

Coastal Fisheries Programme

Draft Strategic Plan

2006–2008

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1. Introduction to the Coastal Fisheries Programme and its strategic plan

This Strategic Plan maps out the direction of the Coastal Fisheries Programme (CFP) for the period 2006–2009, and follows the Strategic Plan for CFP 2003–2005.

CFP works with Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) to help Pacific Islanders assess, monitor and manage the coastal ecosystems that sustain fisheries, and develop locally based fisheries (particularly smaller-scale fisheries) and sustainable aquaculture. The service CFP provides is broad-ranging, including research, fishery assessments (socio-economic and eco-biological), development advice, planning advice on domestic and regional sectoral policy and governance systems, information compilation and dissemination services, intercountry linkages, and human resource development. Pacific Island capacity-building is at the core of all Programme services. The Programme also plays a major role in assisting SPC members to develop regional overviews and fulfil international reporting requirements on domestic fisheries and coastal ecosystem issues.

CFP is part of the Marine Resources Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and is based in Noumea. It contributes to the Division's aim of helping the region achieve the vision of the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy: *'A healthy ocean that sustains the livelihoods and aspirations of Pacific Island communities'*. This vision is shared by all of the CROP (Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific) agencies working towards the achievement of ocean-related objectives in the region.

SPC's governing bodies, the Conference of the Pacific Community and the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA), specify the key directions and balance the priorities of the organisation as whole, and confirm the key directions for the Programme. The SPC Heads of Fisheries (HoF) Meeting plays an important role in identifying emerging challenges and recommending key directions for both the Oceanic Fisheries and Coastal Fisheries programmes.

The aims of CFP fall within an area that is defined not only by the expressed priorities and needs of member governments and administrations, but also by the functionality of other regional agencies and SPC programmes working on ocean issues. At the regional intergovernmental level:

- the SPC Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP) addresses highly migratory fisheries and associated pelagic ecosystem scientific objectives (see the OFP Strategic Programme Plan);
- the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) addresses regional highly migratory fisheries (principally tuna) management objectives and supports member governments in international fisheries negotiations and domestic oceanic fisheries policy planning. FFA has recently restructured its operations to include a major focus on developing Pacific Island tuna fisheries;
- the Secretariat of the Pacific Islands Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) addresses endangered marine species and environmental protection objectives;

- the University of the South Pacific (USP) addresses ocean-related higher education objectives, academic ocean research and, where specific expertise is held, the general provision of commercial consultancy support towards the objectives of other agencies;
- the Western and Central Pacific (WCP) Fisheries Commission provides a forum within which fishing states can meet with coastal states and agree on enforceable management measures for tuna fisheries in the entire WCP area, including high seas;
- the SPC Regional Maritime Programme addresses objectives specifically relating to seafarers and shipping (including seafarers aboard industrial fishing vessels); and
- the Pacific Islands Applied Geosciences Commission addresses objectives in oceanography, marine minerals management and coastal protection, and generally covers the non-living ocean and coastal environment.

Most of these agencies are part of the CROP Marine Sector Working Group (MSWG), along with NGO (non-governmental organisation) observers as appropriate. MSWG is currently convened by the SPC Marine Resources Division, and provides an informal mechanism for improving dialogue and mutual awareness between regional programmes working on ocean issues, defining the boundaries between work programmes, and developing collaborations as appropriate. CFP, through SPC, also has specific Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with agencies where there is an especially close working relationship, particularly FFA, SPREP and USP. There are also formal linkages with national and international bodies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), L'Institut de recherche pour la développement (IRD) and the Programme Group on the Western Pacific (WESTPAC). This Strategic Plan takes into account these various linkages and the changing pattern of interrelationships between organisations.

The Strategic Plan provides CFP with a measurable, results-based focus that will guide the work programme activities over the period from January 2006 to December 2009. It is, however, a 'snapshot' of the current state of the evolving goals and objectives of the Programme, as benchmarked from time to time by consultation with member countries and reviews, particularly involving the SPC HoF Meeting, which will next be convened early in 2006. This Plan is thus a 'living document' and may change during its course, with the approval of SPC members.

