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TUNANOMICS workshop for journalists on tuna fisheries economics and challenges

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Development of Sustainable Tuna fisheries in the Pacific ACP countries is vital if tuna market is to be maintained in the region.

Head of European Commission's Office to the OCT's in the Pacific, Efstratios Pegidis said the importance of tuna fisheries resources for the Pacific Islands' is well known.

"Tuna fisheries provide a vital source of food, employment, recreation, trade and economic well-being for people throughout the Pacific. Therefore, every effort should be made to ensure that fisheries activities are conducted in a responsible manner, in order to allow present and future generations to benefit from its exploitation.

Pegidis said this opening remarks during the launch of the FFA DEVFISH Tunanomics Pacific Media Initiative, in partnership with SPC and PINA and with funding support from the EU and government of Japan.

He said such occasions (Tuna meet) were an important opportunity to re-affirm the European Unions' support in the conservation, management and sustainable development of the fisheries' sector in Pacific Island countries, who all share the same tuna fisheries resources.

"The European Union is contributing to the organisation of this Workshop through the "Development of Sustainable Tuna Fisheries in the Pacific ACP countries Phase II" Project, better known by its acronym DEVFISH2, which is an EU 10th EDF funded Project implemented together by the FFA and SPC.

Pegidis said the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) supports the largest tuna fishery of the world.

"The value of the fishery has been estimated at the tune of over US\$4 billion.

Pacific tuna stocks are still considered one of the world's healthiest tuna stocks and are still abundant compared to other regions in the world.

"However, we must be vigilant. Catches in the WCPO in 2012 have been the highest on record and the number of vessels has largely increased during the last decade. Tuna stocks are natural and renewable resources, but this does not mean that they are inexhaustible. Therefore, is everybody's responsibility to take all necessary measures to avoid overfishing and Pacific tuna stocks to become overfished, as well as to ensure that Pacific people will be able to get the maximum benefit out of it, while ensuring its sustainable exploitation. He said the involvement of the EU in Pacific fisheries projects and programmes

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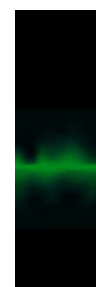
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has been remarkable.

"I would like to take this occasion to recall that the cooperation between the EU and the SPC and the FFA in the field of fisheries dates back has been longstanding and started about 40 years ago.

"This cooperation has made possible the implementation of several successful fisheries projects and programmes over the last decades. The EU is currently contributing approximately 20 million euros, under the 10th European Development Fund, for the sustainable management of the region's fisheries through 2 regional projects and one all-ACP programme, namely: 1. the former mentioned DEVFISH2 project implemented by both FFA and SPC; 2. the "Scientific Support for the Management of Coastal and Oceanic Fisheries" Project, more commonly known as SCICOFISH, being implemented by the SPC. 3. the Program entitled "Strengthening Fisheries Management in ACP Countries, better known ACP Fish II ", which has a Pacific component and has implemented 21 projects during its implementation. This Programme will close its activities in 2014.

"I am not going to extend myself too long on the activities implemented by these programmes and projects, but at least I would like to summarize the major achievements of our ongoing regional projects," he said.

Pegidis said DEVFISH2 project overall objective was to increase the contribution from the sustainable use of highly migratory marine resources, particularly tuna, to the alleviation of poverty in Pacific Island States, through the reduction of constraints to domestic tuna industry development.

He said these constraints arise from economic and environment vulnerabilities, including lack of capacity to manage and support the tuna industry; and IUU fishing activities which divert economic benefits and threaten efforts to sustainably manage the resource.

"Over the last three years, DEVFISH 2 has been extensively working with Competent Authorities responsible of Sanitary and Phytosanitary matters of Pacific countries that are currently allowed to export fishery products to the EU. As well, assistance in the development of Competent Authorities is on-going in several countries.

"Both countries with established Competent Authorities and the ones trying to set up new ones have benefited from capacity building and inspector's training. In this regard, a Regional Competent Authorities Standard Fish Inspectors course was developed and delivered in collaboration with SPC."

He said maintaining the access to European markets is crucial for the economies of these Pacific countries, and accordingly DEVFISH2 has dedicated a lot of effort and resources.

"Illegal fishing has been identified as one of the main drivers undermining fisheries managers' conservation efforts and disrupting markets with unfair competition.

"Establishing systems to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is another priority of DEVFISH2. DEVFISH2 has successfully supported Pacific countries to comply with the EU Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing Regulation. National Plan of Action (NPOA) for IUU fishing and associated Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) have been formulated or updated, strategic support to Monitoring, Control and Surveillance detection operations and coordination is underway, and efforts have been made to improve IUU detection data and to integrate information systems available.

He said the private sector has also benefited from DEVFISH2 activities. The Pacific Islands Tuna Industry Association (PITIA) was established under the auspices of DEVFISH2 predecessor (DEVFISH). PITIA provides information and services to its members to encourage information and engagement of industry in key policy decisions affecting their businesses. DEVFISH2 has continued to support PITIA's

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work.

He said DEVFISH2 is assisting Pacific Island countries in the preparation of tuna development and management strategies, providing technical assistance in policy development, and supporting small scale fisheries.

He said the tuna tagging activities in the central Pacific Ocean will help us to understand the behaviour of tuna species and will allow us to fine tune the assessments

NOUMEA, (POST COURIER)

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