

New course on Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Compliance takes off!

Competency-based assessments (CBAs) were conducted from 6 to 13 November 2018 for Cohort 1 of the new Certificate IV in Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Compliance. The course was developed by the Pacific Community (SPC) under the New Zealand-funded Coastal Fisheries Governance project in collaboration with the Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE) Programme of the University of the South Pacific (USP). Fifteen students who are working as monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) officers at varying levels in the Pacific, three guest lecturers and seven assessors participated in the assessments, which were held in Suva, Fiji. The assessments were a great success and thanks are extended to the assessors and guest lecturers whose assistance greatly helped to achieve a positive outcome.

All 15 students were graded as competent at the end of the CBAs, which was a fantastic outcome considering that 16 enrolled for the course in August 2018. They will graduate in early 2019 with a Certificate IV in Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Compliance. The one student who was unable to complete the CBAs had a good excuse – he was involved in rescue and restoration work in Vanuatu following Cyclone Hola, so he will be the first to be enrolled in Cohort 2 in early 2019.

The timeline for completing online components was condensed to three months because all Cohort 1 students had already completed Certificate IV in Fisheries Enforcement and Compliance (Certificate IV FEC, the old Forum Fisheries Agency foundation course) and were familiar with using the Moodle online learning platform. In addition, they had already graduated with a certificate in Operational Planning and Enforcement Processes, one of the mandatory

courses required for the new Certificate IV in Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Compliance.

The CBAs assess students' capabilities when dealing with real world situations along with their knowledge and understanding of the topics covered in the course. These topics included: legal issues related to enforcement, coastal fisheries and aquaculture management, inspection and interview procedures, and how to manage stakeholder consultations.

Market inspections were conducted at the Bailey Bridge market and the Suva Central market on Saturday morning. No offences were detected at the Bailey Bridge market, although undersized fish and mud crabs were located and confiscated from vendors during the inspection of the Suva Central Market. One vendor was issued a warning for selling goods without a fish license, while another vendor was selling a brown-marbled grouper (*delabulewa*), which is an



Students and assessors during a visit to the Crab Company. (image: USP)



Vessel inspection in Suva. (image: Ariella D'Andrea, SPC)

endangered species covered under Fiji's Endangered and Protected Species Act of 2002. Because the fisheries officers were not authorised officers under the Endangered and Protected Species Act the incident details were reported to the Department of Environment for further action.

One fishing vessel was also inspected because it was berthed at the small wharf opposite the market, and all of their catch was legal size. The market inspections were carried out very efficiently and the officers were well respected by the vendors and general public, with many asking questions about the purpose of their work. It was pleasing to see the students displaying good social and communication skills and remaining calm when questioned by vendors. Some of the vendors that were interviewed were really excited and thankful to receive a snap-on bracelet ruler that they could use to measure mud crabs and fish when harvesting them to ensure were of legal size.

In addition to market inspections, students undertook two visits to aquaculture ventures – the Kaybee Tilapia Farm and the Crab Company – to increase their understanding of operational aspects of aquaculture farms where vannamei shrimp are grown for the domestic market. Guest lecturers



Fish for sale at a market in Suva. (image Ariella D'Andrea, SPC)

from SPC's Aquaculture Section explained the workings of the aquaculture farms and gave students an insight into what permits and approvals are required for new aquaculture ventures in Fiji.

During the CBAs, we were advised that USP had just accredited the course so, in the future, it will be advertised as a full USP Certificate IV course. SPC will run the CBAs for at least the next two cohorts and provide student scholarships that will cover flights and accommodation for international students and cover their course fees. USP will provide the training venue and the facilitator for the online learning component, and this will include setting up and management of the USP Moodle platform that will be used to deliver the online component of the course. USP will also take over the advertising of the course and it is hoped within two–three years SPC's involvement will be limited to providing assistance during the CBA phase.

Nominations for the 2nd cohort of the Certificate IV in Coastal fisheries and Aquaculture Compliance will be called for in early 2019. If you are interested in nominating for the next course or would like further information please contact Ian Freeman at ianf@spc.int.

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Measuring fish being sold at the market to ensure they are of legal size (bottom); and confiscated fish and other seafood (top). (images: Ariella D'Andrea, SPC).