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**SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION**  
**TWENTY-FOURTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES**  
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 3-7 August 1992)

**SPC FISHERIES PROGRAMME OVERVIEW**  
(Paper prepared by the Secretariat)

**INTRODUCTION**

1 This paper provides an overview of some issues relating to the management of the Commission's Fisheries Programme. Staff changes are presented, Secretariat action in response to the recommendations passed by the 23rd RTMF is noted, and major issues related to project planning or funding are noted.

2 More complete details of the specific fisheries-related activities carried out by the Commission during 1991/1992 are given in WP 2 (Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme) and WP 3 (Coastal Fisheries Programme).

**STAFFING**

3 On 30 June 1992, Fisheries Programme staff totalled 31 professional positions (5 of which were unfilled), 7 secretarial/project assistant staff and 2 data entry technicians. The positions of Fisheries Coordinator, Coastal Fisheries Programme Manager, Fisheries Education and Training Advisor and Senior Inshore Fisheries Scientist became vacant and were filled during the year.

4 Five established professional posts are currently vacant. The TBAP Computer Systems Manager and the Women's Fisheries Programme Officer left the Commission in March and April respectively. The posts of Senior Fisheries Scientist, Fisheries Scientist (TBAP) and Master Fisherman have all been vacant for over a year due to shortage of funding. These constraints make it unlikely that any of these posts will be filled in the short to medium term.

5 It has been necessary to recruit short-term consultants from time to time to alleviate some of the problems arising from staff shortages. A data processing consultant was engaged by the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme for the period February to July 1992, and will be renewed for a further 6-month period from September 1992. Two consultants have been engaged for one-month periods as Master Fishermen to carry out national assignments within the Deep Sea Fisheries Development Project. In addition, a visiting senior scientist position within the TBAP has been filled by secondment from the US National Marine Fisheries Service for a period of one year, commencing August 1991.

## FUNDING

6 The funding base of the Fisheries Programme is complex, involving as it does both SPC's core budget as well as a wide variety of extra-budgetary donors. In general, funding to the programme is continuing to increase but at a slower rate than in previous years.

7 The TBAP continued to be funded entirely from extra-budgetary sources, and financial planning continues to proceed on a year by year basis. The central work programme is funded by contributions from the traditional donors - Australia (AIDAB), France, USAID and New Zealand. These contributions totalled 623,000 CFP units (1 CFP unit = 100 CFP) in 1991 (1/10/1989 - 30/9/1991), and were supplemented by larger contributions in support of fixed term field-oriented projects - the Regional Tuna Tagging Project, the Albacore Tagging Project (both EC-funded) and the Coordination of Albacore Data (ICOD-funded). These latter contributions totalled 1,040,215 CFP units.

8 The financial position of the TBAP is becoming increasingly uncertain. Two of the traditional donors have reduced their contributions during 1992, and another may do so during 1993. The programme has also carried forward a deficit since 1987, although this has been steadily reduced. Alternative sources of funding are proving difficult to identify at a time when the services of the TBAP are in increasing demand, and some reduction in personnel and services in 1993 seems inevitable at this stage. With continuing delays in anticipated EC Lomé IV funding, detailed analysis of RTTP results may also be disrupted.

9 Expenditure by the Coastal Fisheries Programme in 1991 was 1.957 million CFP units, of which 16.6% came from the SPC core budget and the remainder from extra-budgetary donors. Expenditure in 1992 is expected to be around the same level, of which 16.2% will be provided by SPC's core budget. The 1993 budget estimate is 2.374 million CFP units, of which only 10.4% is anticipated to come from SPC core budget.

10 The declining proportion of core support is a cause of concern, since it leaves the programme increasingly at the whim of extra-budgetary donors and leads to increasing potential for programmes becoming donor-driven. The decline is due both to increases in the XB component (up 28% between 1991 and 1993) and decreases in core allocations (down 25% in the same period). The Deep Sea Fisheries Development Project in particular has suffered a severe cutback in core contributions, from 249,300 units originally allocated in 1992, to 121,900 units in 1993, and zero in 1994.

## RELATIONS WITH FFA

11 The Thirty-First South Pacific Conference last year recommended that closer co-ordination and dialogue be established between SPC and FFA, and directed the Secretariat to report on this matter to the Thirty-Second South Pacific Conference.

12 A meeting of senior FFA and SPC fisheries staff met in Port Vila during March to address this issue. The meeting noted the need for improved information exchange between SPC and FFA, and for the development of effective consultative mechanisms, particularly on matters involving country-specific activities and in approaching funding agencies. Both agencies acknowledged the usefulness of the Port Vila meeting and felt that this should be formalised into an annual undertaking. A report of the meeting is available as Information Paper 2.

