THE FISHERIES AND MARINE RESOURCES SECTOR OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Overview of the fisheries and marine resources sector

Papua New Guinea has a coastline approximately 17,000 km long. Deltaic flood plains and barrier lagoon complexes extend for 4,250 km, whereas the islands and atolls account for 4,180 km. The total shelf area, to a depth of 200 m, is approximately 7.4 million hectares.

Currently, it is estimated there are 1,762 verified fish species in Papua New Guinean waters and 80 more that are noted but have not been verified. The majority of these species are marine.

Sedentary marine resources are an important part of the subsistence and artisanal fisheries of Papua New Guinea. Some of these species, such as beche-de-mer, trochus and oysters, are increasingly being exploited for commercial purposes.

The pelagic fisheries in Papua New Guinea waters are relatively diverse and productive. A number of shrimp and lobster species are also important elements of the artisanal and commercial fisheries. Due to the small coastal population and the low level of industrialisation in the coastal zone, marine pollution problems in Papua New Guinea are not a real concern at this time.

The coastal and offshore waters of Papua New Guinea contain a large variety of fishery resources. These resources support a number of fishing activities, including a large-scale distant-water tuna fishery and smaller domestic operations for prawn, barramundi, lobsters, pelagics and sedentary resources. Inland waters are generally much less productive and support relatively small fisheries, primarily for tilapia, carp and freshwater prawns.

There is no domestic tuna fishery in Papua New Guinea at present but investment proposals are with the Government for consideration. Most of the tuna caught in Papua New Guinea is taken by distant-water fleets from the United States of America, South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines, using purse-seine boats. The South Pacific Commission estimates that approximately 300,000 t of tuna is caught in PNG waters each year.

Fisheries administration and functions

The creation of the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources (DFMR) [now National Fisheries Authority (NFA)] and the National Forest Authority out of the former Department of Primary Industry was in line with the Government policy to promote economic development, in particular the renewable resource sector.

This could not be achieved under the former Department of Primary Industry, as it was difficult for fisheries and forestry to be given priority in terms of policy development and implementation, as well as the allocation of funding for programmes, due to the size of the agriculture sector. Their creation was a move by the Government to give more recognition and priority to the renewable resource sector.

The Gazettal Notice of 31 December 1986 which formally established the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources listed a range of functions for the Department, covering legislation, development, research, resource management and liaison requirements.

There are provincial fisheries divisions within the provincial governments and their programmes are concurrent with these of DFMR.

DFMR interacts with the provinces only in policy and programme implementation. While there is a need for policies and programme implementation to be compatible,
prioritisation and allocation of annual budgets lies within the responsibility of provincial governments.

DFMR has assisted by establishing Research, Coastal Management and Surveillance Stations to enhance relevant activities at the provincial level. The only formal link with provinces is through the annual meeting of the National Fisheries Council. Various types of assistance have been requested of DFMR through the Council, but a formal request needs to be made by the Provincial Government concerned before DFMR can provide assistance.

The Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources is currently made up of three Divisions and nine Branches. It is headed by a Secretary who is appointed by the National Executive Council (NEC). Responsible to him is a Deputy Secretary who is appointed through the normal Public Service selection process, and who is directly responsible for the general administration of the Division and Branches.

Medium term objective

In the medium term, beyond 1996 the fisheries sector will aim at optimising the economic development of Papua New Guinea through the exploitation of its fisheries resources; strengthening the administration of the sector; and ensuring that fisheries management is carried out in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

The strategies and programmes of the Department are based on development priorities and recommendations identified by past studies on the fisheries sector; the major policy, legal and administrative reforms adopted as a result of the creation of the National Fisheries Authority and its approved functions; production of a set of revised policy statements; the approval of the Fisheries Act 1994 and the Fisheries Regulations 1995; and new policies for domesticking the tuna industry in PNG.

The key programmes which to be undertaken include developing a local tuna industry; enabling artisanal fisheries development (especially small enterprise development; augmenting the production capacity of inland river systems through stocking; maximising the rent from the distant-water tuna fisheries; and strengthening the institutional capacity of the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources to make it more client-supportive.

