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Title:	Transforming aquaculture in the region through the Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy
Author(s):	Timothy Pickering, Andrew Smith

Summary:

This paper updates delegates about the next steps in the development of a new Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy, based on identified medium- and long-term aquaculture needs, to guide and support members' aspirations for aquaculture and build upon the region's strengths and experiences.

The updates presented here cover matters of process and funding to develop the Strategy and suggest the scope of the Strategy itself.

Recommendations:

Members are invited to:

- a. *confirm* the revised process set out in Appendix 1 to develop the new Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy, incorporating the guidance provided by delegates during and after HoF14, and
- b. *endorse* the tentative Goal and Objectives suggested in the Regional Aquaculture Assessment (IP12 of HoF14) that will (among other sources) inform the consultations with members and stakeholders towards the development of a Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy.

## Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to update delegates about the next steps in the development of a new Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy, based on identified medium- and long-term aquaculture needs, to guide and support members' aspirations for aquaculture and build upon the region's strengths and experiences.
2. The updates presented here cover matters of process and funding to develop the Strategy, and the broad scope of the Strategy itself.

## Process and funding

3. In WP6 of HoF14 in 2022, delegates were presented with a proposed process and timeline to develop and finalise a mid- to long-term Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy for the Pacific Islands region. Delegates discussed the proposed process in a Break-Out Group session (BOG6), and provided SPC FAME with comments and amendments.
4. Taking into account the guidance provided by HoF14 delegates, the text of the proposed process has been revised. It is presented here in Appendix 1 for final confirmation by delegates.
5. A further decision of HoF14 is that the output from the Regional Aquaculture Assessment (IP12) and its suggested future directions, objectives, priorities, and processes, will (among other sources) inform the consultations with members and stakeholders towards the development of the Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy.
6. At the Third Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting RFMM3 held on 25 August 2022, Ministers:
  - a. “commended the progress on developing the process and timeline for a Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy with a focus of ensuring that some of this potential is realised”;
  - b. “highlighted the need for the strategy to consider aquatic biosecurity, increasing resilience by decreasing dependence on imported goods and materials used in the sector, learning from other regions with successful aquaculture, and the role of the private sector in accelerating progress”, and;
  - c. “endorsed the need for a regional approach to developing aquaculture, and noted that this work is important in implementing blue economy elements of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent”.
7. SPC FAME has been canvassing possible options for funding to support the Strategy formulation process, which involves stakeholder consultations at national, sub-regional and regional levels. The scale of this exercise is likely to be similar to that for the Scaling Up CBFM Framework for Action developed during 2021, while noting that some COVID-19 travel limitations still remain in some places and that travel costs have greatly increased as a result of the pandemic. Only a limited amount of funding is available within SPC FAME core,

programme and project budgets. Approaches are being made to FAME's donor partners for supplementary funding.

## Scope

8. One of the objectives of the Regional Aquaculture Assessment (IP12 of HoF14) was to propose how a regional aquaculture strategy could be developed and what it might look like. From the investigations undertaken for the Assessment, an overall 'working' Goal for the sector (the "why") and a series of 'working' Objectives (the "how") which will contribute towards the achievement of this Goal, were proposed.
9. As the Assessment points out, it is essential that the suggestions for the 'working' Goal and Objectives be regarded simply as a starting point for the Strategy. They are intended to be reviewed and further refined by the consultative process that aims to engage, understand and incorporate the comments and concerns of the region's primary aquaculture stakeholders – those who *do* aquaculture. It is necessary to recognise the nature of aquaculture in the Pacific region, in particular, to acknowledge the importance of:
  - a. Community-based aquaculture (often in conjunction with CBFM);
  - b. land or coastal based small-scale aquaculture for food security and income;
  - c. commercial aquaculture (with the main motivation being profits), and;
  - d. reseeded and restocking.
10. The Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy is intended to be a strategy for Pacific aquaculture in its entirety. The scope of the Goal and Objectives, the issues, and the actions identified to address them, will be wider than SPC FAME's specific mandate of providing members with technical and policy advice in aquaculture.
11. In the Regional Aquaculture Assessment, it was suggested that the working Goal and Objectives put forward as a basis for the Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy consultations be stated as follows:

*Goal:*

To increase the contribution by sustainable aquaculture to local, national and regional food systems supporting food security and health, economic growth and trade.

