

SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

SECOND SPC HEADS OF FISHERIES MEETING (Noumea, New Caledonia, 23-27 July 2001)

RECOMMENDATIONS

During the course of the 2nd head of fisheries meeting (2HoF) in Nouméa, New Caledonia, 23-28th July 2001, the following statements were agreed by Pacific Community island member representatives to be included in the record of discussion, for the guidance of the secretariat of the Marine Resources Division and/or the benefit of other SPC or international processes:-

1. Noting the capacity of several Pacific Community members in certain specialist areas, particularly aquaculture, the meeting reminded the regional and international community that, when carrying out research within the Pacific Islands, to use expertise, capacity or facilities already present within Pacific islands themselves wherever feasible.

2. The meeting noted the recommendations of the FAO Pacific Islands Regional Workshop on Fisheries Statistics, 16-18 July 2001, and agreed that reliable quantitative information about the status of coastal fisheries was of vital importance for sound national and regional policy planning, and in management processes that required governmental intervention.

2 bis The meeting further noted the report of the 4th Meeting of South West Pacific Ministers of Agriculture held in Vanuatu, 23-24th July 2001, and urged FAO to coordinate its efforts with that of the SPC Marine Resources Division and other organisations which support PICTs in their efforts to strengthen capacity on statistics on coastal and subsistence fisheries and aquaculture.

3. Incorporating and carrying forward the sense of recommendations 1, 2 and 6 from 1HoF the meeting highlighted the continuing gap in support at the regional level for post-harvest aspects of fisheries: aspects which are a priority are for many SPC members. Heads of Fisheries recognised the growing capacity of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to address the needs of members in the industrial and trade aspects of fisheries and urged SPC to concentrate on post-harvest aspects of small-scale fisheries and to develop collaboration with other agencies, including FFA, and USP in a concerted effort to provide a service to member countries that would assist in maximising the value of fishery exports

4. The meeting urged the Director of Marine Resources to continue seeking the means to improve SPC's capacity to provide a full range of practical advice, from community consultation to legislative drafting, in promoting the better management of inshore fisheries. The meeting recognised that management and conservation planning for fisheries would occur at an increasingly fine scale in future, and require increasing commitment from fisheries administrations, and that the Marine Resources Division should consider regional and national capacity building in fisheries management planning to be one of its priority themes in the development of its work programme.

4bis Heads of Fisheries commended the collaborative work of the Live Reef Fish Trade Initiative and encouraged SPC to continue to develop its role as a clearing house for information useful to members, and collaborative action on international and regional standards for the conduct of the trade.

5. The financial problems likely to face the SPC/Nelson fisheries training course in 2002 were noted with concern by the meeting. Pacific Island fisheries administrations had already signalled the high priority they afforded this type of comprehensive practical specialist training for their fisheries staff – the only training of its kind available – by contributing local funds towards part of the cost of running the course, and the meeting again reiterated its perception of the value of this course in the induction of new generations of fisheries officers, including the real prospects for improving the number of women professionals in fisheries management. The meeting strongly commended the value of this course to SPC's partners and urged SPC to seek means for its continuation.

6. The meeting noted with great concern the further erosion of SPC core funding devoted to fisheries work. Representatives of Pacific Community fisheries administrations requested that the SPC Governing Council direct attention towards the basis of the mechanism of SPC core funding allocation. The meeting pointed out that external funding was generally pre-programmed and did not allow SPC work-programmes to respond flexibly to rapidly-arising sectoral issues and changing priorities.

7. The meeting strongly recommended that SPC prioritise financial resources to enable SPC sectoral meetings, like HoF, to be held biennially. Noting that the standard SPC staff contract was three years long, the meeting pointed out that under a triennial meeting cycle there was a strong likelihood that SPC's sectoral programmes would not be able to form an accurate view of the regional needs of their primary clients.

8. Pacific Community fisheries administrations welcomed the information and notification about the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development. The meeting felt that decision on the exact wording of any detailed fisheries sector submissions to the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development should be left to national delegations participating in the Summit preparation process, but agreed that any multi-sectoral regional submissions should highlight:-

- the high level of dependence of Pacific Islands on the living resources of the ocean, both for food security in the case of inshore resources, and for environmentally sustainable economic development in the case of offshore resources;
 - the strong tradition of stewardship of living marine resources already existing in the region;
 - the record of strong and effective cooperation and collaboration between Pacific Island governments in the governance of shared fishery resources;
 - the relative vulnerability of Pacific Island fishery-based livelihoods to externalities, including land-based impacts, geographic difficulties of external trade, and dependencies on external fishing interests;
 - the sheer scale of the ocean area being managed by Pacific Island nations – an area which includes the majority of the world's coral reefs and what is now the world's largest tuna fishery;
- the increasing effect of modern social structures on subsistence lifestyles and the implications for traditional fishery management mechanisms;
- the concrete example of progress since the Rio Earth Summit embodied in the finalisation of the (insert full name of MHLA convention)

9. The meeting noted that discussion on funding priorities for the region, arranged by the Global Environment Facility under the auspices of a Country Dialogue Workshop (CDW), would be convened in Samoa in September 2001. Noting that the Oceanic Component of the Pacific Islands International Waters Programme (IWP), which the meeting felt had already provided valuable support to regional initiatives to promote the sustainable management and conservation of the Western Central Pacific pelagic large marine ecosystem, was scheduled to finish in 2003, the meeting encouraged national and regional representatives to the CDW to assign high priority to building on the outcomes of the Oceanic Component of the IWP in future funding support to the region. The meeting also hoped that due consideration would be given to the representation of the fisheries sector at the CDW

10. Pacific Community Heads of Fisheries appreciated the opportunity to review the work in progress on the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy that had been directed by the Pacific Islands Forum. In addition to the comments provided in plenary on the draft, participants decided to provide additional comments, as necessary, after taking the time for considered appraisal and consultation.

11. The meeting widely acknowledged the significance of the longline bycatch issue to PICTs. Heads of Fisheries recognised the need to be pro-active in the matter of dealing with the bycatch issue. Fundamental to dealing with bycatch was the need to determine the extent and nature of the issue. At a regional level, there was agreement that additional data collection and expansion of the current observer programme was needed for a variety of reasons, particularly on the high seas.

12. The meeting noted the significant progress made by SPC since 1HoF and welcomed the new aquaculture programme. The recommendations of the SPC/ACIAR aquaculture workshop were endorsed by the meeting, which asked that SPC now forge ahead in providing a regional pool of advice and expertise to enable a strategic approach to the problems of aquaculture in the Pacific Community area.

13. SPC should investigate the costs and benefits of membership of the Network of Aquaculture Centers in Asia (NACA).

14. Several participants noted that the lack of local capacity in “pearl seeding” techniques had significant impact on economic returns. The Cook Islands outlined its own intention’s to address this training need and recognised that both the USP and SPC had a role to assist the nation and the region in this regard.

15. Heads of Fisheries noted the potential synergies between aquaculture and community-based management and requested SPC to bear these potential linkages in mind during the strategic planning of both the aquaculture and the community fisheries sectors.

16. The meeting strongly endorsed the value of community-based mechanisms in the management of their fishery resources and requests were made by several governments for the SPC Community Fisheries Section to assist them in their efforts to involve communities in fisheries-related projects.

17. As a regional activity, the meeting requested the Community Fisheries Section to work with member countries and territories to develop ways in which local rules by village communities may be given legal recognition, under different regulatory systems, in order to facilitate monitoring, governance and enforcement by communities.

18. Heads of Fisheries drew attention to the number of different agencies that are working with communities, and the problems both of agencies promulgating potentially conflicting mechanisms and of the burden placed on some communities by the frequency of consultation and expectations of collaboration. The meeting asked that regional agencies liaise more closely with respect to community-oriented work, particularly in the communication of fieldwork plans with each other, and also recognised the role that official contacts and national focal points could play in communicating or co-ordinating potentially overlapping activities of different intergovernmental agencies in their countries.

19. The meeting agreed that it would be timely to have a broadly based regional consultation or workshop on community-based management of Pacific Island coastal fisheries.

(Note: the issues highlighted here are in no particular order and do not constitute a full prioritisation of the work programme of the SPC Marine Resources Division but are presented separately in this way because they are issues which required particular consensus agreement in plenary, or the attention of authorities or partners outside the scope of the meeting. A context within which to judge the prioritisation of issues is provided by the Record of Discussion of the meeting, which also provides additional guidance to the SPC Marine Resources Division work-programme)