

Roadmap for inshore fisheries management and sustainable development 2014–2023

*Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat
Secretariat of the Pacific Community*

Melanesia: Our home, our fish, our wealth and our future

Background

At their March 2012 summit, the leaders of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) of countries (Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) agreed to develop a roadmap for the protection of inshore fisheries. This document presents that management framework and subregional roadmap for sustainable inshore fisheries, developed by the MSG Secretariat in cooperation with representatives of the fisheries departments of the MSG countries and with the technical assistance of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

This roadmap was initially developed by the Inshore Fisheries Working Group (IFWG) in Port Vila in October 2013. The process was facilitated by SPC and informed by a comprehensive Strategic Review of Inshore Fisheries Policies and Strategies in Melanesia, commissioned and managed by SPC. This strategy enhances the inshore fisheries management elements of the Memorandum of Understanding on Technical Cooperation in Inshore Fishery and Aquaculture Development, developed by MSG members in 2012.

The regional roadmap provides overarching guidance for MSG members and enumerates the actions they have agreed to take to address the management of inshore fisheries in Melanesia.

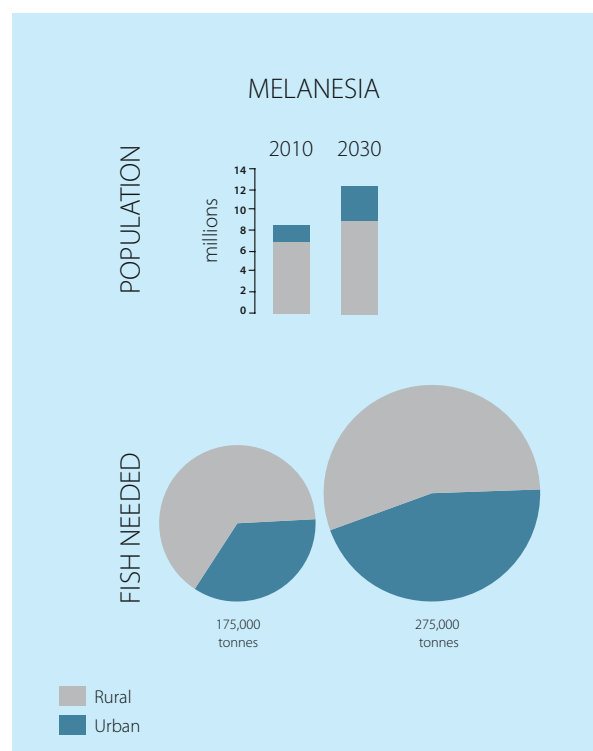
Context

A looming crisis: Inshore fisheries, upon which the majority of coastal populations depend, are generally fully exploited, or in some cases, overexploited. Increases in population and demand will drive many of them to collapse unless ways can be found to manage them sustainably.

Millions of people at risk: The majority of the population of Melanesia is dependent on inshore fisheries for subsistence and local economic needs. The risk

resulting from this high reliance on inshore fisheries is exacerbated by the limited alternative opportunities and increasing external pressures which have already driven the most valuable fisheries such as beche de mer (BDM) into a spiral decline of boom and bust. Climate change will increase vulnerability and management strategies are urgently needed to increase resilience and adaptive capacity.

Potentially large economic benefits: While management efforts and political attention have traditionally been monopolised by the high-value tuna fisheries, in fact the largely subsistence inshore fisheries



Projected population growth in rural and urban areas of Melanesia to 2030, and the fish needed for future food security (Bell 2009).

contribute 30%–95% of the overall value of all fisheries to the national GDP of Melanesian countries. In addition, it is estimated that sustainable management of the BDM fishery could make it possible to double the value of production to over USD 35 million each and every year; most of this would be returned as valuable cash income to coastal communities. The costs of improved inshore fisheries management in general would be offset by benefits to the national economies.