*Potential priority objectives:*

- To mainstream aquaculture into the economic and social development agendas of PICTs.
- To increase aquaculture production of edible and non-edible aquatic products for income and food security in the commercial, community and small holder subsectors.
- To improve capacity in the aquaculture sector.

- To improve biosecurity in the region.
  - To assess the effects of climate change and other natural disasters in the region and develop outline plans for mitigating measures.
  - To improve market access and supply chains.
  - To establish regional cooperative institutional frameworks.
  - To improve quality of post-harvest products.
  - To mainstream cross cutting issues such as health, environment and gender in the whole aquaculture value chain throughout the region.
12. An Information Brief can be prepared to inform stakeholder consultations and to assist them in defining and refining the scope of the Strategy. Background information can be summarised about aspirations and expectations for aquaculture in the Pacific. This can start from Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, and include the various international and national instruments which prescribe ways for aquaculture to contribute toward the SDGs through the activities of governments, the private sector, and communities. This will set the scene for a process to find out what the vision is that drives Pacific governments, private sector and communities to engage in aquaculture, and how to achieve it.

## Recommendations

13. It is recommended that delegates:
- a. *confirm* the revised process set out in Appendix 1 to develop the new Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy, incorporating the guidance provided by delegates during and after HoF14, and
  - b. *endorse* the tentative Goal and Objectives suggested in the Regional Aquaculture Assessment ([IP12 of HoF14](#)) that will (among other sources) inform the consultations with members and stakeholders towards the development of a Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy.

## Appendix 1

Process to develop a Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy, revised with guidance provided by HoF14 delegates:

1. The output from the Regional Aquaculture Assessment and its suggested future directions, objectives, priorities, and processes, will (among other sources) inform the consultations with members and stakeholders towards the development of a Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy.
2. Below is the process to further develop and finalise a mid- to long-term Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy for the PICTs, to be implemented in conjunction with regional and international institutions and national development partners:

Process:

- a. SPC FAME presents HoF with the proposed process and timeline for development of the Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy, for discussion, amendment, and confirmation by members.
- b. Funding and the support of donor partners is sought by SPC, based on HoF decisions.
- c. SPC to initiate the process by contacting fisheries departments in PICT governments and administrations, to advise as to the next steps which are:
  - i. initial consultations undertaken virtually with individuals in aquaculture departments and divisions;
  - ii. agreement sought (and obtained) for in-country needs and direction analysis for the Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy and appointment of a government focal point for stakeholder consultations in each member.
  - iii. identification of key stakeholders, both primary and secondary, carried out by focal point/s with SPC (brainstorming sessions).
- d. Consultations with stakeholders. The member focal point/s, in conjunction with SPC FAME, will review prevailing circumstances nationally, then select from the range of available options to design a cost-effective and supportable consultation process in which key stakeholders are adequately represented.
- e. Three sub-regional workshops (hybrid in-person/virtual format to ensure inclusiveness) convened in geographically central locations to consolidate the results of the in-country consultations, and to involve sub-regionally based secondary stakeholders.
- f. The results of the three sub-regional workshops are consolidated by SPC into a Draft Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy which is distributed to all PICTs for further comment.

- g. Review and validation by members of the updated draft Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy, by distribution of the draft document to all PICTs after comments from (ix) above have been addressed by SPC and further adjustments made to the Draft Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy document as necessary.
- h. Draft Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy and a supportive Draft SPC Pacific Regional Aquaculture Policy Brief are distributed to all SPC members for them to further distribute internally to all stakeholders, for comments as appropriate, which are incorporated in the final draft documents.
- i. Draft Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy and a supportive Draft SPC Pacific Regional Aquaculture Policy Brief are presented to HoF meeting for final review and approval.
- j. The Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy and the supportive SPC Pacific Regional Aquaculture Policy Brief, approved by HoF, are presented to the Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting for endorsement.
- k. The Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy is launched throughout the region with media coverage and publicity.
- l. Members proceed to implement the Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy, assisted by regional institutions and partners.