

The aquatic biosecurity component of the ‘Sustainable Pacific aquaculture development for food security and economic growth’ project meets success

The New Zealand funded project ‘Sustainable Pacific aquaculture development for food security and economic growth’, which was implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC), was launched in June 2016. It has a specific component of aquatic biosecurity and aquatic animal health management that includes the development and update of import and export standards and requirements for live aquatic organisms and their products. The first results within the framework of the implementation of this component are becoming visible, as shown by two successful examples from Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Vanuatu, which are presented here.

Improvement of the National Quarantine Authority’s capacities on aquatic biosecurity to facilitate access to the Australian market for fishery and aquaculture products from Papua New Guinea

In January 2017, the National Agriculture Inspection and Quarantine Authority (NAQIA) of Papua New Guinea requested the technical support of SPC in order to assist with the development of their capabilities in aquatic biosecurity, aquatic animal health management, and import and export standards and requirements for live aquatic animals and their products.

Thanks to the actions carried out in these matters, and through collaboration with PNG National Fisheries

Authority and the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program (PHAMA), the doors have been opened to possible exports of crustaceans of various species (from capture fisheries in first instances) to Australia.

In 2017, NAQIA carried out an evaluation of the sanitary status of the stocks of wild and domesticated crustaceans, based on the evaluation of pathogens of mandatory declaration for the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). The results of this evaluation have been extremely positive and led to the development of an epidemiological surveillance programme and strict national aquatic biosecurity measures.

Thanks to these measures, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources of Australia has taken the decision to evaluate the possibility of importing fresh and frozen crustaceans from several fisheries export companies of PNG.



The development and implementation of an epidemiological surveillance programme in Papua New Guinea will assure a high health status of farmed and wild aquatic stocks (image: Ruth Garcia-Gomez).

If possible, it would bring great benefits for fishers, producers and exporting companies in the future. And, it already confirms the importance of NAQIA's role and responsibilities in the field of aquatic biosecurity.

This action is being completed nowadays with the development and implementation of an epidemiological surveillance programme that is based on Australian requirements.

Development of a new regulation on crustacean imports in Vanuatu

In January 2017, SPC was approached by the Vanuatu Biosecurity Agency for technical assistance in the domain of marine biosecurity.

There is only one prawn farm located in Vanuatu nowadays, which produces around 120 tonnes per year that are destined for export markets such as Europe and Japan (60–70% of production) and to the local market (30–40% of production). The Government Agency 'Biosecurity Vanuatu', under the Ministry of Agriculture, estimated important to evaluate the biosecurity hazards that may affect this activity.

During 2017 and early 2018, SPC carried out a first screening of the prawn farm, followed by an epidemiological surveillance programme for diseases of mandatory declaration for prawns. The list of diseases that were tested was based on the list that has been established by OIE.

The epidemiological surveillance programme demonstrated that Vanuatu is free of all diseases of compulsory declaration for crustaceans (OIE notifiable diseases), which gives it a great comparative advantage over other producing countries.

To protect this advantage, and, therefore, to avoid possible risks of entry of exotic crustacean diseases into the country, the National Biosecurity Agency of Vanuatu has decided to develop a new, stricter legislation on the importation of live and processed crustaceans.

While reducing possible risks of entry of exotic pathogens that are not present in the country, this legislation will probably reduce competition from imported crustaceans and, therefore, in a way, will promote and encourage the development of the local aquaculture sector.

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Prawns produced in this Vanuatu farm are free of all diseases of compulsory declaration for crustaceans (image: Ruth Garcia-Gomez).