13 A further consultation between the two organisations was held opportunistically in Fiji in June 1992, following the Pacific ACP Group of Officials Meeting on Lomé IV Regional Programmes and Projects.

#### SECRETARIAT ACTION IN RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 23RD SPC REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES

14 The recommendations made by the 23rd RTMF are listed below, together with brief commentaries on action taken by the Secretariat in response to each one.

##### Recommendation No. 1

15 *In order to facilitate the role of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish in providing technical review of the work of the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme for the RTMF, the meeting endorsed the recommendation of the Fourth Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish that the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme prepare and distribute to Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish members prior to each meeting:*

- a detailed description of any proposed new activities,
- a projected work plan for the year.

16 Action taken: Despite some difficulties posed by the deferral of the TBAP Strategic Plan (see below), a work plan for 1992 was presented, in agreed format, to the Fifth Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish (SCTB) and approved in principle by that Committee. SCTB considered that an adequate mechanism for evaluating proposed new activities was not yet available, and proposed a format whereby new activities could be described, circulated for consideration in advance, and discussed by the Committee.

##### Recommendation No. 2

17 *The meeting endorsed the recommendation of the Fourth Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish that a detailed operational plan for 1992-1996 be developed by the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme and distributed in advance of the Fifth Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish for evaluation by that meeting.*

18 Action taken: With the decision of the Thirty-First South Pacific Conference to defer consideration of the draft Strategic Plan for the TBAP for the period 1992-1996, no action could be taken on this item. Funding uncertainties have additionally clouded this issue. In the expectation that Conference this year will approve the Strategic Plan, the Fifth Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish directed that an operational plan be developed for 1993-1997 and distributed in advance of Sixth SCTB.

### Recommendation No. 3

19 *The meeting recommended that the South Pacific Commission assist Pacific Island countries to make use of remote sensing and image processing in survey work on trochus and other marine resources, especially benthic invertebrates.*

20 Action taken: A proposal to set up an in-house image processing and basic GIS facility that could be used for the analysis of remotely sensed data at SPC was put forward for consideration to CRGA 15, held in Tonga in October 1991. A decision on the issue was deferred to CRGA 16 in May 1992, which approved that SPC go ahead with the establishment of an appropriate facility covering its own programmes' needs. The principal focus for the first year of operation will be inshore marine resources. As the facility becomes better established it will gradually expand its services to other parts of the Commission and, ultimately, may evolve into a larger RS/GIS technical and advisory service addressing the needs of the region.

21 The Commission will continue in its efforts to secure funding to permit the installation of a small image processing facility (computer hardware and software) which can be used to support both SPC and national marine resource survey efforts by providing basic image processing services and training. This development will require a substantial commitment of time by IFRP staff.

### Recommendation No. 4

22 *The Meeting recommended that the South Pacific Commission establish a new Special Interest Group (SIG) on shells and the shell trade, focussing especially on trochus.*

23 Action taken: The first issue of the Trochus Information Bulletin has been published and circulated within the region. Copies are available from the Secretariat.

### Recommendation No. 5

24 *The Meeting recommended that the South Pacific Commission carry out a detailed study of the Aitutaki trochus fishery as a case study, in order to provide management-related information that will be applicable to the developing fisheries in other atolls of the region.*

25 Action taken: The study, which will be carried out in collaboration with the Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources, and with funding and technical support from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research and the FAO South Pacific Regional Aquaculture Development Programme, is expected to take place in September 1992, in the period around the next Aitutaki trochus harvest. Six fisheries officers (2 from Cook Islands and 4 from other Pacific Island countries), 1 Australian scientist sponsored by ACIAR, and 1 SPC scientist will travel to Rarotonga and Aitutaki for approximately 1 month to carry out a survey and harvest monitoring programme which will yield detailed information on trochus population dynamics useful to fisheries managers throughout the region.

### Recommendation No. 6

26 *The meeting recommended that the South Pacific Commission encourage the adoption of standardised survey techniques for trochus and other benthic marine invertebrates in Pacific Island countries, so as to enable comparison of results by different workers and from different areas.*

27 Action taken: A handbook on standardised survey techniques for benthic marine invertebrates is currently in preparation. The draft is being produced by staff of the Sea Fisheries Division of the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, working in collaboration with IFRP staff. Some unanticipated delays have occurred in the production of this document but the Commission expects that it will be completed before the year-end. Once completed, this document will provide a means whereby countries of the region can apply standardised methods during marine resource surveys.