2. Pacific context and challenges

The ocean, and islanders' continuing relationship with it, is one of the main factors that defines the Pacific community. As such, gaining a sound knowledge of the ocean and its resources, developing aquatic-based food security and economic growth, and instituting sustainable fisheries governance systems are high priorities for Pacific Island governments and administrations, and account for the relatively large size of regional fisheries programmes. The international scope of many fisheries and natural resource management issues has also contributed to this comparatively strong regional supporting role.

Although there are specific problems, Pacific Island fisheries can confidently be said to be in better average shape than most other tropical regions. The Pacific Islands tuna fishery constitutes one of the last major global fisheries that is not yet fully exploited or overexploited. Reef fisheries, whilst there are definite problems near population centres and with certain export commodities, are not the disaster zones that have been created in some other tropical reef regions. Although SPC claims some credit in this, the Pacific Islands' longstanding tradition of reef and lagoon resource management has buffered most nearshore excesses (although the spillover effect of urban construction is beginning to take its toll and is outside traditional jurisdiction), and relative isolation has provided a measure of protection from exploitation to supply external trade.

The Pacific community is not complacent (indeed, this broadly favourable assessment of the relatively healthy status of most Pacific Island fisheries is not widely appreciated within the region) but remains a region where there is still an opportunity to implement measures to ensure that fisheries and aquaculture developments are sustainable, whilst rehabilitation is required for only a few primarily export-based or urban-adjacent fisheries, and fisheries impacting endangered species.

However, traditional buffers continue to be outpaced by development, and although the region is considered small in human development terms, in geographical terms the Pacific Ocean is vast. The region owns 50% of the world's area of hard coral reef and its exclusive economic zones cover 10% of the total world ocean area. An additional challenge that is coming to the fore is the increasing need to help address requirements agreed to by PICTs at the international level — including requirements for information and inventories, and requirements to address international standards in trade and resource management. This is a challenge that is being addressed by CFP and other agencies working together through CROP, each contributing according to its own specialisation.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing Pacific Island coastal fisheries is institutional. Fisheries management affects only the activities of fishers, but non-fisheries' impacts on coastal ecosystems, particularly on small-island, densely populated coasts with limited reef areas, appear to be starting to outweigh the effects on fishing. Many of these non-fisheries and land-based impacts do not take adequate account of their effects on coastal fisheries ecosystems, and yet the effects of these impacts on food security, employment and foreign exchange earning can be profound.

At a more detailed level, within the fisheries sector itself the greatest challenges facing the region within the mandate of CFP are:

- helping Pacific Islands to cope with the inevitable change in balance between subsistence and commercial fisheries and the associated erosion of marine-resource-based protein food security and community governance systems, and traditional knowledge, in rural areas;
- the extreme scarcity of objective data available to Pacific Island fisheries managers and planners on the status and resilience of reef fisheries and supporting ecosystems — fishery management decisions have to be made on the basis of perceptions and politics. Adaptive management, which makes continuous changes in response to perceived results, can be very effective in the absence of complete scientific knowledge about the functioning of fisheries, but it requires objective monitoring of fishery status;

- the need by Pacific Island authorities for assistance in guiding ever-increasing aquaculture investment into economically and socially sustainable channels, particularly in evaluating the plethora of new, and often inappropriately transferred, systems being developed elsewhere in the world; and
- helping Pacific Islanders to derive greater direct and sustainable benefits from nearshore pelagic resources, through the development of environmentally sound small-scale coastal state-based fishing enterprises (working in close collaboration with the larger-scale tuna fisheries economic development work of FFA, and the tuna fisheries and ecosystem scientific work of SPC's OFP). For 50 years SPC has advocated that reef fisheries do not provide a significant source of commercial development potential — indeed, the few export commodities that have been developed have frequently, and almost inevitably, been overexploited — and that government development efforts should be focused outside the reef on more widespread and ecologically resilient resources, saving reef resources for food security and other domestic purposes.