Programmes and implementation

1. Major policy initiatives and institutional capacity building

The Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources has undertaken major, legal, and administrative reforms to establish future directions for the fisheries sector. The policy initiatives include the production of a new set of Fisheries Policies for the fisheries sector, the revision of the Fisheries Act and Fisheries Regulations and approval by Government to establish the National Fisheries Authority.

1.1 Establishment of National Fisheries Authority

In November 1993, the Government approved the establishment of the National Fisheries Authority, which will take over the existing functions of the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources. The decision to establish the National Fisheries Authority was a political one, taken in line with the Government’s privatisation policy and the present trend in other renewable resources sectors.

The Fisheries Act 1994 formally establishes the National Fisheries Authority, defines its objectives and functions, and also specifies a set of fisheries management principles which the Minister and the Authority are required to take into account. It also deals with other basic legal matters, as well as detailing the nature of the relationships between the Authority, the Minister and NEC.

The Authority will be a non-commercial statutory organisation and will still be subject to normal Government regulation and supervision. Its existence should enhance consultation, cooperation and responsibility-sharing between national- and local-level government and between government, industry, resource-owners and special interest groups.

The establishment of the Fisheries Authority will concerns about the effectiveness of DFMR and the need to make the body more efficient, accountable and directly responsive to the needs of the provinces and the fishing industry.
The Authority will maximise Papua New Guinean participation in the fishing industry by facilitating commercial investment by national companies and citizens and promoting the wise use and development of fisheries resources as a renewable asset.

1.2 Administrative functions of the National Fisheries Authority (NFA)

The Authority, the Authority will give advice to the Minister on policy, licences and other matters relating to fishing. The Authority is also required to give effect to any policy directive by the Minister and NEC on the development, management and use of Fisheries and marine resources.

The Authority will oversee the administration and enforcement of the Fisheries Act and any other legislation pertaining to fisheries matters, and of any fisheries policy approved by NEC. These duties were previously carried out by the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources.

The Authority is responsible for drawing up relevant policy documents, such as fishery plans, for specific fisheries, and fisheries policy and strategy for the long-term development of the fisheries sector. These fisheries development plans are submitted to the Minister for approval.

Based on these, the Minister, in consultation with the Authority, then draws up Licensing Guidelines for endorsement by the NEC. The Licensing Guidelines comprise the primary statement of government policy regarding the licensing of fishing and related activities under the Act.

1.3 Fisheries policies and plans

The new fisheries policy includes new Government initiatives on industrial fisheries domestication, as well as new regional initiatives to better manage and develop the fisheries resources.

The major emphasis of the policy is an industrial and commercial fisheries development, with the view that industrial and commercial fisheries provide the infrastructure for small- and medium-scale fisheries development.

The policy also reflects the concept of sustainability and resource management as the key element for exploitation of fisheries resources. During the preparation of the policy, extensive discussions were held at the National Fisheries Council level and with the private sector and NGOs.

The Department is currently preparing a Five-Year Corporate Plan which will set the basis for priority programmes for implementation. In addition, an annual programme document, which will provide annual work programme and budgetary allocations, will be produced annually.

Fishery resource plans for the harvesting of specific fisheries will also be prepared to ensure that there is long-term sustainability of the resources. All this will be undertaken in the medium term to assist in effectively monitoring the progress of the programmes undertaken by the Department.

1.4 Fisheries Act and Fisheries Regulation

The 1994 Fisheries Act takes into account new developments in the management of modern-day fishing activities; new technology; economics and marketing trends; and a whole wave of new international and regional conventions. The Act establishes the administrative structure for the Authority and deals with the important aspects of regulating fishing activities, mainly commercial fishing activities in Papua New Guinea.

The Fisheries Regulations which provides the details of a comprehensive licensing management system, also specifies new increases in licence fees for various types of fishing, as well as penalties under the Act. Manuals of surveillance and inspection procedures are being drawn up to assist officers in monitoring and enforcing the provisions of the Fisheries Act and Regulations.

