

## 2 Background

In early 2001 Asian Development Bank (ADB) expressed concern that the importance of fisheries to Pacific Island economies was not being fully appreciated by the countries of the region or by the donor community. Discussions with the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Pacific Community (SPC), and the World Bank led to a study (the Benefish study) to improve the accuracy of the estimates of the contribution of fisheries to national economies. The output of that study was the book “The Contribution of Fisheries to the Economies of Pacific Island Countries” (Gillett and Lightfoot 2001). Areas of emphasis in that volume include the following:

- Identifying the official contribution of fishing to GDP, articulating a simple approach for estimating fishing contribution to GDP and making estimates of fishing contribution to GDP for each Pacific Island country (the first Benefish study did not include aquaculture or freshwater fisheries in scope, and did not include the non-independent territories).
- Illustrating the major reasons for differences (official versus re-estimated) in the estimates of fishing contribution to GDP, and discussing the common difficulties found in estimating that contribution.
- Estimating volumes and values of the production from the four major components fishing in the region: coastal commercial, coastal subsistence, offshore locally based and offshore foreign-based.
- Providing summaries of the available data on the fisheries aspects of employment, trade, government revenue and nutrition.

In 2007 the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) produced a framework for engagement in fisheries-related development assistance in the Pacific region (AusAID 2007), which calls for the development of regularly updated and disaggregated information on the contribution of subsistence, small-scale commercial and industrial fisheries to the

economies of Pacific island countries. In late 2007 AusAID initiated discussions with the Asian Development Bank on updating the 2001 Benefish study. In early 2008 these agencies agreed, in principle, on the value of, and need for, a revision and expansion of the original work. A formal funding agreement between AusAID and ADB was signed in July 2008. Discussions between AusAID, ADB, FFA, SPC and the World Bank (the project partners) resulted in an understanding that the new study should be similar to the 2001 project: that is, the assembling of existing information by country on production (volumes and values) and the fisheries' contributions to GDP, exports, government revenue, employment and nutrition. ADB recruited a consultant for the project, and work began on the study on 1 August 2008.

Visits to collect information were made to most Pacific Island countries and territories (the non-independent territories were included in this Benefish study), and headquarters of the regional organisations in the period August to October 2008. A meeting of all project partners was held in late September. Country-specific information was assembled, analysed and written up in November and December 2008, and the main text of the study was produced in January 2009. The book (Gillett 2009) was printed and distributed by ADB in May 2010. A summary of that book appears in Appendix 1 of the present book.

In early 2015 discussions between SPC and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) resulted in an agreement to sponsor an update of the 2009 Benefish study. The same consultant was recruited, to ensure consistency with data collection and analysis. The fieldwork to collect information began on 1 August 2015, and was completed in early November. Country-specific information was assembled, analysed and written up from mid-November 2015 to late January 2016. The main text of the study, including the cross-country analysis, was produced in February 2016. Editing of the text at SPC commenced in January 2016.

One of the principles in writing this second edition of the Benefish study of fisheries in Pacific Island countries and territories was that the categories of data and methodology should remain consistent with the 2009 first edition – and with the previous edition from 2001 that did not include territories – to enable comparison between the three studies. The 2009 edition separated the countries and territories to enable easier comparison. This ordering format has been maintained in this second edition. Style and format conventions have been generally preserved between the first and second editions.