

SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

**THIRTY-SEVENTH MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS**
(Apia, 7-9 November 2007)

OVERVIEW REPORTS FOR 2007

WORK PROGRAMMES – DIVISIONAL OVERVIEW PRESENTATION

AGENDA ITEM 2.2.2 –MARINE RESOURCES DIVISION
(Paper presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

1. This paper provides an overview of the work of the three programmes within the SPC Marine Resources Division (Coastal Fisheries, Oceanic Fisheries, and Maritime) during 2007. It summarises the main emerging issues within the three subsectors that are likely to be of interest to CRGA participants and provides pointers to more comprehensive information.

Recommendations:

2. CRGA is invited generally to note the work of the Marine Resources Division during the course of 2007 and the work-programme broadly proposed for the remainder of the duration of the Division's three Strategic Programme Plans, and to provide any guidance necessary for implementation or direction of these plans.
3. CRGA is invited specifically to note and, as appropriate, provide guidance on several proposed new marine sector initiatives, aimed at attracting multi-donor support and intended to address emerging or existing gaps in the Divisional work-programme, as follows:
 - a. Regional Tuna Tagging Programme Phase II (see paragraph 8)
 - b. Aquatic Biosecurity Initiative (paragraph 11.a)
 - c. Coastal Fisheries Scientific Support Initiative (paragraph 11.c).

Introduction

1. This paper summarises the work of the Marine Resources Division during the period since the last Divisional Presentation was compiled, and discusses some of the issues arising within the fisheries and maritime sectors that it may be desirable to draw to the attention of the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations. The verbal presentation to CRGA will be supplemented by issues arising since this paper was drafted. More detailed information about the division is available from the SPC website¹, strategic programme plans², papers presented at sectoral meetings^{3,4}, previous CRGA papers, and programme reports (see Annexes to this paper)

Institutional developments

2. Currently, the Marine Resources Division (MRD) comprises the three ocean-related programmes of SPC: the Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP), the Coastal Fisheries Programme (CFP) and the Regional Maritime Programme (RMP). The division itself is an administrative grouping of programmes and does not have a single comprehensive divisional objective like the SPC Land Resources Division because its sectoral coverage is interleaved with the work areas of other regional agencies (particularly those in the CROP Marine Sector Working Group).
3. The programmes of the Division are still in the first half of strategic programme plan periods that started in 2006, so there have been no major institutional changes since the last CRGA. At the time of writing no decision has yet been made concerning the potential changes implicit in the Pacific Island Forum's Regional Institutional Framework Review. Until these decisions are made, programmes are concentrating on existing channels of collaboration, and on delivering the services and products described by their existing strategic plans.
4. All three marine programmes have remained stable in size and scope over the course of the year, following the more significant changes that took place at the start of the strategic programme plan period. Inevitably, it is increasingly difficult to maintain the same set of programme services as at the start of the Plan period, if programme funding is static and costs – particularly staff costs – increase as time goes on. However, an advantage of the programme funding model is its flexibility. Individual activities are not necessarily tied to specific donor projects, and funds can be concentrated in different areas as regional priorities evolve and objectives are achieved. The work-plan budget is not entirely programme-funded, however, and as well as restructuring programme-funded services, there is the possibility of implementing parts of the work-programme via special projects under donors such as the Global Environment Facility and the European Union. Funding will be discussed during the SPC budget presentation later in the meeting.

