for Pacific aquaculture development.
 - d) **Endorse** the proposal in this paper that the expected output from the study will be presented at the 14th HoF for discussion, and that a draft regional aquaculture strategy will be developed by SPC and presented to RTMCFA5 for review before being presented to HoF15 for endorsement.

Breakout Group questions:

1. What broad topic areas in aquaculture do you suggest should be addressed in an assessment of the aquaculture needs, priorities and future directions in the region?
2. In each topic area, identify emerging issues, opportunities and required support for its development among PICT members.