1.5 ADB Technical Assistance Support

A major institutional strengthening exercise has recently been completed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) through a Technical Assistance (TA) grant. The major thrust of this TA has been in the area of counterpart training in project identification and preparation.

The outcome of this study is a number of investment projects prepared to appraisal stage pending formalisation for submission to ADB as components of the project loan. A project preparation TA (PPTA) is now being prepared. In achieving its broad objective, the scope of the PPTA encompasses activities very much consistent with institutional strengthening, with
Map of Papua New Guinea showing locations of the different administrations related to fisheries
emphasise on developing processes relevant to achieving the goals of NFA.

2. Fisheries research and resource management

In line with the Government policy to promote sustainable development in the fisheries sector, the Department will ensure that fisheries resources are exploited within the limits of sustainable yields so that they can provide a long-term source of edible protein for local consumption; income and employment opportunities for Papua New Guineans, and much-needed foreign exchange for the Government.

The Department will devise management regimes through scientific research in the areas of biology and ecology, stock assessment, fisheries management plans, fisheries interactions and the impact of fishing activities on the environment.

3. Coastal fisheries programme

The Coastal Fisheries Programme is aimed at providing support to small-scale fisheries projects and fishermen in order to encourage increased participation in the exploitation, utilisation and distribution of fish and fish products which will contribute to income generation and create employment at the village level.

In 1993, 1994 and 1995, the programme included a privatisation programme for existing coastal fisheries stations, post-harvest and women-in-fisheries activities, small-scale credit facilities, and an extension and gear development programme.

4. Training and staff development

This programme is on-going and is aimed at developing the skills and knowledge of staff so that they provide effective professional services to the Department. The programme consists of overseas training, in-country training, attachments and development of a three-year training plan.

During the period, nine officers are undertaking long academic (post-graduate) courses, mainly in Australia and funded by AusAid. There have been few in-country courses, as priority for funding was given to the long-term overseas courses.

A number of attachments have been undertaken which provided practical training to staff. They were funded by the South Pacific Commission, the Forum Fisheries Agency, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Food and Agricultural Organization.

5. Fisheries surveillance

The statutory requirement to provide the necessary control, management and conservation of PNG’s fisheries resources requirement has been strengthened through the new legislation, which provides the legal instruments for better management and control of commercial fishing practices and related activities, and for the protection of the country’s national fisheries resources.

The Government is currently investigating the establishment of an integrated surveillance system which will be cost-effective and sustainable in the long term. This approach was recommended by a feasibility study conducted in 1994.

6. National Fisheries College

The Department’s only Fisheries College, which provides education and training in fisheries technology at Certificate level, has been in existence for 18 years. Until recently there had been no major development or upgrading of its training facilities and curriculum.

However, work was done recently on upgrading the student accommodations, training facilities, staff housing and the main administration office. These developments cost the Government nearly K1 million.

In addition a complete review was undertaken of the College syllabus in line with concerns identified by past sector studies, such as the FAO Sector Review and the ADB Technical Assistant Support, including concern over the fact that private sector training requirements were not being met.

The new syllabus was produced with technical assistance from JICA. As a result of the new syllabus additional training aids and facilities were established, including a new training vessel and new training classrooms. Additional academic staff were recruited.

In line with the Office of Higher Education National Training Plan, the National Fisheries College was among a number of colleges to be administered by a Governing Council which comprised representatives from relevant Government Departments and the Private Sector. The Governing Council is responsible for major policy decisions on the administration of the College.
7. Tuna fishery

Tuna is the single most valuable fishery resource in Papua New Guinea. The major activities in tuna fishing are still carried out by distant-water fishing nations through fishing access arrangements. Fishing access agreements are in place with fishing companies from Taiwan and the Philippines. Fishing access for South Korean fishing fleets was ended in June 1995.

Access agreements with DWFNs will continue to be granted until PNG is able to fully domesticate its tuna fishing industry. The Government has now established shore-based industrial fisheries facilities. This has led to the construction of a fish cannery in Madang by ZZZ Fishing Company. In addition, a Taiwanese company (New Guinea Fisheries) has established its base in Port Moresby, with a fleet of two purse-seine vessels.