Running through these 'vertically oriented' challenges are the general 'cross-cutting' shortfalls faced by all developing countries in maintaining a specialised human resource cadre and specialist information processing and delivery systems. Human resources for the monitoring, management and administration of Pacific Island fisheries services are a continuing concern and one of the main reasons why a regional service continues to be useful. Human resource capacity is limited by island size, not by ocean area, and the 'brain drain' of trained specialists continues, not only to better-paying jobs outside the region, but internally. Many top Pacific Island government jobs are now filled by people who were originally fisheries specialists.

An additional challenge that faces many countries of the region in the fisheries sector might be put under the heading of 'good governance' but is probably better labelled 'individual corruption'. The limited-entry licensing schemes that have been introduced to improve the sustainability prospects of many fisheries have also provided opportunities for certain unscrupulous individuals to allocate limited licences to those who provide the biggest 'personal incentives'. This is not, of course, a problem that is limited to Pacific Islands or to the fisheries sector, but is also found — to provide just one example — in the allocation of taxi licences in certain Western countries. However, in the Pacific Islands such people are often quickly exposed, and the resultant indignation and publicity have a bad effect on the national reputation. Because this problem is confined mainly to industrial fisheries, it is not appropriate for the SPC Coastal Fisheries Programme to address it, but we will assist governments to develop systems to do so if it occurs in small-scale fisheries.

3. SPC's response

The new challenge is to manage not just coastal fisheries, but the entire coastal ecosystem upon which coastal fisheries and aquaculture depend. Fisheries managers need to drive this new Ecosystem Approach to coastal management because fisheries are heavily dependent on the integrity of coastal ecosystems, and fishers are still the primary user group impacted by land-based and other developments. As well as income-earning development from fisheries, subsistence fisheries are still a primary source of protein food security in many Pacific Islands, whilst recreational fisheries and non-fishery 'users' of fish, such as tourism, are increasing in importance.

There is growing feeling within the international community that conventional methods of fisheries management have been unable to predict or cope with change, or indeed that they have 'failed'. Pacific Island coastal fisheries management is still very much an ad hoc affair, 'fire-fighting' challenges as they arise, but thankfully most food-fisheries still have a large component of traditional or community oversight, unbroken over the millennia in many islands. Rather than continuing to try to develop management plans for individual fisheries — management plans that can control only the activity of fishers and that are helpless to control or even predict other impacts on coastal ecosystems — SPC intends to assist the Pacific Islands to 'skip' the next step in conventional fisheries management and start implementing the more holistic Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) through the development of coastal ecosystem management plans.

The implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to coastal fisheries is likely to be a lot more difficult, and at the same time much more immediately necessary, than the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to oceanic fisheries. In oceanic fisheries the main impacts upon the fisheries ecosystem are from fisheries themselves, which are relatively easily controlled by more conventional management systems, or from long-range climate processes, which are either uncontrollable or can be addressed only through global action. The main requirement for implementing the Ecosystem Approach to oceanic fisheries, now that an implementing mechanism is in place through the new WCP Fisheries Commission, is better information about pelagic ecosystem functioning and species relationships. This will be addressed by the SPC Oceanic Fisheries Programme. For coastal fisheries, the main requirement at this stage is to build institutional systems that can consider all of the human impacts on coastal ecosystems, and get different agencies working together to achieve a common vision of how the coastal ecosystems that currently support fisheries should be maintained, and how usage should be allocated and controlled.

It is not possible, at the current level of scientific knowledge, to build a reliable predictive model of a whole coastal ecosystem, and if the Ecosystem Approach is to be implemented it will have to be done using a 'bootstrap' approach. Even the Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council of the USA, which is probably the most advanced of all the US regional fisheries management councils in developing a practical application of the Ecosystem Approach, has recently decided that the only way forward is to stop waiting for science to catch up, and to implement an adaptive framework that can be modified and elaborated over time. The approach will be to use existing systems and knowledge and provide a framework of linkages and interrelationships for integrating them into a broader system. This is not much different from the concept of Integrated Coastal Zone Management, which has been tried, without great success, in some Pacific Islands — but this time there is a definite economic imperative and the approach is expected to have substantial international backing.

The Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy and the subsequent development of Pacific Island national ocean policies will provide the high-level mechanism for taking the Ecosystem Approach to coastal fisheries forward. At the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, SPC member governments made a non-binding agreement to aim to implement the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries by 2010. The fundamental steps in this development thus need to be accomplished by countries within the time period of this Strategic Plan, 2006–2009.

4. Priorities

The top priority of the region within CFP's area of competence is to sustainably develop the use of coastal aquatic resources. Development is relatively easy, at least in things that are likely to provide a relatively rapid return to the private sector. Sustainable development of a natural resource that is renewable only up to a definite limit, looks beyond the term of the average bank loan, and recognises that a majority of businesses go bankrupt within five years of starting up, is much more difficult.

Given the experience of the past, and given the valuable example that is provided by observing the route of other, bigger countries down the fishery development path, the priorities of CFP are to help Pacific Island governments and administrations to:

- a) develop economic prospects based on aspects of coastal aquatic ecosystems that are not currently limited. These include aquaculture, nearshore pelagic fisheries (although domestic bigeye and yellowfin tuna capacity increases would likely have to be at the expense of foreign licensing) and possibly non-extractive income-earning (tourism and heritage) uses; and
- b) understand, and stabilise the sustainability of limited or problematic aspects of, coastal aquatic ecosystems.

Both these priorities can be addressed through the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to coastal fisheries — an approach that recognises that human beings are an integral component of the ecosystem, and that has economic and social, as well as ecological, expressions.

Within the Programme itself, the new focus on EAF, like the application of EAF itself, will build upon existing competencies and knowledge, but with greater concentration on the linkages and on the bigger picture. The current balance of the staff and their specialisations will not change significantly, but certain areas will need priority attention.

- a) Integrative programme leadership has already been strengthened, with the appointment of a Coastal Fisheries Programme Manager in October 2005.
- b) A Regional Fisheries Ecosystem Council will be set up to enable countries to share experiences, develop common mechanisms and consult on cross-boundary fisheries ecosystem issues, probably by reconvention during the annual SPC HoF Meeting session.

- b) The Programme will need to be strengthened in several key competency areas. These include coastal legislation, economic evaluation of aquatic development issues, assessment of land-based impacts, marine aquaculture, and non-extractive uses of coastal aquatic resources.
- c) The Programme must be organised so that more multidisciplinary country missions can be made, involving several staff in joint activities to help countries develop coastal fisheries ecosystem management approaches and multisectoral assessments, moving away from the request-driven single-specialist missions that are the current *modus operandi*.

5. Goal and objectives

The goal of CFP in contributing to the achievement of the regionally shared vision of ‘A healthy ocean that sustains the livelihoods and aspirations of Pacific Island communities’ is:

to assist SPC members in their commitment to apply the Ecosystem Approach to coastal fisheries and aquaculture by 2010.

To help Pacific community members achieve this goal, CFP will focus on three objectives for the four-year period from January 2006 to December 2009:

1. assisting governments and administrations in the development of scientifically informed and socially achievable coastal ecosystem management systems, including coastal living resource components of national ocean policies;
2. consolidating a regional support framework for economically, socially and environmentally sustainable aquaculture planning, research and development by Pacific Island governments and private enterprises; and
3. assisting governments and administrations in the development and management of domestic nearshore commercial fisheries within a sustainable ecosystem context.

There is likely to be some rearrangement of the current sections of the Programme in order to better address these objectives, and this will be done in consultation with the next SPC HoF Meeting. All sections will contribute to Objective 1, particularly the current Coastal Fisheries Management Section and the Reef Fisheries Observatory, whilst Objective 2 will remain the primary focus of the Aquaculture Section. Objective 3 is likely to require the amalgamation of the Development Section with many of the functions of the Training Section (which already has a particular focus on this area). It may be useful, if the planned additional capacity is acquired, to constitute a separate Technical Support Section, which would provide information, legislative, economic and training support to all objectives.

