

Information Paper 1

Original: English

Coastal fisheries and aquaculture – Regional governance framework, information flow and decision-making

The Third Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries is supported
by the Australian Government and implemented by SPC



Purpose

1. The purpose of this Information Paper is to outline the new regional governance framework, information flow and decision-making processes for Pacific coastal fisheries and aquaculture. The framework and processes have been introduced this year on a two-year trial basis, at the direction of the 11th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting (March 2019), and endorsed by the Special Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting (June 2019).
2. The 3rd Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries (RTMCF3) is the first phase of this new, still evolving, governance framework. Participants are asked to identify, discuss and agree on clear priority coastal fisheries and aquaculture technical issues and opportunities that the RTMCF3 can submit to the 12th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting in March 2020 for consideration and action.

Introduction

3. How to more effectively address coastal fisheries and aquaculture issues at the regional level has been considered at the 2nd RTMCF (November 2018) – [Information Paper 1: “A strong and coordinated approach to coastal fisheries management—the big picture”](#) – and at the 11th SPC Heads of Fisheries meeting (March 2019) – [Working Paper 6: “Heads of Fisheries Meeting – purpose, priorities and direction”](#).
4. Regional frameworks and strategies for coastal fisheries have been developed and adopted by Pacific Leaders:
 - a. [“A New Song for Coastal Fisheries – Pathways to Change: The Noumea Strategy”](#) adopted in 2015, represents a shared vision of coastal fisheries management in the Pacific, with the ‘Pathways to Change framework’ outlining agreed-upon actions needed from member governments and other stakeholders. It provides the regional platform for a strong and coordinated approach to coastal fisheries management, with a commitment to a community-driven approach.
 - b. [“The Future of Fisheries – A Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries”](#) was endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in 2015. The Roadmap has three clear goals and five strategies for coastal fisheries through to 2025, as well as indicators that can be used to measure progress. The [Coastal Fishery Report Card](#) provides annual high-level reporting on the current status of Pacific coastal fisheries in relation to the goals, indicators and strategies adopted in the Regional Roadmap and the New Song. It provides a snapshot to enable fisheries stakeholders and political leaders to monitor progress on implementing regional commitments relating to coastal fisheries.
5. While these regional frameworks and strategies have galvanised increased support for coastal fisheries, and especially community-based coastal fisheries management, there were still limited pathways at the regional level to proactively engage in building a strong and coordinated approach to addressing coastal fisheries management challenges, gaps and priority areas. This was addressed by the [11th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting](#) (HoF) in the context of reviewing the purpose, priorities and direction of the Heads of Fisheries Meeting.

Coastal fisheries and aquaculture – Regional Governance and decision-making framework

6. The purpose, priorities and direction of the Heads of Fisheries (HoF) meeting were considered, and HoF11 recommended that the HoF Meeting be held annually (for a two year trial). It will continue to focus on guiding FAME's strategic direction and work-plan priorities, and consider strategic regional fisheries policy and governance issues, and emerging issues of concern.
7. HoF11 also agreed that coastal fisheries and aquaculture technical issues be dealt with by the Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries, with its outcomes forwarded to the HoF Meeting for consideration.
8. HoF11 agreed that an indicative flow of information and advice on coastal fisheries and aquaculture issues at the regional level, and any key decisions required, be from: the RTMCF to the HoF Meeting to the Regional Fisheries Ministers' Meeting to the Forum Leaders.

Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries

9. The RTMCF was re-established in 2017, with meetings in November 2017 and November 2018.
10. The purpose of the RTMCF is to bring together coastal fisheries and aquaculture scientists and technical experts in the Pacific to discuss important technical and scientific gaps, needs, challenges and opportunities.
11. The outcomes will be presented to the Heads of Fisheries:
 - a. Technical outcomes not requiring HoF approval for implementation will be presented at HoF meeting for noting;
 - b. Technical outcomes needing HoF support and approval for implementation by SPC FAME Division and PICTs at the national and regional levels will be tabled for discussion and approval at the HoF meetings; and
 - c. Technical outcomes of significant regional importance, needing HoF support and approval, as well as high-level endorsement, will be tabled for discussion and approval at HoF meetings, with a recommendation that the HoF consider transmitting those recommendations to the Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting.

Coastal Fisheries Working Group

12. In 2016, the Forum Leaders noted that coastal fisheries management was receiving inadequate attention at the national level, and:
 - a. Noted the links between coastal fisheries and communities, food security, health issues and in particular non-communicable diseases.
 - b. Agreed that coastal as well as offshore fisheries should be standing agenda items given that they are both key regional priorities that require a whole-of-government approach, and Leaders' close oversight.

