



Agenda Item:	8.b
Paper No:	RFMM5-WP10
Title:	Update on member support to review regional policies

Summary:

In 2022, the Pacific Fisheries Ministers at their 3rd Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting in Tarawa, Kiribati, tasked their fisheries officials, to be supported by FFA and SPC, to review existing regional fisheries policies including the Regional Roadmap and the New Song for Coastal Fisheries noting these policies were approaching the end of their timeframes, to ensure close alignment with implementation of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

In 2023, at the 4th Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting, ministers endorsed the review process for the Regional Fisheries Roadmap and the New Song for Coastal Fisheries, as presented by SPC and FFA. They approved the formation of a review committee with six Members (Cook Islands, Fiji, Republic of the Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Palau, and Tokelau) to draft the Terms of Reference and oversee the review. Recognizing the need for extensive consultations and resources, ministers tasked SPC and FFA with incorporating the review into their annual work programmes, ensuring adequate support and resource allocation.

Since the 4th Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting, progress has been made in the review of regional fisheries policies. The review committee has developed the Terms of Reference, and a dedicated project manager has been engaged to support the committee, FFA and SPC in implementing the review. This development aims to ensure a thorough, independent and effective review process, with the project manager providing oversight and coordination to facilitate the review.

Recommendations

Ministers are invited to:

- i. **note** the progress made by the Review Committee, SPC and FFA on the review to date, including resources allocated by SPC and FFA for the review as tasked by RFMM4;
- ii. **endorse** the revised timeline for the review;
- iii. **acknowledge** the importance of Member input for the quality of the review and Member commitment to engaging with reviewers during the consultation period (November 2024 to March 2025), and
- iv. **highlight** any key issues for the reviewers to consider as they begin the review.

Introduction and Background

1. The Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries (Regional Roadmap) and the New Song for Coastal Fisheries: Pathways to Changes – Noumea Strategy (New Song) were developed to promote sustainable management of fisheries, enhance livelihoods, increase economic growth, and address food security from fisheries in the region. These policies are approaching the end of their respective timeframes, with the Regional Roadmap having a 10-year timeframe (2015-2025).
2. Pacific Forum leaders endorsed the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries in 2015, with the aim of achieving seven goals by 2025 for the sustainable management and economic development of oceanic and coastal fisheries. The goals and strategies relating to coastal fisheries in the Regional Roadmap includes seven of the eight outcomes in the New Song for Coastal Fisheries, developed and adopted the same year. The New Song aims to achieve sustainable, well-managed coastal fisheries that provide food security and long-term economic, social, and ecological benefits to communities, taking a community-based ecosystem approaches to fisheries management, including strong coordination and collaboration among stakeholders.
3. In 2022, Pacific Islands Forum Leaders adopted the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent (2050 Strategy) which sets out a long-term Strategy to realise Leaders' vision for a resilient Pacific Region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity, that ensures all Pacific peoples can lead free, healthy and productive lives. The 2050 Strategy includes seven thematic areas, including political leadership and regionalism, resources and economic development and ocean and environment. In 2023, the 2050 Strategy Implementation Plan 2023-2030 was endorsed by Leaders, and a Pacific Regional Economic Development framework was also developed.
4. Ministers at the 3rd Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting (RFMM3) in Tarawa, Kiribati, held in 2022, assigned their fisheries officials, with the assistance of FFA and SPC, the responsibility of reviewing regional fisheries policies. This review would specifically focus on aligning the existing Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Fisheries and the New Song for Coastal Fisheries with the implementation of the 2050 Strategy. The objective was to ensure a close integration between these policies and the broader goals of the 2050 Strategy. Furthermore, in addition to the assigned review, Ministers at RFMM3 encouraged each other and the officials to engage in discussions that aimed to achieve seamless integration between the existing efforts under the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Fisheries and the New Song for Coastal Fisheries, and the implementation plan for the Resources and Economic Development, as well as the Ocean and Environment thematic areas of the 2050 Strategy. The purpose of these discussions was to ensure a cohesive and coordinated approach towards the implementation of the 2050 Strategy, with all relevant regional fisheries policies working in harmony towards its goals.
5. In 2023, at the 4th Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting (RFMM4) Ministers endorsed the review process as presented by SPC and FFA. They approved the formation of a Review Committee with six Members (Cook Islands, Fiji, Republic of the Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Palau, and Tokelau) to draft the Terms of Reference and oversee the review. Recognizing the need for extensive consultations and resources, ministers tasked SPC and FFA with incorporating the review into their annual work programmes, ensuring adequate support and resource allocation.
6. This paper discusses progress made on the review of the regional fisheries policies, including the Regional Roadmap and the New Song for Coastal Fisheries. It also seeks endorsement from Ministers on the scope, process and updated timeline of the review.

Objectives of the review

7. During the 15th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting and FFC126, officials noted that the review should assess the effectiveness of the policies implemented so far and explore how to update and adapt them to support sustainable fisheries, enhance livelihoods, promote sustainable economic growth, address food security, build resilience, and respond to external pressures such as climate change and natural disasters.
8. The objectives of the review of regional fisheries policies identified by officials are:
 - i. to assess the effectiveness of the policies in achieving their goals;
 - ii. to assess the policy elements and their ongoing relevance in the region;
 - iii. to identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of the policies;
 - iv. to identify opportunities for collaboration and integration with the 2050 Strategy; and
 - v. to propose recommendations for the alignment of the future policies with the 2050 Strategy and its Implementation Plan.

Scope of the review

9. At the 15th SPC Heads of Fisheries meeting and FFC126, the scope of the review was discussed. While the current work on reviewing indicators for both policies was deemed out of scope, it was acknowledged that they could still be useful in formulating review questions related to effectiveness, impact, and relevance.
10. The review, will focus on the Regional Roadmap and New Song for Coastal Fisheries, as directed by Ministers, and may also consider other key regional fisheries policies endorsed by Fisheries Ministers at FFCM or RFMM to identify mutual alignment (e.g. FFA Climate Change Strategy, Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling up Community-based Fisheries Management, Regional Framework on Biosecurity, etc). While the focus of the review is on oceanic and coastal fisheries, it was agreed that fisheries in the review context extends to the inclusion of aquaculture.

Revised timeline for the review

11. It was agreed by officials that the timeline for the review would need to be flexible, and progress would need to balance other processes and requests from Ministers.
12. Progress made on the review to-date is as follows:
 - November-December 2023: First draft of the Terms of Reference shared with the Review Committee for their direction, review and revision, with comments received.
 - April-May 2024: Review updates and discussion provided at 16th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting and FFC127.
 - May-June 2024: SPC led the development of TORs and advertisement for an independent project manager to be engaged to progress and support the implementation of the review. Consultant engaged in June 2024.
 - June-July 2024: The Review Committee reconvened to agree on finalised draft Terms of Reference to circulate to members for intersessional endorsement.
13. The revised timeline for the remaining review tasks is:
 - July 2024: FFCMIN21 and RFMM5 Review update and discussions;
 - July 2024: Member endorsement of draft Terms of Reference for the review;

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- July-September 2024: External consultant(s) engaged to carry out the review;
- October 2024 – March 2025: External consultant(s) undertake the review overseen by the Review Committee, supported by the Review Project Manager, and with collaboration from FFA, SPC and fisheries officials;
- March 2024: Draft Review report provided to the Review Committee;
- April – May 2025: Draft final Review report presented to the 17th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting and FFC128; and
- July 2025 – FFCMIN22 and RFMM6: Final Review Report presented for Endorsement.

Support for members in the review

14. The work required to conduct this review is substantial. The review itself will require a consultancy to complete within the proposed timelines. It will be particularly important that broad consultation is undertaken with members during all stages of the review. The consultancy and the consultation will require resources from SPC and FFA to support.

15. It is also likely that some technical analyses may be required from SPC and FFA staff during the consultancy to support comparative analyses of the regional policies. Staff and resources will also be required to support the work of the Review Committee.

16. The other key area of FFA and SPC support will be the inclusion of this work in annual workplans and in the agendas and supporting documents for the abovementioned meetings.