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HoF 8 Meeting Outcomes

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8th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting, 4–8 March 2013, Noumea, New Caledonia
8^e Conférence des Directeurs des pêches de la CPS, 4–8 mars 2013, Nouméa, Nouvelle-Calédonie



HoF 8 Meeting Outcomes

The eighth SPC Heads of Fisheries (HoF) Meeting took place at SPC Headquarters in Noumea, from 4th to 6th March 2013.

The meeting was chaired by the Director of Fisheries for French Polynesia (Mr Stephen Yen Kai Sun).

HoF is a regional meeting of the heads of SPC member country and territory fisheries departments, or their deputies, covering the entire range of interests for which they have responsibility and on which the SPC Division of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) provides advice and assistance. As such, the HoF meeting plays a unique role in providing strategic guidance to the Director's Office, Coastal Fisheries Programme (CFP) and the Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP) of FAME.

The following outcomes constitute the main points of consensus agreement among delegates that the meeting felt necessary to document, either to guide the management of the FAME work programme, to draw to the attention of other regional agencies and development partners, or to signal agreement on issues that require attention by members themselves, and to inform SPC CRGA.

The meeting was officially opened by Dr. Jimmie Rodgers, Director, SPC. The agenda of the 8th HOF was adopted with no additional provisions.

Coastal fisheries

1. Recognised data limitations in coastal fisheries, and noted CFP's progress in the development of standardised data collection processes, survey manuals and data storage systems. Called for the development of standardised data collection forms and practices to be a focus of future funding proposals.
2. Recognised that food security issues were becoming more critical to PICTs, including as a result of research identifying the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and population growth. The issue requires effective policy coordination and broad-scale assistance from governments, donor agencies and technical institutions, noting that the gap will continue to increase without effective management.
3. Encouraged the deployment of FADs as a means for addressing food security issues and to provide alternate sources of protein, particularly in ciguatera-prone areas, and supported CFP's continued assistance with FAD deployment and capacity development.
4. Recognized the lack of management and enforcement in coastal fisheries and identified the need to strengthen these areas, including capacity building.
5. Expressed concern over the increase in the number of ciguatera cases and recognized the need for more focus on awareness, general information dissemination, and more resources to address this issue. Suggested that a certification program could be established to identify fish caught in ciguatera-free areas.
6. Recognized the work of CFP to assist with fisheries-diversification projects, such as the development of fisheries for diamond-back squid, small pelagics, or bluenose, and noted that while such activities may not be viable at an export level they may be suitable for domestic markets.
7. Acknowledged the multi-faceted work areas of CFP and suggested that members be judicious with country requests.

8. Supported work undertaken by CFP in development of sport fisheries and of new products including fish handling DVDs for sport fisheries, training in tuna handling for sashimi grade product in Tarawa.
9. Called for continued assistance from SPC with developing guidelines for regulation of the aquarium trade.
10. Noted appreciation for the rollout of new coastal fisheries databases and acknowledged that satellite servers in outer provinces would be useful to link with a master server at the head fisheries office.
11. Requested that consideration should be given to placing one SPC fisheries person in the FSM SPC regional office if funding for such a position becomes available.
12. Indicated a need for more focus on coastal resources given the importance of these areas for national food security and livelihood.
13. Reaffirmed the need to find funding for a biosecurity officer in the aquaculture program at SPC.
14. Supported CFPs plans to have an aquaponics consultation in the near future.
15. Expressed support for private-public partnerships, particularly in the aquaculture sector. Suggested that SPC could provide a key facilitating role in the development of these partnerships in this sector.
16. Acknowledged the need for assistance with developing fishing associations in some PICTs and called for increased economic training.
17. Reaffirmed interest in work on fish waste processing facilities, particularly in terms of its economic viability.

Oceanic fisheries

18. Reaffirmed general support for pelagic stock assessment work from SPC-OFP, OFPs supporting role at regional, sub-regional, and national levels, and the SEAPODYM model as a forecasting tool. Acknowledged appreciation for adding economic information to projection analyses, with encouragement for more economic indicators.
19. Noted appreciation for country-level support from OFP, specifically work that aided in country-level negotiations, FAD closure management decisions, IMS, data entry and TUFMAN and TUF-ART database developments, and the training of observers. Affirmed the desire to continue country-level reports, specifically those aimed to assist with country-level management decisions.
20. Noted that the effects of fishing in territorial waters may be an area of future work for PICTs.
21. Agreed that more work to further last year's stalled draft CMM for south Pacific albacore which stalled in WCPFC is needed. Suggested continued cooperation with SCTB and other interested parties to work towards sustainable catch limits for SP albacore.
22. Noted the desire of some members for assistance with measuring an appropriate level of in-country fishing effort in terms of achieving desired economic benefits.
23. Called for country-level catch reporting estimates to be developed in addition to the usual estimates by fleet for the tuna data workshop.