### Recommendation No. 7

28 *The Meeting recommended that the South Pacific Commission request the Government of France to provide continued support for the SPC component of the PIMRIS project, and continue its attempts to identify funding for long-term attachment of national information officers to the Project as a means of establishing and strengthening national-level PIMRIS activities.*

29 Action taken: There was a slight increase in the 1992 funding for this project, which was generously provided by the Government of France, and which permits the continued employment of the Fisheries Information Officer. Indications are that France will continue to fund the project at similar levels during 1993. However, to enable the project to fully meet its objectives, additional funding, extending beyond 1993, will have to be sought. Long-standing negotiations with ICOD for additional support for this project, under way for over two years, finally fell through at the beginning of 1992 due to ICOD's closure. Alternative potential funding sources will now need to be identified.

30 One short training attachment nevertheless took place during 1992, using British Government funding support provided through the Inshore Fisheries Research Project, the umbrella activity within which the Fisheries Information Project falls.

### Recommendation No. 8

31 *The Meeting recommended that the Secretariat make all the necessary arrangements to enable the practical module of the SPC/Nelson Polytechnic Pacific Island Fisheries Officers Course to be held in Vanuatu in 1992.*

32 Action taken: The 1992 practical module of the SPC/Nelson Polytechnic Pacific Island Fisheries Officers Course was held at the Fisheries Training Centre on the island of Espiritu Santo from 1 June to 4 July. The success of the course was due in large part to the excellent support provided by the Government of Vanuatu and the staff of the Fisheries Training Centre.

### **Recommendation No. 9**

33 *The Meeting accepted that there was a need for improved coordination of education and training in the fisheries sector within the region. The Meeting recommended that SPC, by the most appropriate means and as soon as possible, obtain the views of donors, educational institutes and regional agencies, in order to determine how best to achieve that improvement, and report to member governments on the outcome of these consultations.*

34 Action taken: Consultations on this issue have been held with the University of the South Pacific, the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, Micronesian Maritime Academy, Fiji Marine School, Nelson Polytechnic, Australian Maritime College, and member country representatives. Most of these consultations took place during an extra-plenary gathering at the workshop on "Opportunities for ASEAN/PIN Collaboration in Fisheries Education and Training" sponsored by the Western Pacific Fisheries Consultative Committee, in which FFA collaborated.

35 There remain major areas of disagreement about appropriate ways to improve the coordination of fisheries training activities in the region. In order to try to resolve these issues in a mutually acceptable way, a discussion paper including concrete proposals for action will be presented during the "Workshop on Fisheries Training for the Pacific Islands" to be held as part of this meeting.

### **Recommendation No. 10**

36 *The Meeting recommended publication of the regional report of the Human Resource Development Study in the form of an SPC technical publication, and publication of the country reports, subject to authorisation from governments within a period of 12 weeks. As many of the recommendations of the report lie beyond the scope of the RTMF to address, it was further recommended that the report be distributed widely within the region (government central agencies, donors, educational institutions, education departments) and that SPC seek the views of these recipients on the value of the recommendations.*

37 Action taken: Some delays in responding to this recommendation occurred because the position of Fisheries Education and Training Advisor became vacant in early 1991 and was not filled until February 1992. Following editorial work to incorporate comments received during the 23rd RTMF, the report was circulated to member countries in March 1992. The specified 12-week deadline for replies and corrections expired in June 1992 and the document was finalised during early in July. The report has now been submitted to the Commission's publications department and is expected to be printed and distributed shortly.

### **Recommendation No. 11**

38 *The Meeting recommended that the South Pacific Commission, the University of the South Pacific and the Nelson Polytechnic consult together with a view to establishing the feasibility of introducing a Certificate in Fisheries Studies as soon as possible.*

- 39 Action taken: Consultation has taken place as required, through correspondence and opportunistic meetings. Other training institutions and several Pacific Island country representatives have also participated in the consultations as opportunity permitted.
- 40 A number of options have been discussed whereby the proposed Certificate course might be established. However, there are many considerations that relate to this issue and none of the options appears completely satisfactory. In order to finalise this matter, a discussion paper outlining the various options available will be presented during the "Workshop on Fisheries Training for the Pacific Islands" to be held as part of this meeting.