The need for a strategic approach to securing fisheries and livelihoods: Considerable efforts have been made by fisheries departments to sustain or increase seafood production, including the use of aquaculture, fish aggregating devices (FADs) and a variety of other interventions. Despite these efforts there remains considerable concern about the health of inshore fisheries. Community-based resource management (CBRM) is widely agreed to be a fundamental approach, although its implementation and support still require refining if it is to be fully effective. However, the experiences, both positive and negative, provide the basis for a strategic selection of approaches that should lay the basis for successfully co-managed inshore fisheries. This should be built on a strong partnership between coastal communities and the various levels of government. Importantly, while alternative livelihoods will be useful in creating opportunities; pursuit of these should not detract from the real and immediate benefits that can arise from improved management.

Political will and leadership will continue to be required: The initiative and support demonstrated by leaders in requesting the development of the roadmap will need to be sustained to ensure its implementation and even increased if inshore fisheries are to realise their full potential in contributing to sustainable development and the livelihoods of the people of Melanesia.

Managing communities rather than fish: An understanding of communities and their social and

economic circumstances is key to effective community-based management. If individuals in communities are not engaged, or are not supportive of inshore management initiatives, it is highly unlikely they will be effective. Communities are, understandably, more interested in development opportunities; the challenge will be balance development with effective management, the latter tending to be seen as telling fishers “what they cannot do”. In reality, effective management allows fishers to continue to harvest benefits from their marine resources for the long term.

The size of the challenge: MSG members have extensive coastlines and widespread, isolated communities and islands. Inshore management approaches have not always reflected this reality, instead focusing efforts on small areas, using intensive approaches that are neither sustainable nor easily adapted to achieving national coverage.

Many users of the marine environment: Fishing is only one use of the marine environment. It may be seen as a dumping ground for pollutants, either directly or through run-off from rivers. Coastal development for tourism may devastate valuable mangroves and destructive fishing methods can have adverse impact on stocks. Without a healthy sustaining marine ecosystem and a balanced use of the marine environment, inshore fisheries cannot exist.

Guiding principles

The following principles will guide the overall implementation of the roadmap:

- It is important to achieve sustainability of resources to provide long-term economic, social, ecological and food security benefits.
- Coastal communities should be empowered with appropriate support from national and local



Aquaculture and FADs can be used to sustain or increase seafood production (images: Antoine Teitelbaum and William Sokimi).

government as well as regional agencies and other non-government stakeholders, to implement CBRM for the benefit of our nations.

- A bottom-up approach, requiring government support to communities, should be provided at or as close as possible to community level, using provincial/local government and other mechanisms and collaborations.
- Approaches should be realistic, achievable, step-wise and measurable, and should focus initially on the better use of existing human and financial resources for long-term food security and sustainable livelihoods for coastal communities.
- Development pressures should not distract from the pursuit of the real and immediate benefits that will arise from improved management to secure the long terms sustainability of resources.
- The approach should be based on a Melanesian partnership that builds on and shares the diversity of experiences while recognising the differences between MSG members, species and stock status.
- Climate change will adversely impact inshore fisheries and their supporting ecosystems; therefore, investing in improving management systems, especially with an emphasis on ecosystem approaches to fisheries management, will increase resilience and adaptation ability complementary to the MSG Leaders' Declaration on Environment and Climate Change.
- The roadmap should be an instrument that facilitates delivery of existing national inshore fisheries objectives, with minimal additional administrative burden.

Vision

Sustainable inshore fisheries, well managed using community-based approaches that provide long-term economic, social, ecological and food security benefits to our communities.

Objectives

1. Development of an effective policy, legislation and management framework for the management of inshore resources, in accordance with other relevant international agreements, to empower coastal communities to manage their marine resources.
2. Education, awareness raising and the provision of information on the importance and management of inshore fisheries.
3. Capacity building to sustainably develop and manage inshore resources with particular reference to experiences in the MSG members.
4. Adequate resources to support inshore fisheries management and best available science and research.
5. Secure long-term economic and social benefits to coastal communities from the sustainable use of inshore resources.
6. Establishment of effective collaboration with stakeholders and partners.
7. Restoration and maintenance of BDM stocks to maximise long-term economic value to coastal communities.

