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Title:	SPC FAME Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Programme: Future focus
Author(s):	Andrew Smith

Summary/short description/key points:

The SPC FAME Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Programme (CFAP) is reaching a critical stage, needing to respond to an increasing rate and broadening range of Pacific Island country and territory (PICT) member requests, heightened technical expectations and regional priorities, while contending with an uncertain funding pipeline and staffing constraints. All this at a time when the region is experiencing an increasing range of economic, social and environmental pressures on coastal fisheries and aquaculture resources. These pressures will only increase as climate change impacts escalate.

This working paper outlines the current situation and the emerging challenges SPC FAME CFAP faces, and for Heads of Fisheries delegates to discuss and propose the best way forward for SPC FAME CFAP to be able to effectively and efficiently support the region and PICT members’ coastal fisheries and aquaculture needs.

Recommendations:

Members are invited to discuss and provide guidance to SPC FAME on the following:

1. How can SPC FAME CFAP best support the region and PICT members with addressing your coastal fisheries and aquaculture needs?
2. What should SPC FAME CFAP’s role(s) be in the short- to medium-term (~2-5 years)? How do you see SPC FAME CFAP operating in 5-years’ time?
3. How should SPC FAME CFAP prioritise support to PICT members? What criteria should be used for prioritising? Is there a role for a HoF sub-committee to propose the criteria for HoF to adopt?
4. How do we improve resource mobilisation to supplement the funding pipeline for SPC FAME CFAP?

FAME Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Programme: Future focus

Purpose

5. The SPC FAME Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Programme (CFAP) is reaching a critical stage, needing to respond to an increasing rate and broadening range of Pacific Island country and territory (PICT) member requests, heightened technical expectations and regional priorities, while contending with an uncertain funding pipeline and staffing constraints. All this at a time when the region is experiencing an increasing range of economic, social and environmental pressures on coastal fisheries resources and aquaculture. These pressures will only increase as climate change impacts escalate.
6. The purpose of this paper is to outline the current situation and the emerging challenges SPC FAME CFAP faces, and to encourage Heads of Fisheries delegates to discuss and propose the best way forward for SPC FAME CFAP to be able to effectively and efficiently support the region and PICT members' coastal fisheries and aquaculture needs. This will help clarify and prioritise CFAP's role, structure, mode of operations, and the resources—staff, skills and funding—required to effectively support PICT members.

Current Situation

7. The 2024 CFAP key priorities and emerging areas are provided in [Working Paper 3 SPC FAME Priorities and Emerging Work Areas in 2024](#).
8. CFAP's aim is to provide excellence in coastal fisheries and aquaculture science and management to realise sustainable and equitable use of coastal and aquaculture resources for the social and economic wellbeing of Pacific peoples.
9. CFAP works to support governments and administrations to effectively manage and equitably benefit from their coastal fisheries and aquaculture resources, through use of emerging and innovative technologies, community engagement, evidence-based management, and people-centred approaches.
10. CFAP has three sections: *Aquaculture*; *CFAP Science*; and *Coastal Fisheries Management and Livelihoods*. These sections are supported by two cross-cutting areas: *Coastal Fisheries Information and Data Management* – providing database and information services, support, and advice; and *Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Economics* – providing economic advice, analysis and assessment of coastal fisheries and aquaculture activities.
11. CFAP staff are mostly based at SPC HQ in Noumea, New Caledonia, with some of the Aquaculture and MCS staff based at SPC Narere, Fiji, and one staff person in the Micronesia Regional Office in Pohnpei, FSM. CFAP currently (end of March 2024) has 25 staff, which is 19% of the total FAME staff, with 12 positions under recruitment (see Annex 1).
12. Given the integrated nature of coastal fisheries and aquaculture in the Pacific islands region, CFAP works in close partnership with the other units in SPC FAME. CFAP also adopts an interdisciplinary approach by collaborating with other SPC divisions and programmes, and with a wide range of universities, international, regional and local NGOs, and other Council of Regional Organisations

in the Pacific (CROP) agencies. CFAP also actively participates in the SPC Flagship Programmes on food systems, climate change, oceans and gender equality.