#### **Recommendation No. 12**

- 41 *The Meeting recommended that the South Pacific Commission set up a Special Interest Group on traditional marine resource management and knowledge in the SPC region, to provide a focus for collection, discussion and dissemination of information on these subjects.*
- 42 Action taken: The Special Interest Group has been established as recommended. A questionnaire seeking interest in membership of the group was circulated in June 1992. The first group information bulletin, entitled "Traditional Marine Resource Management and Knowledge", has been prepared under the supervision of an external technical specialist, Dr Ken Ruddle, and was submitted for printing and distribution in July 1992.

#### **Recommendation No. 13**

- 43 *The Meeting recommended that the Inshore Fisheries Research Project assist, in consultation with member countries and, where appropriate, in collaboration with other regional organisations, in the design and use of customary marine tenure questionnaires, building on the experience of the Solomon Islands in their survey of 43 customary marine tenure systems in that country.*
- 44 Action taken: Some difficulties were experienced in obtaining a copy of the Solomon Islands report and questionnaire referred to in the recommendation, but they were ultimately circulated to all member countries in June 1992. Any comments or additional information forthcoming will be disseminated through future issues of the "Traditional Marine Resource Management and Knowledge" Information Bulletin.

#### **Recommendation No. 14**

- 45 *The Meeting recommended that SPC approach countries which already have animal quarantine regulations and collect information from appropriate international institutions, in order to compile guidelines and regulations already in use; on the basis of this compilation, a report on quarantine protocols for marine organisms, especially those which are the subject of aquaculture, should be published and circulated to all member countries.*

- 46 Action taken: A joint agreement has been entered into between the Commission and SPREP, whereby an external consultant has been engaged to review the history of introductions of marine organisms in the Pacific Islands region. The draft report was still awaited in July. When this material is received it will be combined with data on plant and animal quarantine regulations applicable in the region, compiled by IFRP staff with the assistance of SPC's Plant Protection and Veterinary Services. General and, in some cases, species-specific recommendations will then be developed for marine organism quarantine procedures appropriate to the region.

#### **Recommendation No. 15**

47 *The Meeting recommended that the South Pacific Commission follow up French Polynesia's offer to contribute to developing a policy and a regional programme for cooperation in the field of pearl shell resource enhancement.*

- 48 Action taken: French Polynesian authorities continue to express their willingness in principle to collaborate with other Pacific Island countries in developing a regional approach to pearl oyster culture, but the terms and conditions under which this could take place have yet to be elaborated. This item will be further discussed during the meeting with a view to identifying specific, concrete actions that can be taken by the various interested parties to encourage collaboration in this potentially important aquaculture activity.

#### **Recommendation No. 16**

49 *The Meeting recommended that the South Pacific Commission Secretariat write to the United Nations Development Programme to urge that the FAO/UNDP Regional Fishery Support Programme continue, and that the Secretariat also bring this issue to the attention of the CRGA.*

- 50 Action taken: A letter to this effect was sent from the Secretary General to UNDP in August 1991. The subject was also raised at the October CRGA held in Tonga in October 1991.

#### **Recommendation No. 17**

*The Meeting recommended that Pacific Island governments stress the need for the continuation of the FAO/UNDP Regional Fishery Support Programme in its present form at the Meeting of Aid Coordinators to be held early in 1992.*

- 51 Action taken: This recommendation was directed to SPC member governments. No action was required from the Secretariat.



**Recommendation No. 18**

52 *The Meeting recommended that Governments of SPC member countries urge the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations to continue funding the South Pacific Aquaculture Development Programme (SPADP).*

53 Action taken: This recommendation was directed to SPC member governments. No action was required from the Secretariat.

**NEW PROJECTS**

54 Several major projects have been approved by previous RTMFs, and subsequently endorsed by CRGA and the South Pacific Conference, and the Commission has been seeking extra-budgetary funding for their implementation. A list of these projects, together with the name of the donor that has been approached, and their estimated cost, is as follows:

Project title	Donor approached	Value
South Pacific Regional Tuna Research Project	European Community	ECU 5,000,000
Regional Post-Harvest Fisheries Facility	European Community	ECU 2,218,000
Regional Purse Seine Test Fishing Project	European Community	ECU 4,000,000
Small-boat Offshore Fishery Development	UNDP	US\$ 912,187
Support to SPC/ PIMRIS Fisheries Information Activities	ICOD	C\$ 245,877

55 Copies of project documents are available to SPC member country delegations. All the above projects have received the strong endorsement of Pacific Island countries and territories during the periods in which they have been developed. Following direction received at RTMF 23, the three projects submitted for EC funding consideration were prioritised through a process of consultation with RTMF country representatives. The order of priority and a brief description of each project is as follows.