24. Reaffirmed the interest of members to continue reference point and harvest control rule work on tuna to remain on track with the direction of the WCPFC.
25. Recognized the critical importance of the observer program to oceanic fisheries and the critical need to secure ongoing funding for this program, potentially through a user-pays cost-recovery program or as core SPC/FFA funding. Electronic data collection seen as a key improvement moving forward.
26. Recognized and thanked New Zealand for new funding support.
27. Explained the continued need to have data available on portable disk drives for countries with intermittent internet connections to ensure local data access.
28. Noted the importance of the OFP's role in capacity building, particularly for smaller fisheries administrations.
29. Reaffirmed the importance of the continued role of OFP as science service provider to WCPFC, which results in considerable benefit to SPC members through the provision of consistent scientific advice and data from regional through to national level
30. Expressed interest in examining interactions of key species between artisanal and growing sports fisheries and the commercial sector.

Director's Office and Information Unit

31. Supported the proposal to have a series of rolling strategic plans that are reviewed every two years.
32. Supported the rollout of work from the outcomes of the vulnerability assessment (Bell et al. 2011) on climate change, including 4 in-country workshops to be completed by June 2013, and noted that long-term indicators will be required to assess the success of climate change-related work activities.
33. Raised concerns regarding the imbalance in resourcing (both staffing and funding) between OFP and CFP, expressed interest in increasing staffing and funding to CFP.
34. Recommended more concrete measures be put in place for assessing FAME Director's Office activities and suggested review into activities and capacity of government fisheries offices in the region.
35. Identified the general need for more discussion to identify cost-recovery programs.

Export facilitation

36. Noted certification process involved with exporting into European market. Informed the meeting that it may be better to adopt a regional approach for export to EU and all could benefit from pooled resources.

Aquaculture biosecurity

37. Acknowledged with appreciation the concept paper developed by SPC and FAO regarding development of a regional aquatic biosecurity framework for PICTs.
38. Requested SPCs assistance with increasing the knowledge of current pathogens and pest species in countries through the development of country-specific pathogen lists and building capacity in risk analysis through training workshops.

39. Reaffirmed the need to find funding for a biosecurity officer in the aquaculture program at SPC. Suggested that alignment of project with OIE provides some scope for accessing funds through OIE World fund, however these would likely be for program funding rather than funding of staff.
40. Recommended a capacity and policy audit to be undertaken to assess current 'state of play' with regards to aquatic biosecurity.

Deepwater snapper

41. Acknowledged with appreciation and supported work planned and progress made in each of the four key priority areas of the deepwater snapper project (improving fisheries data collection, improving biological knowledge of key species, moving towards improved fisheries assessment and management and increased capacity building).
42. Expressed interest in expanding project to PICTs not currently involved (in particular PNG who offered support for research activities).
43. Requested consultations between relevant SPC project scientists and national stakeholders to ensure results and management outcomes are clearly understood.
44. Acknowledged with appreciation funding support from AusAID and supported the need for continued funding for this key work area.

Management of sea cucumber fisheries

45. Noted complexities in management and evaluating harvest of sea cucumber resources, including 'boom-bust' cyclical nature of fisheries, and the large increases in price of high-value species in last 5-10 years. Noted that allowing all species to be harvested opens the door to 'opportunistic exploitation'.
46. Suggested the use of species-specific TACs and that the most effective arena for evaluating harvest would be at the market gate (point of entry into the market). Suggested a comprehensive list of licensing criteria, similar to that currently in use in some PICTs (e.g. PNG), as a way forward at the regional level.
47. Thanked SPC for training assistance in assessing sea cucumber resources, including field surveys, species identification classes, standardisation of survey methods and development of survey manual, involvement of line officers and NGOs in field trainings, exchange trainings, attachments for data analysis and reporting. Requested continued assistance in these areas.
48. Recommended conservative management of high-value sea cucumber species, be it through species-specific catch quotas, species-specific bans, or exclusion of high-value species from lists of allowable species.
49. Noted the interesting study of IRD and the Vanuatu Fisheries Department, and the development of new FAO species catalogue on sea cucumbers.
50. Requested continued SPC assistance in the standardisation of methodologies to collect appropriate data. Recommended development of key reference densities, taking a regional and island-type perspective, based on all available data sources, and requested continued assistance in developing management plans and regulations to ensure compliance.
51. Called for greater transparency and enhanced understanding of market trends for sea cucumbers, including market prices at point of sale.