Other institutional arrangements are possible, however, and in order to produce the best practicable working arrangement these will be refined by a process involving the new Programme Manager and the internal CFP Coordinating Committee.

6. Outputs and key performance indicators and targets

The following does not provide a detailed work plan or a complete set of outputs and indicators, which will be produced annually for each objective outlined here. Thus it does not contain all outputs, but summarises generic or key outputs and provides the top-level indicator used in measuring general achievement towards each objective over the entire plan period. More detailed outputs and annual indicators of achievement are built into the annual work plan and reported on at the end of each year.

Running through the entire work programme is capacity-building, and rather than repeat this under every objective and output, these training, mentoring, attachment and related outputs are reflected in the detailed indicators that are attached to the annual work plans under the Strategic Plan. Overall, the Programme expects to have up to 10 attachments to work at headquarters and up to 100 attachments to work in the field, to hold 20 workshops, and to run one formal three-to-six-month training course for up to 10 fisheries officers or fishers, in addition to working with national administrations on their human resource development systems and other institutional strengthening activities. The Programme also maintains a continuously updated fisheries training opportunities register.

Objective 1: Assisting governments and administrations in the development of scientifically informed and socially achievable coastal ecosystem management systems, including coastal living resource components of national ocean policies

This objective will involve input from the other objectives of the Programme, and achievement will depend as well to a large extent on collaboration with other agencies, particularly the CROP agencies SPREP, South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), FFA, USP and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), but also national agencies in each member country. It will also benefit from contact with outreaching national institutions such as the US Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council. Another level of collaboration will come from the regional processes, such as the Regional Fisheries Ecosystem Council that is to be set up by the Programme. Thus all the following outputs should be read as being dependent upon collaboration with other agencies, particularly those that are involved in assisting in the development of national ocean policies. A primary aim here is to ensure that non-fisheries impacts do not further degrade the production capacity of coastal fisheries and aquaculture systems unless those impacts have been clearly assessed and decided as being in the overall national interest, in addition to improving control over the impacts on coastal ecosystems by fishers and aquaculturalists themselves.

Outputs	Key performance indicators and targets
Output 1.1 Assessments of the status of national coastal living marine resource user groups, impacts on resources, existing impact management systems, and the current status of resources themselves	21 national coastal fishery ecosystem governance baseline assessments produced over the plan period using the best available knowledge (NB: It is assumed that the main need here will be from countries, rather than territories, some of which already have related processes under way)
Output 1.2 Assistance to members in developing or adapting cross-sectoral consultation processes to produce a scientifically and socially realistic national vision, or island visions, of the desired state and balance of usage of their coastal marine areas	14 national ocean policy social consultations supported over the course of the plan period (NB: It is assumed that there will be a CROP-wide multi-agency process involved in developing ocean policy applications)
Output 1.3 Practical assistance to members, as necessary, in designing and implementing adaptive frameworks for the application of the Ecosystem Approach to coastal fisheries and aquaculture	Every Pacific community island member has EAF policies, plans or legislation in place by 2010

Objective 2: A regional support framework for economically, socially and environmentally sustainable aquaculture planning, research and development by Pacific Island governments and private enterprises

Outputs	Key performance indicators and targets
Output 2.1 A regional network of contacts to exchange ideas, overviews and experience on aquaculture issues both regionally and internationally	Network traffic
Output 2.2 Establishment of environmentally and economically sustainable aquaculture enterprises by Pacific government departments and/or private sector	Real value of regional aquaculture production doubles during the Plan period
Output 2.3 A regional support service to help in assessing, managing and mitigating the potential impacts of aquaculture, including exotic introductions and quarantine	Regional agreement principles for aquatic biosecurity, and implementation at the national level in five countries by the end of the Plan period

Objective 3: Governments and administrations develop domestic nearshore commercial fisheries within a sustainable ecosystem context