**South Pacific Regional Tuna Research Project (RTRP) (ECU 5,000,000) (Priority 1)**

56 Funding of this project would enable the TBAP to implement continuous scientific monitoring of the region's tuna fisheries, now the world's largest, and to undertake and refine the tuna resource assessment work based on the results of the EC-funded Regional Tuna Tagging Project (RTTP). Port sampling, scientific observer, additional field-based biological sampling, and continuing assessment and modelling are planned.

**Regional Post-Harvest Fisheries Facility (RPFC) (ECU 2,218,000) (Priority 2)**

57 The objective of this project is to establish a facility that would provide the region with the support services and training opportunities needed to elevate and strengthen the assistance provided to seafood processing and export operations. This project, which was approved at RTMF 22 and subsequently ratified at the South Pacific Conference, is described in more detail in WP 3.

**Regional Purse Seine Test Fishing Project (PSTP) (ECU 4,000,000) (Priority 3)**

58 This project, which was developed over a 2-year period which involved extensive consultation with member countries, aims to explore the feasibility of small-scale purse-seine tuna fishing outside the areas of activity of presently operating fleets.

59 These projects have now been considered by two EC/ACP meetings (in February and June 1992) to discuss funding of Lomé IV projects in general. The RTRP and RPFC were both placed in the high priority category of projects to be considered for funding within the marine resources allocation. The projects were nevertheless in the position of competing for funds both with each other and with projects submitted by other regional agencies. As a result, a final decision was ultimately made to accept only the top priority project from each agency for final funding consideration by EC decision-makers in Brussels.

60 The SPC project that will be considered in Brussels is therefore the RTRP, but Lomé IV funding for the project is not yet certain. Some problems still remain to be solved in ensuring continuity between ongoing TBAP/RTTP activities and the RTRP given the length of time likely to be involved in securing the first funding disbursement for the new project. The RTTP concludes on September 30th 1992, but with much of the important analytical work still needing to continue beyond that time. Negotiations will commence shortly to seek a commitment of bridging finance from unspent Lomé III funds to ensure that there is no discontinuity between operational phases of the TBAP.

61 Lomé IV funding for the RPFC now appears unlikely unless other projects are withdrawn. The EC have nevertheless indicated a continued interest in financing this project. Discussions to identify other possible sources of EC funding will take place in the near future. An update on these discussions will be presented during the meeting. If EC funding ultimately proves unavailable, further substantial delays are likely to occur as attempts are made to identify alternative funding sources.

62 Funding for the PSP from any EC-related source appears highly unlikely. Given the length of time that has expired since the project was conceived, the major changes that have occurred in both local and distant-water fishing fleets and operations during that time, and the likely need to re-format the project proposal if it is to be presented to another funding donor, it is the Secretariat's view that the PSP proposal is no longer appropriate in its present form and is in need of major review and modification. This is discussed at greater length in WP.4.

**Small-boat Offshore Fishery Development (US\$ 912,187)**

- 63 This 4-year project aims to strengthen Pacific Island member countries capacity to harvest offshore fishery resources through a combination of activities including FAD programme support, small- to medium-scale fishing gear trials and development, development of catch handling and marketing procedures, and associated training and manpower development support. The role of the project, and its relationship with the Deep Sea Fisheries Development Project, is discussed in more detail in WP 4.
- 64 The project received very strong support from countries of the region at the UNDP Meeting of Aid Coordinators in June 1991. UNDP funding has been committed in principle and the Commission has been advised that project documents and official project approval can be expected in the near future.

**Support to SPC/ PIMRIS Fisheries Information Activities (C\$ 245,877)**

- 65 This project aims to provide support to the production of technical reports by regional fishery workers and the upgrading of report writing skills in the region through a variety of means, including research and training attachments with the Inshore Fisheries Research Project. The project also includes an element to allow expansion of the number of Special Interest Groups presently being operated by the Fisheries Information Project.
- 66 Negotiations regarding funding of this project had been under way for some time with the International Center for Ocean Development (ICOD). However, ICOD was formally closed by the Canadian Government early in 1992, and as a result the Commission will now need to identify a new potential funding source for this activity
- 67 Irrespective of the present status of funding negotiations, the Commission is committed to the implementation of each of these projects, subject to the availability of funding. As funding agencies are often influenced in their considerations by the conclusions of regional technical gatherings such as this one, country delegates are encouraged to express their views on the relative priorities and importance of these projects, and the way in which these may have changed over time.