13. SPC FAME CFAP priorities are currently guided by members’ requests: "*reactive support*"; and the implementation of the frameworks and strategies in the [New Song for Coastal Fisheries – Pathways to Change: The Noumea Strategy](#), the coastal fisheries component of the [Future of Fisheries: Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries](#), the [Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling-up Community-based Fisheries Management: 2021-2025](#) and the [Regional Framework on Aquatic Biosecurity: "proactive support"](#).
14. The SPC FAME Member Requests tool started tracking official member requests in mid-2021, with a total of 282 requests received from 20 PICTs. 218 (77%) of those were for CFAP, of which 47% have been completed and 53% are still active. 129 of CFAP’s requests were received in 2023-2024. This does not include the 58 informal requests received by CFAP staff from member fisheries agency staff since late 2022 when tracking of informal requests began.
15. Of the 218 CFAP requests, the most common requests have been for: ‘aquaculture-development’ (39 requests) and ‘data management’ (39), followed by ‘aquaculture-technical’ (31), ‘legislation and policy’ (26), ‘science’ (25), ‘fisheries development’ (23), ‘data collection apps’ (21), ‘management’ (20), ‘information materials’ (18), ‘aquatic biosecurity’ (12), ‘socioeconomics’ (12), ‘MCS’ (11), ‘fisheries economics’ (10), ‘CBFM’ (9), ‘FADs’ (9), ‘fishing techniques’ (8), ‘livelihoods’ (5), ‘stock assessments’ (5), ‘cross-cutting’ (4), ‘MPAs’ (2), and one each for ‘food systems’ and ‘MEL’.
16. CFAP’s funding for 2024 is just over EUR 8.5M, which is approximately 30% of the total SPC FAME 2024 budget (see Figures 2 and 3). The secured funding for 2025 is EUR 6M, and for 2026 it is EUR 4.7M. While there are some funding proposals in the pipeline, none are yet firm enough to be included in the forward budgets. The Pacific European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP – EU/Sida) programme activity funding finishes at the end of 2024. PEUMP provides 35% of the CFAP 2024 budget.

Figure 2: 2024 FAME Budget

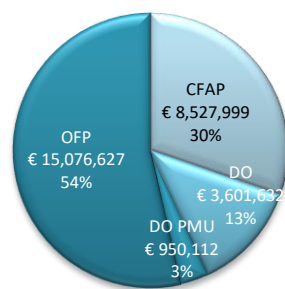
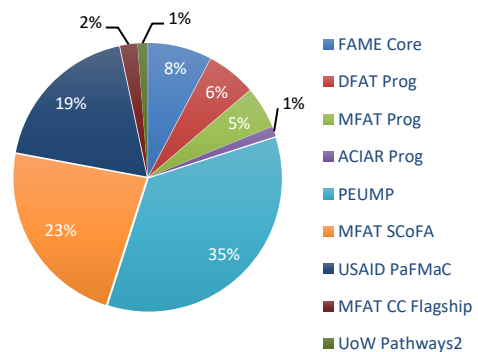


Figure 3: 2024 CFAP Budget



Challenges

SPC FAME CFAP is the only regional organisation supporting all 22 PICT members in all aspects of coastal fisheries and aquaculture. By comparison, oceanic fisheries in the Pacific islands region are supported by SPC FAME OFP (science and environment), together with FFA, WCPFC and PNA, with considerably more resources (staff and funding) available to this sector.

Another point of difference is how the resources are managed, with oceanic fisheries members working in a more collaborative manner on what are perceived as shared/common resources. The challenge for coastal fisheries and aquaculture in the region is that these sectors are national/territorial resources, to be developed and managed separately by the respective governments and administrations, at national and local levels, with very limited regional or sub-regional coordination or collaboration on sustainable development and management.

17. The recent Benefish 4 study (and related Policy Briefs)¹ found that:

- Coastal fisheries are crucially important as they provide the vast majority of fish from the region for consumption by PICT communities, given that most offshore fisheries production is shipped out of the region;
- For all PICTs combined, the average value of a tonne of coastal commercial catch is USD 3405, coastal subsistence USD 2259, offshore locally based USD 1442, offshore foreign-based USD 1298, and freshwater USD 1519;
- Commercial and subsistence coastal fishing together are responsible for most of the contribution from fisheries in the region to GDP, employment, and regional fish supply - despite the volume of coastal production (174,084 tonnes) being much less than that of offshore fishing (1,351,932 tonnes); but
- Noted that coastal fishery and aquaculture statistical systems are poorly developed in the region, with government fishery agencies giving low priority to the collection of data on coastal catches and aquaculture production, which contrasts with offshore statistical systems that are in relatively good condition at both PICT and regional levels.

18. SPC FAME CFAP is at a critical stage with a 'business as usual' approach which is simply not sustainable to support all 22 PICT members across the full scope of the coastal fisheries and aquaculture sectors with the current resourcing (staffing and funding) levels. The current CFAP staff are working incredibly hard, long hours, with extensive duty travel to support our PICT member requests to the highest professional standards.

¹ Gillett R. and Fong M. 2023. Fisheries in the economies of Pacific Island countries and territories (Benefish Study 4). Noumea, New Caledonia: Pacific Community. 704 p. <https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/ppizh>

Gillett R.E., Cartwright I. 2023. SPC Policy Brief #41: The general results and policy implications of the Benefish Study 4. New Caledonia: Pacific Community. 4 p. <https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/gi56j>

Gillett R.E., Cartwright I. 2023. The coastal fisheries findings and policy implications of the Benefish Study 4 [SPC Policy Brief #43]. Noumea, New Caledonia: Pacific Community. 4 p. <https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/wmzhh>