Outputs	Key performance indicators and targets
Output 3.1 The output of economically viable Pacific Island commercial fishing enterprise matches the sustainable production capacity of the natural resource allocated	Fishery performance indicators that take into account the status of stocks and ecosystems as well as profitability and contribution to national accounts (to be developed at the start of the Plan period) remain at optimum levels
Output 3.2 Resource materials and case-specific advice and mentoring on appropriate fisheries and fishing techniques	Significant augmentation of the body of available and useful practical information accessible to Pacific Island fisheries authorities and fishing enterprises on sustainable fishing methods, new initiatives and the results of fishing trials and experiments
Output 3.3 Improvement in the per-unit value of Pacific Islands fisheries production	Value of fisheries

7. Reporting, monitoring and evaluation

The work of the Coastal Fisheries Programme is coordinated by the CFP Manager. Key staff meet at least monthly in the CFP Coordinating Committee to discuss Programme issues with the Programme Manager and Divisional Director, and the SPC Executive Committee reviews a budgetary overview on a monthly basis. Annual progress reports and work plans are provided to the Divisional Director and to donors, with a six-monthly update (this is in addition to specific project reports and any exceptional reporting). Individual sections publish quarterly reports of current work in the SPC Fisheries Newsletter, and the results of completed projects and activities are published in specific technical reports. All of these are also available on the Programme website at www.spc.int/coastfish.

Discussion of general collaborative work with other CROP agencies is carried out within the Marine Sector Working Group, and at a more technical level during occasional interagency colloquia (annually, in the case of FFA). Major individual in-country activities are managed through memoranda of agreement between the Divisional Director and national fisheries head, specifying the inputs expected from each party, outputs and schedules, whilst all country-specific activities that involve expenditure on staff travel or consultancy are subject to a formal process of request and approval through SPC's 'official contact' for that country or territory¹.

¹ Whilst the Programme may often discuss potential in-country projects with private-sector companies or NGOs, implementation is always subject to 'official contact' approval, and discussions always involve the fisheries administration. The 'official contact' for SPC is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the equivalent representative sitting on the SPC CRGA.

The HoF Meeting monitors and evaluates the CFP annual work programme and provides a regional consensus on changing priorities within the living aquatic resources sector, amplified by occasional subsectoral focus meetings. HoF also reviews and guides strategic plans. An overview of the Programme's performance against the Strategic Plan is also included in the annual Marine Resources Division report to CRGA, which is responsible for formally approving the Strategic Plan and annual budget. Independent reviewers evaluate the Programme every few years as part of the Division's review programme; individual projects and sections are reviewed as provided for in work plans. For some projects these reviews may be yearly; EU projects have recently benefited from up to four different audits and reviews per year.

8. Partnerships and resources

The Coastal Fisheries Programme is part of the Marine Resources Division of SPC and is located in Noumea, but occasionally it manages field-based staff. It shares a common vision with the Oceanic Fisheries Programme and the marine-related programmes of other agencies collaborating within the CROP Marine Sector Working Group.

The Programme also works in collaboration with FAO, Worldfish, WESTPAC and IRD as well as other CROP regional organisations, and maintains working relationships to varying degrees with several supra-national environmental NGOs (ENGOs), particularly the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations, the Nature Conservancy, Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific.

Apart from the Programme Manager position, which is paid from SPC core funds, the work of the Programme is currently funded by a basket of voluntary contributions from SPC members Australia, France, New Zealand and New Caledonia, and by special projects from the European Union, Commonwealth Secretariat, MacArthur Foundation, Asian Development Bank and national agencies in Australia, Iceland, Taiwan and others. Most Programme activities are implemented in collaboration with member country fisheries administrations, usually with commitments by them in cash or kind towards the achievement of joint goals specified by MoU. The direct budget of the Programme is approximately 3.5 million CFP units (at the time of writing, one CFP unit was approximately equal to one US dollar).

The Programme currently has 28 staff, of whom five are locally recruited specialist assistants and 23 are internationally recruited experts. Over 50% of these internationally recruited experts are now Pacific Islanders, up from 25% at the start of the last Strategic Plan period — a result that is a significant contribution to capacity-building in itself.