Presentations by other organisations

52. Expressed appreciation for JICA working with community-based coastal resource management (CBCRM), including activities on FAD deployment, milkfish aquaculture, and CBCRM programs in Vanuatu and Palau. Acknowledged collaborative technical support from SPC on FAD deployment projects. Noted the request from some PICTs for assistance with their observer program and with crew training in an attempt to increase local economic benefits (could be conducted in association with the Fisheries and Maritime Institute). Suggested that a formal network or forum be established for practitioners involved in community-based work programs to share experiences and increase regional collaboration.
53. Under the joint FFA and SPC DEVFISH project, FFA informed the meeting of the development of a draft curriculum for new regional qualification in MCS of which is aimed at oceanic but intended to also include coastal components. The draft curriculum will be passed to the MCS working group for comment later this year.
54. Supported the continued commitment to the Pacific Islands fisheries officer course at the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology for regional fisheries training in collaboration with SPC, and their expanded range of facilities and training opportunities. There was particular appreciation for new content such as small business training in collaboration with SPC and with MCS. Informed the meeting of likely new components based on HoF8 discussions, including database management and market and creel surveys, and noted that changes in the curriculum were a result of the 2003 review. Supported the continued funding assistance received from NZAid to continue the NMIT regional fisheries training course.
55. FAO explained developments, programs and activities under ABNJ (Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction), including tuna projects, deep sea projects, the ocean partnership project funded by the World Bank, and the strengthening of global capacity to effectively manage ABNJ. Acknowledged collaborative support from SPC as well as other regional organisations. Noted the joint SPC/FAO meeting on biosecurity in 2012. Acknowledged the importance of deep sea fisheries to some members and the potential for joint projects between FAOs deep sea program and SPC.

National tuna web pages

56. Acknowledged appreciation for the development of the national tuna web pages and for advancements with the SEAPODYM model.
57. Expressed interest in giving priority to translating certain report pages into French for use by the French territories.
58. Called for national coastal fishery web pages, similar to those presented for tuna, and requested that donor funding be extended to the coastal component.
59. Requested training workshops on the use and interpretation of ecosystem models (SEAPODYM).

Annex 1

Country statements and reports

French Polynesia

60. Informed the meeting of aspirations to further develop economically sustainable industries for the longline fishery (including with the use of refrigeration units, training and certifications) and other smaller (economically) fishery sectors.
61. Explained continued interest in aquaculture (finfish, prawns, pearl culture).
62. Explained interest in subsistence fishing in lagoon areas and the reintroduction of management plans this coming year for sea cucumber and further work with green snail and trochus.
63. Noted the development of new management plans for coastal and oceanic fisheries.

New Caledonia

64. Informed the meeting that a new regulatory framework for fisheries management was developed and is in line with WCPFC.
65. Commented that the VMS is in place and being used and that effort levels (# licenses) are being regulated with monitoring data.
66. Explained the continued importance of shrimp farming for aquaculture-based production as well as trends for the development of lagoon cultures.
67. Noted the establishment of a process towards a marine natural park in the Coral Sea.
68. Recognized the support from SPC in the last year, within the new joint country strategy.
69. New Caledonia informed the meeting that it is continuing to work on the establishment of a fish waste processing industry.

Papua New Guinea

70. Announced future plans to submit a document outlining activities and interests for future SPC support.
71. Explained that the tuna program is currently under review, including observer programs.
72. Recognized that K35 million has been given to both coastal and inland fisheries in provinces to fund program activities.
73. Informed the meeting of aspirations to install FADs in association with all maritime provinces by mid-2013 and to extend the seaweed program.
74. Explained the extension of the moratorium for sea cucumber for another 3 years with plans to develop a management plan; monitoring is ongoing.
75. Recognized SPC for work on the aquarium trade.
76. National Fisheries College commented on its support from regional programs (purse seine observer and tuna tagging), and the Nago Island Mariculture and Research Facility (cobia pathogen risk analysis, quarantine protocols and the supply of laboratory equipment).

Cook Islands

77. Informed the meeting of the expansion in oceanic fisheries for albacore and bigeye and the importance of the fishing sector to diversify economic base (away from tourism dependency).
78. Explained the importance of the artisanal and game fishing sectors and how assistance from license revenue is generated. Also noted the value of FADs in less productive waters with up to 10 units deployed around Rarotonga's 30km coastline.
79. Noted that there have been regulations to establish a total allowable catch (TAC) of 1250 days for purse seine fishing.
80. Recognized aspirations to increase exports and develop on-shore infrastructures.
81. Commented on the importance of sea cucumber and that stock assessments are underway for this species before commercial harvesting would fully begin.
82. Explained that pearl culture is struggling due to poor environmental management and profitability.
83. Recognized the lack of food security in the southern group islands such as at the capital island of Rarotonga and the challenge of redistributing fish caught from the northern atolls where there is an over-supply of fish.

New Zealand

84. Recognized SPCs assistance to PICTs and acknowledged that New Zealand is providing a three-year fund to assist in key oceanic areas of development and science.

Australia

85. Commended SPC FAME for the direction of its strategic plan and its capacity to respond to ongoing and emerging challenges.
86. Noted the need for greater national and regional attention to food security issues associated with pressures on inshore fisheries arising from climate change and other factors.
87. Commended the ongoing work associated with stock assessments in the valuable offshore tuna fisheries.
88. Noted that Australia would continue to provide critical support to relevant FFA and SPC fisheries programs and to bilateral partners in accordance with identified priorities, including those articulated within the Pacific oceanscape framework.