

## ■ AQUACULTURE SECTION

### Training for seaweed farmers and project field-men in Fiji Islands

Fiji's Department of Fisheries and SPC's Aquaculture Section recently collaborated on an advanced-skills training in *Kappaphycus* seaweed farming for seaweed project field men in Fiji. Organised jointly by Department of Fisheries staff Lorima Hansen and Sam Mario and SPC's Tim Pickering (10–12 September), the emphasis was on seaweed nursery techniques (floating raft and floating long-line construction), seaweed biology and ecology (to understand culture and processing

methods), an update of current trends in world markets, and a full-day practical session (at Nukulau Island near Suva). SPC contributed to the training by providing each field man

participant with a copy of a seaweed farming manual in English, seaweed "comic books" for distribution to farmers, seaweed training DVDs in both the English and Fijian lan-

**"This deep." Sam Mario of Fiji's Department of Fisheries shows Kabariki farmers the correct level for spreading harvested *Kappaphycus* seaweed on drying platforms in order to optimise the sun-drying process and avoid loss of quality.**



guages, and a soft-copy Fijian translation of the seaweed farming manual.

A second workshop was held on Kadavu Island, Fiji, this time aimed at rural villagers who are considering taking up seaweed farming as a new livelihood. Held at Kabariki Village in southern Kadavu, participants also attended from the neighbouring villages of Levuka and Nukubalavu. This workshop was run by Sam Mario with Tim Pickering and Kadavu-based fisheries staff Rabo and Keni. Explanations were given about basic techniques to farm seaweed and how to choose appropriate farm sites to avoid culture prob-

lems. As a practical demonstration of nursery techniques and alternatives to the standard off-bottom culture method, a seaweed longline and a raft was constructed by participants, seeded with seaweed and deployed in the lagoon in front of the village. Evenings were spent in informal discussion sessions, talanoa, about seaweed and other fisheries topics. Farmers provided feedback about the training, which they greatly appreciated because it had filled gaps in their knowledge about the purposes and processes of seaweed farming in Fiji.

Southern Kadavu is one of three locations where seaweed farming

is currently being encouraged by the Fiji government and by the main seaweed buyer, Agro-Marketing Authority, through focused assistance in farmer training, seedstock culture for planting, and marketing assistance. The other two places are Namuka Island and Ono-i-Lau Island, both in the southern Lau group. Seaweed farming is undergoing a renaissance in Fiji due to recent increases in global seaweed prices fueled by the high demand in China, and due to the continued interest in sustainable alternative livelihoods by people in Fiji's maritime provinces.