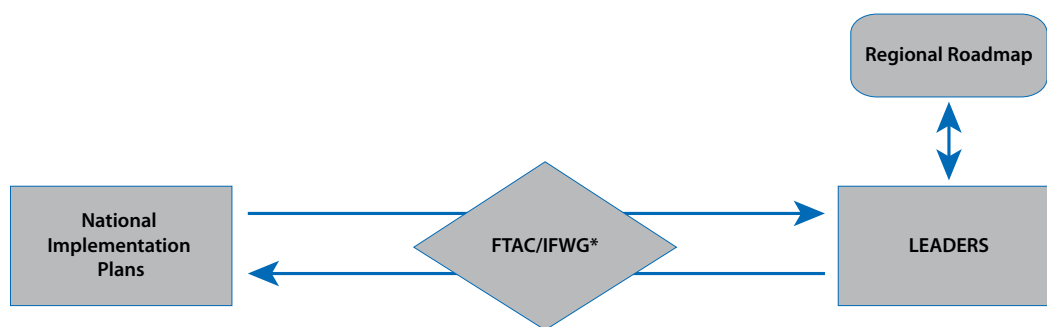
Timeline and priority actions

The roadmap is to be implemented over a 10-year period, from 2014 to 2023. The timelines in the roadmap provide a general indication of goals and milestones to be met; however, it is noted that a few priority and relatively easily actionable objectives can be achieved in the short term to:

- make best use of existing human and financial resources;
- build the profile of and promote “success stories” in inshore fisheries management; and
- attract additional support from donors and government for longer-term, more resource-intensive activities.

Implementation at the national level

The sub-roadmap provides overarching guidance for MSG members and enumerates the actions they have agreed to take to address the management of inshore fisheries in Melanesia. Individual members have committed to national implementation plans, which will give effect to the regional roadmap at the national level, noting that a number of the regional actions are underway or are planned under existing national arrangements.



* FTAC: Fisheries Technical Advisory Committee
IFWG: Inshore Fisheries Working Group

Monitoring and evaluation process.

Considerable progress was made with national implementation plans by the members during the October 2013 workshop.

Monitoring and evaluation

If this plan is to be effective it is vital to monitor progress and identify and address emerging shortfalls in a timely manner. The process described above seeks to clearly assign roles and define the process for achieving this.

Role of MSG Secretariat

The MSG Secretariat will support members in meeting reporting requirements, with the information to be provided to the MSG Fisheries Technical Advisory Committee (FTAC) annual meetings and to help ensure leaders are updated at the biennial leaders meetings. The Secretariat will also coordinate and harmonise approaches for regional agencies and development partners regarding assistance to members for implementation of the roadmap at the national level, as agreed by members from time to time.

Role of national administrations

The draft sub-regional roadmap is complemented by national implementation plans developed by MSG members. Each member will:

- Self-assess progress.
- Provide reports through national fisheries departments, including for activities carried out by partners or other ministries.
- Endeavour to obtain independent assessment through an existing or specifically formed national committee or network which includes civil society and community participation.
- Address shortfalls in performance.

Frequency and format of reporting and review

- Reporting by national fisheries departments will be annual.
- Reports will be provided to leaders at their meeting every two years (via FTAC).
- The roadmap will be reviewed every three years.

Performance measurement

- Specific performance indicators will be incorporated as appropriate in national implementation plans and reported by national fisheries departments in their annual reports.

The endorsement process

- The draft roadmap was presented and endorsed by IFWG at its meeting on 2–8 October 2013. This will be presented to the FTAC at its meeting in April 2014 before final endorsement by the MSG leaders through the Trade and Economic Officials Meeting, Senior Officials Meeting and Foreign Ministers Meeting.

Reference

Bell J.D., Kronen M., Vunisea A., Nash W.J., Keeble G., Demmke A., Pontifex S. and Andréfouët S. 2009. Planning the use of fish for food security in the Pacific. *Marine Policy* 33:64–76.

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