¹ <http://www.spc.int/mrd>

² <http://www.spc.int/mrd/org/org.html>

³ <http://www.spc.int/coastfish/Reports/meetpap.htm>

⁴ <http://www.wcpfc.int/sc3/Index.htm>

Oceanic Fisheries Programme

5. The OFP is the principal vehicle for the delivery of scientific services – including fishery monitoring and data management, stock assessment, and biological and ecological research – to SPC members in support of national and regional tuna fisheries management. The interim Oceanic Fisheries Programme report for 2007 is provided in Annex 1⁵, and a more detailed version will be made available on the Marine Resources Division website at the end of the reporting year (December 2007).
6. The work of OFP, as a scientific service covering a regionally roving shared tuna resource managed through internationally-agreed mechanisms, is well defined, and is also beginning to be linked to a formal ‘resource-user pays’ arrangement that will lend a certain amount of scalability according to demand. However, the development of monitoring capacity (most of which will need to be at the national level) and the development of a better understanding of the oceanic pelagic ecosystem (through basic research) remain major medium-term ‘growth’ tasks, in addition to ongoing workloads of stock assessment in the service of management plans and conventions.
7. The development of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) continues to have implications for the OFP work-programme. In previous years, OFP work was aimed at answering questions posed by island member countries about the science involved in the management of tuna fisheries, either individually, or collectively in furthering the intentions of various multilateral tuna management treaties. With the advent of WCPFC the role of the OFP has broadened. However, there is a significant overlap in the work undertaken for WCPFC to support regional management and that required by SPC island member countries to implement their own management plans – these are the same stocks of fish. The WCPFC now pays SPC for the incremental cost of developing answers to questions that it alone might pose. However, it remains fair to say that WCPFC benefits to some extent from SPC-subsidised services, as the area of overlap is funded from SPC sources. On the other hand, SPC members benefit from the OFP’s WCPFC role as the involvement in regional data management and stock assessment enables a regional perspective and in-depth knowledge of the data and assessments to be brought to service provision at the national level. These issues will be reviewed in 2008 as part of a WCPFC review of its science functions, but the Secretariat believes that the current arrangement provides benefits to both WCPFC and SPC members and should be continued.

⁵ Also available on the website at <http://www.spc.int/mrd/doc/E-OFP-2007.pdf>

8. A major development during 2007 was the completion of phase 1 of the multi-donor tuna tagging project, for which the OFP eventually attracted in excess of USD 1.5 million. Two three-month tagging cruises were held in August–November 2006 and February–May 2007 using a pole-and-line vessel, Soltai 6, chartered from Soltai Fishing and Processing Ltd of Solomon Islands. More than 60,000 tuna were tagged (twice the operational target) using a combination of conventional dart tags and data archiving electronic tags. To date, in excess of 6,000 tag recaptures have been reported to the OFP. As tagged fish are reported over the coming years, this project will provide valuable information about the status of stocks – information that is independent of the fisheries catch/effort data that is obtained from logsheets – as well as information about migration and growth rates that can be obtained in no other way. Efforts are now focused on tag recovery and data analysis to realise the ultimate objectives of the project for PNG and the region. A second phase is planned to extend this work to other areas of the Pacific, initially Solomon Islands, and fundraising is already underway⁶.
9. Annex 1 should be consulted for a more complete list of OFP outputs, but other highlights of 2007 include:
 - a) A detailed stock assessment – for yellowfin tuna – was undertaken for the WCPFC in 2007. The assessment concluded that current exploitation levels are at maximum safe levels, with a significant probability that overfishing is occurring. Further increases in fishing effort would likely result in long-term reduction in catches. Detailed assessments for skipjack, bigeye and South Pacific albacore are scheduled for 2008. The most recent assessments for these species indicate that overfishing is occurring for bigeye tuna, while skipjack and South Pacific albacore continue to be fished at sustainable levels.
 - b) The 2nd Regional Stock Assessment Workshop was held for 2 weeks in June–July at SPC headquarters. This year, the workshop was broken into two parts – an introductory and an advanced workshop. Twenty participants from 18 PICTs attended the workshop, which was designed to enhance understanding of regional tuna assessments. Staff from the FFA Secretariat and from the Philippines Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources also participated. These workshops are a key element of the OFP’s stock assessment capacity building strategy, which seeks to enhance participation of PICTs in WCPFC processes and enable the consideration of regional stock status in national management initiatives. It was pleasing to note that a large number of the workshop participants attended the WCPFC Scientific Committee meeting in Honolulu. SPC members have strongly supported the continuation of these workshops, and it is likely that another will be held in 2008. The OFP, with the approval and cooperation of participating SPC members, is also planning to enhance the quality of stock assessment training through an on-line training facility to bridge the gap between annual workshops.

⁶ A proposal is available at <http://www.spc.int/mrd/doc/tag2-nov2007.pdf>

- c) The Tuna Fisheries Data Management System (TUFMAN) is a comprehensive, integrated database system developed by the OFP that allows PICTs to enter most types of tuna fishery data, perform data quality control, identify gaps in the provision of tuna fishery data, and report summary data to the WCPFC. Work on TUFMAN in 2007 included a complete redesign of the reporting module to provide more reports and a more user-friendly interface, the addition of a new Data Registry module and the design of a computer training video facility for TUFMAN. Updates of the latest version of TUFMAN (v4.0) were provided to all existing users (Palau, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Nauru, Fiji, Tuvalu, Tonga, Cook Islands), and new installations were undertaken in FSM and Vanuatu. Work in the latter part of 2007 will include investigation into using a new back-end relational database management system to support the large volumes of tuna fishery data in TUFMAN. The main focus of work in 2008 will be the development of a comprehensive observer data module.
- d) The WCPF Commission's policy on the provision of scientific data was accepted at its second regular session in December 2005, and during 2007 the OFP again compiled these data on behalf of the Commission. The quality of annual catch estimates, stratified catch and effort data, and size composition data continues to improve, although some Commission members did not meet the April 30 deadline. The verification of reported catches with comprehensive unloadings data is gaining increased importance and is likely to be a focus of the future work programme on regional tuna fisheries statistics.

Coastal Fisheries Programme

10. The Coastal Fisheries Programme report is provided in Annex 2, and a more detailed version will be made available on the Marine Resources Division website⁷ at the end of the reporting year (December 2007). The main stakeholders and beneficiaries of programme support continue to be Pacific Island government fisheries and living marine resource management institutions, but the programme also assists the development of the private sector in fisheries and aquaculture development and vocational training.
11. CFP, like FFA, provides fisheries management and development support services to member countries, and, like OFP, fisheries science – but in all of these areas the support is concentrated on nearshore rather than oceanic fisheries. It also provides aquaculture support and assists members in the development of their fisheries training and information capacities. CFP work thus involves a range of disciplines and it is probably useful to describe some of the programme issues separately.

⁷ <http://www.spc.int/mrd/org.htm>

- a) The Aquaculture Section, which was established in 2001, is developing very satisfactorily, but it is likely that more support will need to be provided to countries at the regional level if this sector is to live up to its potential. Around 30% of the world's total fish supply now comes from aquaculture, and its contribution to food security in the Pacific is likely to become significant in the coming decade. However, steps must be taken to avoid the environmental problems that have plagued aquaculture developments in some other regions. A major emerging gap is aquatic biosecurity. There is a long way to go before we come up to the standards already established for quarantine systems relating to animal and plant health and for risk assessment of introduced species. A workshop held in October 2007 will develop a roadmap and proposals for establishing regional capacity⁸, and improving national capacity in this field.
- b) CFP's main objective in the new strategic plan period, endorsed by CRGA last year and confirmed by HoF, is to help members to implement the Ecosystem Approach to coastal fisheries (EAF) by 2010, in line with the voluntary deadline agreed on by members at the World Summit on Sustainable Development for Implementing the Ecosystem Approach in general. Work on this objective complements FFA, SPC OFP and WCPFC attention to implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to oceanic fisheries. A workshop in October 2007⁹ will assess national progress in fulfilling this commitment, and identify areas on which attention should be concentrated.
- c) Although SPC currently has a large reef fisheries assessment section, the section is almost entirely funded by a European Union project of finite duration. Regional capacity for non-tuna fisheries assessment and monitoring is thus in danger of disappearing when the EU funding¹⁰ ends, unless new funding can be found to provide follow-up. Ideally, the SPC inshore fisheries research, statistics and assessment work will eventually achieve the multi-donor funding stability of OFP, but progress to this goal has been handicapped by several factors:
 - i) Lack of formal regional or national management plans or international conventions legally requiring scientific input on coastal fisheries;
 - ii) Although some inshore fisheries have major conservation and management problems, they are small in scale; unlike tuna fisheries, there is little prospect that artisanal fisheries will ever be able to support 'user-pays' research;
 - iii) The area of knowledge to be covered is enormous given the many thousands of separate inshore fisheries stocks in the Pacific Island region. It should be noted, however, that the ecosystem approach provides a different perspective on this diversity and a potential way forward.

⁸ A proposal will be posted to the website at <http://www.spc.int/mrd/doc/aqbiosec-initiative-nov2007.pdf>

⁹ The report of this workshop, when available, will be posted at <http://www.spc.int/mrd/doc/EACF.pdf>

¹⁰ As current project funding finishes, the CFP scientific staff of 11 will drop to 6 by mid-2008 and to a single post in Jan 2009, if no other arrangements can be made.

- iv) The science and data needs of national and local coastal fisheries managers, in relation to implementing the ecosystem approach to coastal fisheries, are being reviewed at the workshop in October and a regional initiative is being formulated to address these needs¹¹.
12. Highlights of 2007 are described below (see Annex 2 for a complete list of CFP outputs¹², and ongoing work):
- a) The CFP and the SPC Library have developed a Digital Fisheries Library that is now available online¹³. This digital library will give users online access to more than 4300 fisheries and aquaculture-related texts, in French and in English, produced by, for, or in collaboration with SPC.
 - b) One SPC initiative that is attracting considerable attention is a food-security project in Nauru. The project, implemented with financial assistance from Taiwan/ROC, SPC and the DEVFISH project, involved constructing fishing canoes, deploying shallow-water fish aggregating devices (FADs) around the island and providing training in FAD fishing and canoe handling skills to local fishers. Nine local boatbuilders were trained in modern construction techniques (composite plywood/fibreglass). Seven inshore FADs have been deployed close to the island, enabling canoe fishers to fish more safely. The lifespan and productivity of those FADs are being carefully monitored by both the Nauru Fisheries Marine Resources Authority (NFMRA) and SPC. This project promises to provide a great test case for using FADs to improve food security in other Pacific Islands. M. Charleston Deiye, NFMRA's Chief Executive Officer, will present the project's initial results as part of the 'fisheries theme' of CRGA 37.
 - c) In terms of formal training, CFP has been instrumental in the development and delivery of a new course for regional Fisheries Compliance Officers. The programme aims at enhancing participants' skills in fisheries management principles and legislation; monitoring of fish catches; patrol operations including methods and resources; and investigation techniques including evidence gathering, note taking, chain of evidence, interviewing and statement taking, brief preparation, and court procedures. A three-week pilot course was run at the PNG National Fisheries College in Kavieng in August with 16 Fisheries Compliance Officers attending. The Fisheries Evidence Training and Investigation Course (FETIC) has been customised from the Australian Basic Evidence Training and Investigation Course (BETIC) program, which is a major component of the nationally accredited Certificate III in the Seafood Industry (Fisheries Compliance). This project is a joint initiative between the FFA Fisheries Operations Unit, Australian Fisheries Academy (AFA) and SPC.

¹¹ This will be available on the website at <http://www.spc.int/mrd/doc/CFSP-initiative-nov2007.pdf>

¹² Also available on the website at <http://www.spc.int/mrd/doc/E-CFP-2007.pdf>

¹³ http://www.spc.int/coastfish/sections/reef/PROCFish_Web/Modules/Library/LuceneSearch.aspx

- d) The EU-funded PROCFish/C (Lomé ACP Pacific countries and French territories) and CoFish (additional Cotonou ACP Pacific countries) reef fisheries science projects have been extended to February 2009 and all substantive fieldwork in the 17 participating countries and territories will be completed by March 2008. Over half of the site reports for fieldwork have been completed and the analysis provided to the respective countries. Three complete country reports have been compiled and sent to countries for comment and clearance. In addition, a socioeconomic manual 'Socioeconomic Fisheries Surveys in Pacific Islands: Collecting a Minimum Dataset' has been produced and several sub-regional workshops will be held in December 2007 and January 2008.
- e) The aquarium fish resource in Nauru was assessed, with five local fisheries staff trained in survey methodologies using distance underwater visual census techniques. One staff member was also attached to SPC for three weeks to enter and analyse the data collected, and write up a report under the supervision of SPC's Live Reef Fish Specialist. Results were very encouraging with the identification of 93 fish species from 11 families with good potential for the marine aquarium trade. However, the potential for harvesting and marketing needs to be assessed. If these results are positive, a management plan will be drafted to ensure sustainable harvesting of this resource.

Regional Maritime Programme

13. While the primary focus of the RMP is to build the capacity of Pacific Island countries to meet international security and safety standards in the shipping and port sectors, the priorities of the programme continue to be assisting PICTs to maintain their compliance and accreditation with the ISPS Code, developing regulatory requirements for maritime safety and security regimes, and furthering the region's professional maritime peer networks.
14. Although island shipping development is largely private-sector-led with a high level of international coordination from the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the demands on Pacific Island countries in meeting these international standards are considerable, particularly for ports – an area that SPC became involved in last year. Regional assistance and pooling of resources – particularly skilled human resources – is necessary to enable small island countries to meet these international requirements so as to prevent avoidable barriers to transport and trade. The SPC Regional Maritime Programme has itself grown rapidly in response to this demand (from three staff in 2003 to 10 staff today).
15. The First Regional Meeting of Ministers for Maritime Transport was convened in Apia, Samoa, on 19 April 2007 and was attended by Ministers responsible for Maritime Transport from Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Pitcairn Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Australia was represented by an accredited Commonwealth Officer. Also attending the formal session as observers were Fiji, France, New Caledonia, and Papua New Guinea. The communiqué from this important meeting is attached as Annex 4¹⁴ and the more important outputs will be presented verbally at CRGA, following the discussion of several of these issues at the 2007 Pacific Islands Forum meeting.

¹⁴ Also available on the website at <http://www.spc.int/mrd/doc/E-RMP-Ministers-2007.pdf>

16. Maritime security in the Pacific Islands region continues to attract international attention and the RMP works with PacMA to conduct security audits of ports and designated authorities in addition to the STCW-95 audits of maritime administrations and maritime training institutes. The high standard of the checking system in place in the Pacific Islands region has been acclaimed by partner organisations and used as an example of “best practice” by the IMO. This has even led to requests for assistance from outside the region. The recognition of RMP and its affiliated maritime associations as the “one-stop shop” for regional maritime information from the Pacific Islands region has required the RMP to work as efficiently as possible within its resources. An example of improvement in this area has been the completion of an integrated data and information management system (DIMS) that captures for future generations the essence of shipping and maritime transport development in PICTs.
17. The audit system already in place in the region has being widened to encompass all activities in the Pacific Islands maritime sector, including safe ship operations, port operations, safety of seafarers including fisherfolk and maritime administration best operating practices. Other audits are based on business excellence criteria.
18. See Annex 3 for a more complete list of RMP outputs¹⁵

Issues in the Maritime Sector during 2007

19. This is by no means a full and prioritised list of issues, but draws the attention of CRGA to several topical matters that deserve consideration at the SPC Governing Council level.

Excellence in maritime business operations

20. There has been a firm commitment from the region’s maritime administrations to introduce a system whereby office procedures are developed and implemented before they are audited to a standard such as the Australian Business Excellence Framework. There has also been a suggestion that a regional standard based on an existing framework be developed. SPC RMP and PacMA will investigate this option further at their upcoming Executive Committee meeting.
21. RMP and PacMA already have an audit regime in place for standards of training and certification of seafarers in accordance with international requirements as well as for international port and ship security. In the same vein, audits are also conducted for safety management. Once initial basic training on establishing office procedures or standard operating procedures has been completed for interested maritime administrations, port authorities and maritime training institutes, the audit regime can easily be expanded to incorporate assessment of business excellence. This system will be geared towards promoting improvement in the region’s maritime industry to world best practice, and thus to maintaining excellent operating standards across the Pacific Islands.

¹⁵ Also available on the website at <http://www.spc.int/mrd/doc/E-RMP-2007.pdf>

22. In conjunction with the business excellence framework, PacMA is currently exploring a regional awards system with RMP. Although no firm decisions have been made, there are ongoing discussions on merit-based criteria, nomination and selection procedures and the establishment of a panel to decide on a variety of awards ranging from cadet/master/engineer of the year to business excellence for maritime administrations, ports or maritime training institutes. Certain awards, e.g. scholarships or book grants, could be linked to the maritime courses of study that will soon be on offer at The University of the South Pacific. The possibilities are endless as the maritime sector of the Pacific Islands region continues to work with RMP to improve and expand systems, standards and operations.

Update on status of tuna stocks

23. The major issues arising from the 2007 update on the status of regional tuna stocks are similar to those in the 2006 update that was provided to CRGA. However, the need to take effective action within the context of the next Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission meeting to reverse some of the overfishing trends, especially for bigeye tuna, has become even more urgent. The findings of OFP and the 3rd WCPFC Scientific Committee Meeting¹⁶ on these matters will be presented to CRGA, along with scientific opinion on various potential courses of action likely to emerge before the next WCPFC meeting in December 2007.

Regional Fisheries Institutional Harmonisation

24. The 64th Forum Fisheries Committee ministerial meeting in Wellington in May 2007 discussed institutional matters of joint interest to CRGA. The FFC64 report including the following:

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL FISHERIES SERVICES

Recognizing the importance of tuna and tuna-like species to FFA members, Ministers agreed to:

- i) Note the potential to broaden the work programme of FFA to enable it to service FFA member needs across the entire fisheries sector;*
- ii) Note there are opportunities to strengthen regional fisheries services across the entire fisheries sector to provide the best services to FFA members;*
- iii) Endorse the proposal to convene a joint FFA/SPC working group to consider the closer integration of the fisheries programmes of the two organizations, noting the general support of the proposal at the Officials Session of FFC64; and*
- iv) Further endorse and direct the FFA Secretariat to work with the SPC Secretariat on developing a proposal for consideration by FFC Ministers.*

¹⁶ [http://www.wcpfc.int/sc3/pdf/SC3%20Summary%20Report%20\(Pre-edit%20version\).pdf](http://www.wcpfc.int/sc3/pdf/SC3%20Summary%20Report%20(Pre-edit%20version).pdf)

25. More recently, the Directors-General of SPC and FFA met bilaterally ahead of the CROP Executives Meeting in Fiji in August and decided upon several joint actions including:
- The FFA taskforce and the proposed broader study on the 'Future of Pacific Fisheries' by SPC – *It was agreed that a joint study to be conducted by a consultant is the best approach to progress this issue. DG / SPC, in consultation with DG, FFA, will develop a short paper to be presented at the 2007 Colloquium¹⁷, on the proposed study to include its objectives, purpose, methodology, expected outcomes, TOR for study and associated budget. It is expected that the Study TOR will be finalized at the Apia Colloquium with a view to commencing the joint study in early 2008.*
 - Joint Ministers of Fisheries meeting in 2008 – *This was agreed to in principle and details will need to be worked out to ensure that such a meeting will provide strategic outcomes and directions that are fully beneficial to the work of both Agencies, particularly the provision of services to their respective members.*
 - Regional Institutional Framework – *It was noted that RIF provides one possible option for enhancing development cooperation amongst CROP agencies. However both CEOs also acknowledged that genuinely engaging in the types of cooperation outlined above¹⁸ would also result in significant levels of better coordinated and complementary service delivery with greater added value to members.*
26. CRGA may wish to note the substantial progress that is being made in bringing clarity to the relationship between SPC and FFA.

10 October 2007

¹⁷ The next SPC/FFA colloquium will be held immediately after the Pacific Community Conference. The text of the SPC/FFA MOU is available at http://www.spc.int/mrd/asides/Other_orgs/FFA/FFA.htm

¹⁸ The full record is available at <http://www.spc.int/mrd/doc/hlc-spc-ffa1.pdf>