- c. Highlighted sea cucumbers, which when processed into *bêche-de-mer*, are the most valuable coastal fishery export in many PICTs and second only in value to the offshore fishery for tuna. Leaders specifically noted the need to “sustainably manage *Bêche-de-Mer*”.
 - d. Tasked SPC to coordinate with national and regional agencies, and community groups to strengthen support and resourcing for coastal fisheries management.
13. In 2017, the Coastal Fisheries Working Group (CFWG) was established under the guidance of the SPC FAME Division, with the Terms of Reference reviewed and endorsed by both the 10th HoF and the FFC Ministerial meeting. The purpose was to bring together a small standalone stakeholder group of representatives of communities, national and regional agencies and institutions to look at the current and potential coastal fisheries initiatives so as to ensure an adequate level of support, resources and services are directed towards assisting national fisheries agencies and local communities implement management of their coastal fisheries resources.
14. At the time it was established, the HoF was every two years, and the Fisheries Ministers only met to consider tuna issues. The CFWG was therefore set up to report through SPC to the Leaders via the Forum Officials Committee’s Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism.
15. With the change to an annual HoF and the establishment of the Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting, HoF11 requested that SPC raise the issues of reporting lines and member government and other representation on the Coastal Fisheries Working Group at the next CFWG meeting, which did agree to undertake a review of the ToR, including membership and reporting.
16. At the Special Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting (June 2019), the Ministers Communique:
 - a. Noted the work of the Coastal Fisheries Working Group (CFWG) but expressed concern regarding its lack of accountability to member Governments. Ministers noted the proposed review of the CFWG Terms of Reference in 2020, and recommended to SPC that the CFWG be disbanded and that other options be considered for giving effect to the Leaders’ decision in 2016 in relation to coastal fisheries (para 10, 47th Leaders Communique).
 - b. Ministers called for the SPC Heads of Fisheries to be the primary vehicle for formulating advice on coastal fisheries management to the RFMM.
17. A review of the CFWG Terms of Reference is being undertaken that will respond to the Ministers’ directive, meet the Leaders’ request “...to coordinate with National Fisheries Agencies, CROP agencies and regional and national community groups, to strengthen support and resourcing for coastal fisheries management” ((para 10, 47th Leaders Communique), and will be considered at the next HoF.

Heads of Fisheries

18. The Heads of Fisheries Meeting is the only regional forum for discussion and priority-setting for coastal fisheries and aquaculture, for the joint consideration of oceanic and coastal fisheries, and where all SPC Members participate.
19. HoF provides an important opportunity for FAME staff and stakeholders to engage in planning and developing regional strategic approaches to Pacific fisheries.

Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting

20. The Forum Leaders have recognised that regional Fisheries Ministers have the primary role in providing sectoral oversight of regional fisheries issues. Fisheries Ministers report to Forum Leaders under the Standing Item on Fisheries including on progress against the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Fisheries and providing advice and recommendations on fisheries issues requiring Leaders' attention.
21. In June 2019 a Special Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting established the Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting (RFMM). The purpose and role of the RFMM is to consider, discuss and, if appropriate, take decisions on:
 - a. Coastal fisheries issues, including aquaculture, of regional significance and/or high importance, including reporting from the SPC Heads of Fisheries (HoF) meeting, the Coastal Fisheries Working Group (CFWG), and the Coastal Fisheries Report Card on progress of the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Fisheries;
 - b. Broader oceans management and governance issues as they pertain to both coastal and oceanic fisheries such as the impacts of climate change, ocean acidification and marine pollution on fisheries resources, food security and livelihoods;
 - c. Any fisheries implications arising from wider regional policy processes;
 - d. Fisheries issues to be reported to Leaders for consideration under the Standing Item on Fisheries, in addition to the outcomes of FFC MIN pertaining to offshore fisheries issues under the mandate of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), and consolidated reporting on the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Fisheries.
22. The SPC Heads of Fisheries will report to the RFMM annually.

Priority technical issues and opportunities

23. The 3rd Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries (RTMCF3) is the first phase of this new, still evolving, governance and decision-making framework. Participants are asked to identify, discuss and agree on clear priority coastal fisheries and aquaculture technical issues and opportunities that the RTMCF3 can submit to the 12th SPC heads of Fisheries Meeting in March 2020 for consideration and action.
24. To achieve this clear priority coastal fisheries and aquaculture technical issues and opportunities need to be identified, discussed and agreed by the meeting. SPC will ensure the outcomes of the RTMCF are documented, then reviewed and approved by the participants.
25. As noted above, the agreed outcomes will be presented to the Heads of Fisheries:
 - a. Technical outcomes not requiring HoF approval for implementation will be presented at HoF meeting for noting;
 - b. Technical outcomes needing HoF support and approval for implementation at the national and regional levels will be tabled for discussion and approval at the HoF meetings; and

- c. Technical outcomes of significant regional importance, needing HoF support and approval, as well as high-level endorsement, will be tabled for discussion and approval at HoF meetings, with a recommendation that the HoF consider transmitting those recommendations to the Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting.