

Pacific Islands fisheries observers

Sixty-seven fisheries observers were trained in 2014 by SPC with financial support from the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency. National training courses were conducted in a number of countries and one sub-regional training was held at the Vanuatu Maritime College for Fiji, Nauru, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. A national training was held in early 2014 for the Marshall Islands national fisheries observer programme. Refresher training courses were conducted in Tonga and Tuvalu, and an upgrade training was conducted for Nauru and Solomon Islands.

Fisheries observer basic training runs for seven weeks, two weeks of which include general training in sea safety, basic first aid, firefighting, occupational health and safety, and restricted radio communication. Another five weeks of training focus on fisheries observer professional development. The basic training enables new recruits to undertake all the current basic tasks that a certified Pacific Islands Regional Fisheries Observer (PIRFO) is expected to carry out on either a purse-seine or longline vessel. It includes a module on the basics of fish biology and a module to teach how to raise awareness among fishermen and other possible tag finders about the importance of recording and filling out the correct information on tag recovery forms. Making sure that found tags are returned is important, but of little use if the information provided with the tag is incorrect. Staff of SPC and country PIRFO trainers deliver the five-week training, while colleges and maritime schools conducted the two-weeks training.

More information on PIRFO training and certification can be found at: <http://www.spc.int/oceanfish/en/certification-and-training-standards>

Observer refresher training

This is an extra training that gets new observers up to speed with new forms and new sampling protocols. Refresher training can be short or long, depending on how much the coordinator and trainers want to cover. A refresher training should be discussed with regional experts in case there is an opportunity to introduce updates, and so that they can be involved in coordinating training activities and ensuring consistency among programmes.



Glen English (SPC Observer Training and Support Officer) demonstrates how to identify fish and fish organs during a biological sampling session.

Observer gear-type upgrade training

Occasionally, usually because of time and resource constraints, a Basic Training on a single gear type may be delivered. The resultant Observer Certificate should reflect this (e.g. Certified to work on longline vessels only). In such cases, an Upgrade Training may also be delivered later to ensure that observers can then have their limited certificate upgraded to an “all-gear types” certificate.

For more information:

Siosifa Fukofuka
 Observer Training and Support Officer
 (EU-SciFish Project), SPC
siosifaf@spc.int

2014 PIRFO training.

Type of training	Fiji	Tuvalu	Samoa	Tonga	Vanuatu	Nauru	Marshall Islands	Solomon Islands	America Samoa
Basic	2	6	1	1	2	1	14		1
Refresher		12		11					
Gear-type upgrade						4		12	