19. In summary, SPC FAME CFAP is facing several challenges:

- The coastal fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the Pacific islands region are extremely broad, diverse and complex, but are critical to PICT members' economies, livelihoods, food security, and social and cultural wellbeing.
- The sustainable development and management of these sectors are already facing a wide range of challenges—economic, social and environmental—which will only increase as climate change impacts continue to escalate.
- SPC FAME CFAP is receiving an increasing number of diverse requests for support from PICT Members. Responding to these requests is fundamental to CFAP's role, and takes a considerable amount of resources, but the need to also be forward-looking and proactive is also a priority for the region.
- Confirmed funding beyond 2024 is insufficient to maintain current CFAP support to members, and the known funding pipeline is limited.
- SPC FAME CFAP staffing levels and areas of expertise currently constrains CFAP's ability to effectively respond to PICT member requests in a timely manner.
- The majority of CFAP staff are fully or partially funded through projects (i.e. time-limited), making retention of specialist coastal fisheries and/or aquaculture expertise very challenging.
- Over the last 12-18 months, SPC FAME CFAP has found it harder to recruit appropriate professional expertise required to be able to meet both PICT member and donor needs. Even in the best circumstances it takes between 3 to 6 months to recruit staff.

Options

20. HoF16 is an opportunity to discuss, help clarify and prioritise, from our PICT members' perspective, what SPC FAME CFAP's role, structure, mode of operations, and the level of resourcing (staff, skills and funding) should be to effectively support the region's coastal fisheries and aquaculture needs in the short- to medium-term (~2-5 years).
21. For aquaculture and aquatic biosecurity, the current sub-regional consultative workshops to guide the development of the Pacific Regional Aquaculture Strategy and the mid-term review of the Pacific Regional Framework on Aquatic Biosecurity (see [IP2](#)) are providing an opportunity to identify the region's priorities in these areas, and these will, in turn, guide what CFAP's areas of focus should be.
22. If resources are constrained, what should SPC FAME CFAP's core business, or focus, be? If we need to focus on fewer areas or issues, what are the highest priority areas of support that PICT members need? Should CFAP primarily focus on areas or issues that are common across the region, rather than focus on issues that are more restricted to certain PICTs or sub-regions only?
23. For coastal fisheries, should CFAP's core priorities be to support PICT members with designing and implementing fundamental fisheries data collection and analysis systems that can be used directly

for the management of priority target resources? Or focusing on support for the development or review of legislation, policy and/or management plans? Support for improving and expanding coastal fisheries monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement (MCSE)? Or continued support for scaling-up community-based fisheries management? Identifying, developing and training fishers on improved nearshore fisheries, including post-harvest handling and value-adding, or related alternative or supplementary livelihood options, including economic and socioeconomic assessments of existing or new fisheries or aquaculture options?

24. Alternatively, should CFAP focus on certain priority fisheries or species as core business? For example, a focus on sea cucumber fisheries, including aquaculture production, wild stock management, CITES NDF support, economic/socioeconomic assessments, MCSE, data management, etc.? Nearshore fisheries development and management, including anchored FADs? Identifying and supporting the development of new and innovative fisheries and aquaculture opportunities?
25. As 'form should follow function', once it is clear what PICT members' short- to medium-term (~2-5 years) priorities are for CFAP, we can then determine what the structure of CFAP should be, and what resources we will need to work with donors on securing. It will also be important to ensure CFAP complements, and doesn't duplicate, the coastal fisheries and aquaculture activities in PICTs directly funded by donors. This may, however, be an opportunity for PICT members that have direct funding support to fund/co-fund CFAP activities.

Questions for discussion

26. How can SPC FAME CFAP best support the region and PICT members with addressing your coastal fisheries and aquaculture needs?
27. What should SPC FAME CFAP's role(s) be in the short- to medium-term (~2-5 years)? How do you see SPC FAME CFAP operating in 5-years' time?
28. How should SPC FAME CFAP prioritise support to PICT members? What criteria should be used for prioritising? Is there a role for a HoF sub-committee to propose the criteria for HoF to adopt?
29. How do we improve resource mobilisation to supplement the funding pipeline for SPC FAME CFAP?

Annex 1: Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Programme work areas and staffing

SPC FAME CFAP Sections, Units & Work Areas	Staff Numbers ² [recruiting]
CFAP Programme Management and cross-cutting:	
• Programme management	1
○ Projects Management	1
○ Administrative support	3+[1]
• Climate change:	
○ Climate Change Project Development	[1]
○ Resilient Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture in Nauru project	[3]
• Economics	1
• Information & data management	1+[1]
• Publications & communications	DO
• MEL and reviews	DO
Aquaculture:	
• Section management	1
• Aquatic biosecurity	1
• Aquaculture	1+[1]
• Mariculture	[1]
• Aquaculture technical assistance	1
CFAP Science:	
• Section management	1 (p/t)
• Invertebrate science	1
• Coastal fisheries science	1
• Research assistance	[1]
Management and livelihoods:	
• Section management	1
• Community-Based Fisheries Management	2
• Fisheries development & livelihoods:	
○ Fisheries development	1+[1]
○ Socioeconomics	1
• Legal	2+[1]
• Policy and management planning	1
• Monitoring, Control, Surveillance & Enforcement	3+[1]
Total staff:	25+[12]

² As of 31 March 2024