Considerable potential also exists to develop the sashimi tuna industry, employing long-line fishing methods and targeting the high-value yellowfin tuna. Due to the level of investment in this fishery, the Government has restricted tuna longlining exclusively to national investors. Already two such operations are fully owned by Papua New Guineans; they are based in Rabaul and Port Moresby.

8. Liaison with the private sector

Current emphasis by the Government on the private sector has resulted in favourable policies being developed to provide incentives this sector. The Department and the Private Sector, Fisheries Industry Association (FIA) have been co-operating in reviewing existing disincentives which have been affecting the fishing industry in PNG. There has been some progress in the relationship between FIA and the Department in the last few years. As a result, there has been increased participation by the FIA in the development of existing fisheries policies and programmes.

The FIA has also participated in a number of influential committees, such as the National Fisheries Board, the Governing Council of the National Fisheries College, and the National Fisheries Council, and has been involved in the proposed establishment of a National Training Council to cater for private sector interest under the new fisheries legislation.

9. Regional and international liaison

Papua New Guinea is a member of regional organisations. In particular, liaison has been maintained with the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and the South Pacific Commission (SPC) in promoting regional cooperation in fisheries, particularly those concerned with tuna and international high seas fisheries.

The main focus of fisheries work with the SPC has been in the area of scientific research under the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme (now the Oceanic Fisheries Programme), with access to the central database and logsheet records on tuna vessels licensed in the region. Other technical assistance and funding have also been received.

Major responsibilities undertaken in consultation with the FFA include, the administration of the Multilateral Treaty with the United States, the operation of the Regional Register of fishing vessels and the coordination of the regional Surveillance Programme and the Niue Treaty on Regional Surveillance.

A sub-group of Forum Fisheries Committee (FFC) is formed by the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), which co-operate in an agreed set of harmonised Minimum Terms and conditions (MTC) for access to the Western Pacific tuna fishery. They also co-operate in management of the Western Pacific purse-seine fishery through the Palau Arrangement, which places a ceiling on the number of purse-seine vessels in the region. Other technical assistance and funding.

Papua New Guinea has actively participated in the above regional organisations in a number of areas. Through SPC, Papua New Guinea received assistance for the Women-in-Fisheries Programme, with research information on tuna and billfish, and provision of the masterfisherman to assist with FAD construction and the East New Britain tuna longline project, and help from PIMRIS (Pacific Islands Marine Resource Information System) with the library and information technology systems.

Through the FFA regional arrangements, PNG has been assisted in the areas of coordinating regional surveillance flights, technical advice on tuna industry domestication policy, improved institutional capability in the exchange of information technology, prosecution procedures and co-ordination of matters relating to high seas fisheries enforcement and management.

Most recently PNG hosted the 14th PNA and FFC 26th Meet-
ing in Port Moresby which provided the opportunity for annual discussions on programme implementation by FFA.

In the international arena, major fisheries initiatives have been undertaken in consultation with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Japanese International Co-operation Agency (JICA), United States Aid Agency (USAID) and the International Centre for Ocean Development (ICOD).

Under the FAO co-operation was developed through Conferences on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, negotiations on the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing, and the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention which came into force in November 1994.

The ADB is currently assisting the Department to improve its institutional capabilities in the area of project identification, preparation and documentation. In light of the new policy initiatives, the ADB will recommend medium- to long-term institutional support to ensure that the Department is strengthened to adequately fulfil its functions and requirements.

During the period JICA assisted PNG in ongoing training in fisheries. It also provided technical assistance in support of the review of the National Fisheries College syllabus and funding for the Inland Fisheries Research Programme at Aiyura, Eastern Highlands Province.

The USAID assisted PNG in the review of the fisheries sector as well as assistance and gave assistance for the private sector (FIA), while the ICOD assisted by funding of the Women-In-Fisheries Programme in consultation with SPC.

Women processing prawn in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea