

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

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Coastal Fisheries Programme Review: Draft Secretariat Response

**Coastal Fisheries Programme
Secretariat of the Pacific Community
Noumea, New Caledonia**

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Introduction

1. SPC programme reviews are carried out in a standardised manner across the range of SPC programmes and support sections. The Coastal Fisheries Programme review was no exception, and was carried out by an independent team of consultants working to a set of terms of reference designed to make SPC programme reviews as comparable with each other as possible. It is the SPC Chief Executive who commissions such reviews via the SPC Planning Unit, and who decides what actions to take upon the recommendations, through the relevant Divisional head.
2. The standard procedure on receipt of review recommendations has become for the Secretariat to prepare a formal response, to inform the decisions of the Director General, and for the information of SPC Governing Councils and stakeholders, particularly the relevant Sectoral Meeting, in this case Heads of Fisheries.
3. The secretariat response to the Coastal Fisheries Programme review of May-July 2003 is as follows, itemised against each major recommendation of the review, and followed by some general comments. The full review is available as Information Paper 5.

Response to the Recommendations of the Review of the Coastal Fisheries Programme

Issue	Review Text	Draft Secretariat Response
The Review	Work on the review by the four consultants took place between late May and early July 2003. SPC headquarters in Noumea was visited and most of the CFP staff present were interviewed. The Review Team then visited New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, and Papua New Guinea and meetings were held with fisheries stakeholders. Discussions by telephone were undertaken with individuals in ten other SPC countries. Altogether, CFP issues were discussed with 101 SPC staff, fisheries officials, commercial operators, villagers, NGOs, national environment departments, regional organizations, donors, and other stakeholders.	A slightly different methodology would have been to hold the review to coincide with HoF3, as the OFP Review coincided with HoF2, in order to personally consult with representatives of all member countries for the least expense. However, one of the aims in commissioning the review was to be able to actually present the results to HoF3.
General Conclusion	The Coastal Fisheries Programme is generally effective in its mission to optimise the value of small-scale fisheries and aquatic resource use in Pacific Island waters. All six sections of the CFP appear to be making good progress towards meeting their established objectives.	

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<p>Other Important Findings</p>	<p>In many countries of the region the fisheries management capacity of government fisheries agencies is low while the need for these skills is large and likely to grow. A “burning need” therefore is for more assistance related to increasing the capacity to manage fisheries.</p> <p>Another important assistance need is in the area of economic analysis. An important part of the CFP work is giving advice on fisheries development, aquaculture development, and enterprise development, but the lack of economic analytical capability negatively affects the impact of CFP efforts.</p> <p>One of the strongest messages to come from the extensive consultations undertaken in this review was that CFP’s links and communications with countries have weakened in recent years, and many of the important fishery stakeholders are only vaguely aware of the range of CFP services available to them.</p>	<p>SPC accepts the identification of improved fisheries management capacity by member government fisheries agencies as a “burning need”, and will focus the CFP towards this. This having been said, it is noted that the CFP role in coastal fisheries management needs to continue to work in harmony with, and not overlap FFA’s role in oceanic fisheries management, and it is suggested that the SPC/FFA MOU be reviewed to make this clear.</p> <p>Fisheries economics is another area where confusion between FFA and SPC roles is possible. The potential for improved impact is recognised however, and will be vigorously explored.</p> <p>Given the lack of baseline information, SPC does not uncritically accept that links and communications with members have weakened over the years, and feels that this may be more of a nostalgic perception than a fact. Nonetheless SPC accepts that links <i>always</i> need fostering and improvement, and accepts the suggestions of the review for more widely advertising services and focussing information flow.</p>
<p>Major Recommendation #1</p>	<p>The CFP should focus more attention on providing fisheries management assistance, including building capacity, providing advice on national strategies, mentoring, and producing technical information understandable to the level at which most management interventions are formulated and implemented. To support this increased focus, the CFP should also ensure that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The output of PROCFISH includes practical management information. 2) The Coastal Fisheries Management Section acquires high-level expertise in the wide range of coastal management subjects. 3) The Fisheries Development Officers channel more of their efforts into management-oriented activities. 	<p>This recommendation is accepted, and will be progressively implemented over the programme as a whole. (1) The outputs of PROCFISH will be translated further into practical information of direct use to reef fisheries managers. (2) Capacity will be sought for the Coastal Fisheries Management Section to address not only its current focus of community fisheries and co-management support, but also support to the role of governments in coastal fisheries management. (3) It is generally recognised that FFA is the regional lead agency in the management of the tuna fisheries currently targeted by the work of the Development Section, however, the Section will work even more closely with FFA in integrating “development” as part of the tuna fishery management process and strengthen the current SPC/FFA MOU in this area.</p>

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<p>Major Recommendation #2</p>	<p>The CFP should have the capability to undertake economic assessments as part of its core services. The Programme should undertake analysis of fisheries development and aquaculture as a service to countries, as well as to filter out requests for involvement in projects that have very limited chance of viability.</p>	<p>Although the intent behind this recommendation is accepted, the mechanism for best implementing it would need to be investigated Economic aspects of fisheries are generally held to be an FFA lead-agency role, although FFA’s capacity is directed towards tuna fisheries and to the policy side of economics. The Forum Secretariat also has a major role in this field, so the CFP would have to implement any economic assessments in a sensitive way to avoid perceptions of “work-area encroachment”. Possibly these other agencies, or joint consultancies, could be commissioned to review national coastal fishery development activities from an economic perspective, but the “screening” of development requests for economic viability would require a rapid in-house response. It is possible that this in-house response could be provided using existing capacity acting under a formal set of request-appraisal guidelines.</p> <p>It should be noted that a lot of the projects undertaken by the Development and Aquaculture Sections are to actually test or identify the economic feasibility of operations, especially in remote locations.</p> <p>It should also be noted that the filtering-out of requests with a low predicted chance of viability often leads to those requests being taken to another, less choosy, regional or international agency. This has been a major contributory factor to “overlap” emerging between agencies in the past, and to perceptions that one agency is "more responsive to member countries" than another.</p>

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Major Recommendation #3	For various reasons, CFP's links and communications with countries have weakened. The CFP needs to focus considerably more attention on establishing closer links with fisheries stakeholders and make them aware of what assistance is available.	Recommendation accepted. Whilst many sections of the CFP would dispute that actual links have weakened, and would point to the increased frequency of actual CFP contact-hours overall, together with the increasing facility of electronic communication and fax, the CFP recognises that member linkages and communications must always be actively under review and improvement. The reduced frequency of HoF and the increased frequency of FFA meetings over the past decade may contribute to this perception by members, together with the split responsibility for SPC programme oversight held between HoF and CRGA. The suggestions by the review team will be taken up, and programme worries about potential "expectations overload" caused by more actively advertising services should be mitigated by a more selective project/request appraisal filter (see Recommendation #2).
Major Recommendation #4	Efforts should be made to obtain funding for a full-time "hands on" manager for the CFP. Failing that, the duties of the Director of Marine Resources on the SPC Executive Team should be reduced while increasing the attention that the Director focuses on the CFP.	Recommendation accepted. Given the current SPC executive strategy of striving for fairness in allocation of core funding to programmes, by providing support at the most fundamental level that would allow the programme to carry on a basic level of work in the absence of any external financing (i.e. essentially one core-funded staff post per programme), it is unlikely that additional core funding would be provided, since the CFP already has one core-funded post. In the likely absence of any offers by donors to fund such an administrative post, several potential ways of implementing this recommendation have been discussed at various levels, but all of them boil down to redesignating or refocussing the duty statement of an existing post. This could either be based on the Director's post, as suggested, or by redesignating the existing CFP core-funded post as programme manager, or of redesignating another existing, or forthcoming donor-funded CFP section head vacancy. It is the opinion of the Secretariat that downgrading the Director's post would not have a positive effect on either the OFP or the CFP's effectiveness, since an executive presence by each Division is a vital part of SPC's internal management mechanism, and loss of the Director's "higher" responsibilities would lead to reduced visibility at the international and policy level for both OFP and CFP as well as the Regional Maritime Programme.

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Major Recommendation #5	To encourage efficient use of scarce management resources, the Coastal Fisheries Management Section should be charged with spearheading cooperation with environment agencies in this area, both on a national and regional basis.	Recommendation accepted. The section is in a unique position to help improve cooperation between government and non-government agencies on community resource management issues.
Major Recommendation #6	More attention should be focussed on the process of the arrangements for CFP field activities by having firm agreement in writing of the arrangements, including detailing the work to be completed, areas of responsibility, and the process of reporting, including mutually acceptable deadlines.	Recommendation accepted. Such agreements, whilst imposing a bureaucratic overhead, provide benefits for all parties, particularly in the avoidance of misunderstanding. Some sections already use standardised formal letters of agreement for field activities, but these are usually only negotiated for major activities, and usually involve a preliminary visit. The LOA mechanism will be standardised across the programme, and two formats introduced, depending on the expenditure involved.
Major Recommendation #7	As the Coastal Fisheries Programme has accumulated decades of experience in the fisheries sector, it should become more involved in documenting what has been learned in the development process.	Recommendation accepted. This might require the development oriented sections to “step back” from their immediate work at times, but the overall value to the region of describing the longer-term outcome of various interventions, and lessons learned, would be great.
Major Recommendation #8	An information flow analysis should be undertaken in a few countries to determine if serious in-country barriers exist to the dissemination of fisheries information to important stakeholders.	Recommendation accepted. This would probably benefit from collaboration with the USP Marine Studies Programme Library.
Major Recommendation #9	An analysis of the use of Internet for fisheries information distribution should be undertaken, including an identification of the types of users and types of fisheries information is for which a web-based approach is appropriate and inappropriate.	Recommendation not accepted. The Secretariat feels it would be a waste of resources to carry out such analysis at the present time. The CFP does not take a web-based approach to fisheries information, but mainly duplicates information to the SPC web-server that has already appeared in print. This duplication consumes few resources, and is more than made up for by the saving either in postage costs, or administration necessary to recover costs, for distributing SPC materials to big countries. The other main application is the provision of “portals” and discussion boards in certain subject areas, where most of the information would be provided by users.

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Major Recommendation #10	The CFP should undertake a capacity needs analysis across the fisheries sector that includes but goes beyond training needs. Such an analysis should include an assessment of the degree of success of training and other forms of capacity building to date.	Recommendation accepted, although with some trepidation about the major scale that would be involved in this social research project, and the difficulty of ensuring rigour in the conclusions. The basis for this will anyway be laid by projects such as “PROCFISH” and “DEVFISH” compiling the available facts about the capacity of the Pacific Islands fisheries sector, from government infrastructure to employment and governance mechanisms. A major regional “stocktake” will be planned later.
Major Recommendation #11	As some of the lesser-advanced countries of the region do not have well articulated strategies for fisheries development and fisheries management, the CFP should provide to countries is advice on basic fisheries development and management strategies.	Recommendation accepted. The capacity to provide a holistic approach to fisheries development and management planning, should any member ask for it, is available within SPC, FFA and others, but would require a task-force approach involving several sections or agencies, and a source of funding broad enough to cover all. Existing CFP, OFP and FFA collaboration in national tuna management planning is a limited example of this, and the SPC cross-sectoral development task-force to small countries like Tokelau is another. It is also suggested that fisheries departments consider inviting SPC to attend national fisheries sector planning meetings. Although it may not be possible to take up all invitations, and would depend on the timing of other work already planned in that country, attendance at such meeting would both help CFP to better understand national priorities, and enable regional agency experience to be more effectively provided in national planning.
Major Recommendation #12	As attempts at improving communication between CFP and USP do not seem to have worked and there would appear to be a need for a detailed MOU between the two organisations. The MOU should draw clear boundaries between the respective roles of SPC and USP and modes of interaction, in accordance with regional priorities for coastal fisheries and aquaculture.	Recommendation accepted. SPC will approach USP to suggest drawing up an agreement, similar in form to the SPC/FFA MOU to promote better understanding of the role and goals of each by the other.
Major Recommendation #13	Assistance in post-harvest activities, and in particular meeting the exacting demands export markets, is a priority need for the region. The issue of post-harvest training and technical advisory services should be reviewed in depth.	Recommendation accepted. Resources to fund an independent review will be sought.

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Major Recommendation #14	A new overarching objective for the CFP should be adopted: “National fisheries agencies, working with environmental and other interests, have a clear vision for the sustainable management and development of coastal living marine resources, and develop and implement strategies and mechanisms to achieve this vision”.	Recommendation accepted, although the second phrase might need clarification. Certainly the general thrust of the objective, based on capacity-building of members and injecting strategic planning at the fundamental level, is a very useful way of expressing the objective of the programme.
Recommendations on the work of specific CFP Sections		
Fisheries Training	The coordination and promotion of training initiatives to build capacity in coastal living resource management (with the Coastal Fisheries Management Section) should become a specific activity of the Fisheries Training Section.	Recommendation accepted. As with its fisheries development training the Section would only organise services to fill identified coastal fisheries management training gaps and not seek to duplicate the work of other institutions. Both the Fisheries Management Section and Reef Fisheries Observatory are well-placed to identify gaps and needs in coastal fishery management, while the Training Section specialises in organising training, especially for groups of countries. It is worth noting that the recent review of the SPC/Nelson Fisheries Officers course recommended a shift in the course focus from fisheries development to fisheries management and conservation. If accepted by HOF3, the new course will be implemented from 2004, and the Training Section will thus definitely be helping build regional capacity in coastal living resource management.
Fisheries Development	The Fisheries Development Section should: -Place more emphasis on assisting countries to formulate realistic overall development strategies (harvesting, processing and with FFA, marketing), which incorporate FDS interventions, and less on “catch more fish” approaches.	Recommendation accepted. This accelerates an existing trend within the section.

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Fisheries Development	-Enhance the establishment and operation of fishermen's associations as a constituency to promote the responsiveness and relevancy of government fisheries agencies.	Recommendation accepted, with some provisos. It should be noted that SPC could only promote such associations according to mechanisms agreed by member governments. And SPC can only help the fishing community establish associations where the fishing community itself wants to become more organised. Fundamentally, this is a national government, or NGO, rather than an IGO role but, in the current Pacific Islands fishing NGO almost-vacuum, SPC can certainly provide fundamental encouragement and SPC and FFA are already helping governments to build governance mechanisms that include the organised input of fishers.
Fisheries Development	-Increase the level of services in the area of (a) economic analysis to evaluate requests, and (b) economic evaluations of proposed fisheries developments (with FFA) as a service to countries.	Recommendation accepted. (See response to major recommendation #2)
Fisheries Development	-Include more information about development process in the fisheries sector. This would include lessons-learned in fisheries development in the region and highlighting why attempts to build domestic fishing ventures have been more successful in some instances than in others.	Recommendation accepted. See response to Major Recommendation #7
Aquaculture Section	Economic evaluations should be part of the "toolbox" of the aquaculture section and this should be greater than occasionally employing a consultant economist.	The spirit of the recommendation is accepted, in that it is recognised that economic issues, particularly markets, are critical factors in aquaculture development activities and will be subject to formal feasibility appraisal as outlined in major recommendation #2. However, the Aquaculture Section is the focal point for a wider regional initiative and SPC does not currently aim to include all major disciplines within the aquaculture section, but to harness external capabilities towards an agreed regional multi-institutional programme.
Aquaculture Section	The Aquaculture Section should work closely with member countries to document past and current aquaculture activities and experiences in the region.	Recommendation accepted. See response to Major Recommendation #7

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Fisheries Management Section	With respect to the future of the Coastal Fisheries Management Section, the Review Team is largely in agreement with the recommendations of the draft strategic plan ¹ . Certain subjects may, however, benefit from additional consideration. These include: Six goals are presented in the plan, all of which seem reasonable. It should be noted that another goal, establishing realistic fisheries management objectives and assessing what information is needed to support obtaining those objectives, appears to be required <i>before</i> the proposed collecting/analysing of data.	Recommendation accepted, and the CFP Strategic Plan will be corrected accordingly.
Fisheries Management Section	A considerable amount of coastal resource management at community level is being undertaken by government environment agencies and NGOs. To encourage efficient use of scarce management resources, the Coastal Fisheries Management Section should be charged with spearheading cooperation in this area, both on a national and regional basis.	See response to Major Recommendation #5.
Fisheries Management Section	The lack of success enjoyed by the many past human resource development planning efforts in fisheries agencies should be considering when promoting additional HRD planning work.	Possibly this recommendation is directed at the Fisheries Training Section? If so, the reasons for the apparent lack of success of HRD planning efforts will need to be investigated. It appears to be inconsistent for the review to recommend greater attention to fisheries resource development & management planning but not to HRD planning. Some would even say that fisheries management has also enjoyed a lack of success. Whatever the perceptions, ALL proposed activities need to be examined for feasibility in light of the success, or otherwise, of previous similar activities. This also implies the need for an excellent institutional memory of former activities, and occasional long-term follow-ups.

¹ Draft number 3, June 2003

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Fisheries Management Section	The need for the Section to provide legal services to the region should be reconsidered. Enhancing an established legal division at FFA may result in greater efficiency (see Section 9.0).	Recommendation taken on advisement. It is difficult to see why the case for legislative support for to CFP management planning activities, when the enhancement of fisheries management is a “burning need”, should be different from the case for economic input to CFP activities. And both can be seen as cross-cutting functions that are also currently held by other agencies. And it is also unclear why this review should come to a different conclusion from the recent meeting of member countries on coastal fisheries management. In view of this, if resources become available or are refocused, and it comes down to a choice between acquiring additional economics or legal expertise, it is likely that Heads of Fisheries would be asked for an out-of-session opinion.
Fisheries Management Section	If the Reef Fisheries Observatory is unable to address the need to adapt the results of its rigorous scientific research to produce practical management guidelines (Section 3.5.1), then this critically important function should be performed by the Coastal Fisheries Management Section.	Recommendation accepted. Indeed this is the current strategy. The Reef Fisheries Observatory was never intended to be a self-contained unit, delivering complete management advice directly to end-users, since management requires more than scientific input. Its role is to provide intermediate information to management specialists. In one area the Observatory already has a management function (i.e. LRFT), and in others it works with the Fisheries Management Section. The need for additional coastal fishery management staff, specialising particularly on the governmental management advisory side, is recognised, and it is possible that PROCFISH/C might be refocused to enhance this. However, the intention of the donor was apparently to sequentially <i>follow</i> PROCFISH/C’s information-gathering and assessment activity with a major management-focussed activity.
Reef Fisheries Observatory	Using the knowledge accumulated in the course of its rigorous scientific work, the Reef Fisheries Observatory should produce practical management information, such basic management guidelines on important species and fisheries.	Recommendation accepted. Indeed it is currently the intention to rapidly develop and consequently refine indicators, “rules of thumb” and other practical tools for fisheries managers. However, the Observatory is a fishery resource and social <i>scientific information</i> facility and should not be expected to encompass expertise covering the whole discipline of fisheries management, from legislation to enforcement. This is something that should be covered by the programme as a whole, and focussed through the Coastal Fisheries Management Section.

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Reef Fisheries Observatory	More attention should be focussed on the process of reporting, including having firm agreement in writing of the arrangements.	Recommendation accepted. Although reporting plans are quite rigorous, it is clear that more rapid preliminary reporting and feedback, particularly to fishery departments would be useful.
Information Section	There should be greater publicity of the services of the Information Section to a wide range of fisheries stakeholders and more efforts should be made to include less experienced professionals in the special interest groups.	<p>Recommendation accepted. The Information Unit has felt little need to advertise its services since it is always working to full capacity on the existing level of requests. However, a more selective filtering process for requests, at the programme level, would probably result in greater efficiency and impact, even if the overall volume of requests increased as a result of advertisement.</p> <p>The Special Interest Groups have evolved naturally over the years, largely dependent on the vigour and interests of the coordinator of each. In most cases the most independently sustainable SIGs have been those with a more academic membership. It is not proposed that this change radically, but that each SIG be reminded, where necessary, of its original purpose in practically assisting the development and management of Pacific Island fisheries, and information items and articles be more actively injected or commissioned by the Information Unit on subjects of direct relevance.</p>
Information Section	Fewer SPC “good news” stories are now required in the Information Section publications, with the style changing to realities of fisheries development and management.	Recommendation accepted, with some comments. It is not clear exactly what this means since the Information Unit does not consciously publish “good news” stories, and several of the SIG groups contain stories of problems. Possibly this refers to the possibility of pressure from member countries to avoid publicising problem areas, or possibly it refers to the ingrained development concept of publicising examples of “best practices”. An effort will be made however, to ensure that lessons can be learned as much from failures as from successes.
Information Section	An information flow analysis should be undertaken in a few countries to determine if serious barrier exist to the dissemination of fisheries information to important stakeholders.	See response to Major Recommendation #8
Information Section	An analysis of the use of Internet for fisheries information distribution should be undertaken.	See response to Major Recommendation #9

General comments

4. The Secretariat feels that this is a good and fair review, and it is worth noting that the review team itself has performed better in fulfilling their terms of reference than most other recent SPC programme reviews. The Director General, with the advice of the Director of Marine Resources and Director of Planning, is able to accept almost all of the recommendations of the review without qualification. Some of these recommendations require CFP activities to be slightly refocused, some of them reflect changes already under way, and some will require new resources to be found before they can be implemented. One or two have major financial implications, and will require further work before they can be justified to potential resource-providers.

5. This “Secretariat Response” will be refined further after taking into account any comments by Heads of Fisheries, and will be presented again to member countries and territories at the next Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations.

6. We are grateful to the review team for bringing together this independent view of the way we work, and feel that the review itself will be a major influence not only on the strategic direction of the Programme, but be of value to all with a stake in coastal fisheries in the region.