

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

**6<sup>th</sup> SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting**  
*(9–13 February 2009, Noumea, New Caledonia)*

## **HOF6 Meeting Outcomes**



6TH SPC HEADS OF FISHERIES MEETING, 9–13 FEBRUARY 2009, NOUMEA, NEW CALEDONIA  
6<sup>e</sup> CONFÉRENCE DES DIRECTEURS DES PÊCHES DE LA CPS, 9–13 FÉVRIER 2009, NOUMÉA, NOUVELLE-CALÉDONIE

## HOF6 MEETING OUTCOMES

The sixth SPC Heads of Fisheries (HoF) Meeting took place at SPC Headquarters in Noumea, from 10th to 13th February 2009.

HoF was chaired on behalf of Palau by Ms Nannette D. Malsol.

HoF is a regional meeting of the heads of SPC member country and territory fisheries departments, or their deputies, covering the entire range of interests for which they have responsibility and on which SPC Marine Resources Division (MRD) provides advice and assistance. As such it plays a unique role in providing strategic guidance to both the Coastal Fisheries Programme (CFP) and the Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP) of MRD.

The following outcomes constitute the main points of consensus agreement among delegates that the meeting felt necessary to document, either to guide the management of the MRD work programme, to draw to the attention of other regional agencies and development partners, or to signal agreement on issues that require attention by members themselves. It is understood that this information will be used to guide the development of the MRD Strategic Plan but that prioritisation will be inevitable and not all the desired activities may be realised.

SPC Heads of Fisheries:

### **Strategic initiatives**

- responded favourably to the overview of CFP and OFP activities and the proposed work plans for 2009, and looks forward to the MRD Review, the revised MRD Strategic Plan and the study with FFA on the Future of Pacific Fisheries,
- encouraged further integration of SPC services, within and between fisheries programmes, and with other SPC divisions, including through Joint Country Strategies and assistance with national strategic plans,
- encouraged collaboration between SPC, FFA, WCPFC and other regional agencies and international initiatives, particularly where the geographical range of stocks extends beyond the SPC statistical area (e.g. CTI, IATTC),
- noted the need for strategic policy advice, including economic advice, with respect to coastal and nearshore fisheries, to be targeted at the specific needs and situations of members, and the importance of such information to guide the provision of technical assistance,

### **Project management**

- voiced concern on the dependence of MRD on project funding, leading to gaps in service delivery in between large projects,
- voiced further concern that with a dominance of project funding, work priorities may not be responsive to all members and some members may be excluded from project activities,
- nonetheless supported the EDF10 SCICOFISH proposals and the general concept of the SMACFish project outlined for ACP countries, noting the strong interest of the French territories in being integrated into these activities through OCT funding, and of other members through additional funding streams,

### **Information and communication**

- appreciated the work of MRD in the area of fisheries information

### **Coastal fisheries**

- noted the need for ongoing assistance with coastal fishery monitoring, including surveys, resource inventories and assessment of stocks, with such research well targeted towards management needs,
- requested ongoing assistance with management of coastal resources through an appropriate mix of community-based approaches and national management plans, including reviews of legislation,
- recognized the work in advising on the implementation of EAFM in coastal fisheries, noting that fisheries departments should incorporate ecosystem principles into their existing management systems,
- requested that the CFP work programme give more consideration to subsistence, artisanal and sport fishing,
- expressed interest in the manufacture of fish silage as a means to fully utilize fish products, integrate with agriculture and respect the environment
- requested further information on safety at sea and alternative boat propulsion
- requested ongoing technical support, capacity building, knowledge transfer and development of designs for shallow-water, deep-sea and sub-surface FADs,
- requested further assistance in dealing with market access issues for products from both aquaculture and wild fisheries, such as HACCP, EU and OIE requirements, including assistance with developing Competent Authorities

### **Aquaculture and biosecurity**

- recognized the importance of effectively reporting regional aquaculture statistics,
- noted that advice from SPC must be responsive to the particular needs of members, whether in technical or legislative areas or in enterprise development,
- noted the importance of effectively managing biosecurity risks to maintain opportunities for exports, avoid adverse effects of imports, meet international obligations, and approved in principle the development of a Regional Aquatic Biosecurity Programme

### **Ciguatera**

- noted the threat to human health and livelihoods posed by ciguatera fish poisoning and encouraged MRD to research, collaborate with other organisations to share information and build capacity to monitor, manage and mitigate this problem

### **Food security and climate change**

- welcomed the studies on food security and climate change, and accepted the need to safeguard food security and build resilience to climate change by appropriate allocation of tuna resources at an international level, by reserving a proportion of national tuna catch for domestic needs, by deployment of nearshore FADs and through development of aquaculture

### **Coral Reef Initiative for the South Pacific (CRISP)**

- recognized the work of CRISP and the expectation that SPC would seek additional donor support for continuation of these activities

### **Deep water resources**

- noted that fisheries for deep water snappers were important for both food security and income for many members, that these resources were not well covered in the past work plans of MRD, and that the future work plan should determine how to best serve members who need technical advice and assistance in managing these resources

### **Oceanic fisheries**

- recognised with appreciation the expanded work being undertaken by OFP in support of WCPFC, noting that while this collaboration is desirable and beneficial to members, this extra work puts a considerable burden upon OFP and the cost is not being fully recovered from WCPFC at this stage,
- requested that MRD further evaluate the extent to which funding from, WCPFC is adequate to meet the demands upon it from both the WCPFC and members,
- requested ongoing assistance in meeting national obligations to WCPFC with regard to fishery monitoring, data provision and the implementation of management measures,
- voiced its concern on the stock status of bigeye and yellowfin tuna and recognised that profitability of longline fisheries for these species would be unlikely to improve unless stock declines are first halted and then reversed,
- recognized the demands upon SPC and FFA arising from commitments to expand national and regional observer programmes,
- endorsed the need for training of trainers to effectively utilize recently endorsed PIRFO training and certification standards and further collaboration in training among the different observer programmes,
- encouraged greater regional cooperation in the deployment of observers on purse seiners operating under bilateral access agreements, to make the most efficient use of the available pool of observers and to provide opportunities to all countries to contribute observers to a coordinated effort to achieve 100% coverage of purse seine fleets,
- recognized that the need to rapidly increase observer numbers for compliance purposes may justify shorter training for fisheries monitors as an interim measure, with more thorough competency-based training for fisheries observers being expanded to 4 weeks,
- noted that the cost of observer training is a very significant component of the total cost of running observer programmes and that there is an urgent need for the mechanisms for recovering these costs to be fully explored,
- supported the recommendations to augment OFP staffing to better respond to the increasing requirements of SPC members for data management and scientific services,

- suggested that OFP should fully explore cost-effective solutions to improve the efficiency of observer data entry, including data entry being carried out in member countries, while retaining overall responsibility for ensuring data quality through effective auditing,
- recognized the ongoing need for training in fish stock assessment, ecological risk assessment and ecosystem science, and encouraged OFP to identify a consistent source of funding for this training that would also allow for multiple participants from each member country/territory, and to explore how to better monitor and evaluate its success,
- recognized that the provision of country-level advice to members on the status of their tuna fisheries was core business of OFP, that the needs of members have increased dramatically with the development of the WCPFC, and cannot be fully met with current levels of resourcing, but nonetheless welcomed the initiative to seek further resources for more frequent communications with members on specific issues,
- looked forward to enhanced modelling and analysis of tuna fisheries at the scale of members' EEZ's, as well as the proposed analysis of the effects of ocean MPAs and of climate change on fisheries resources.