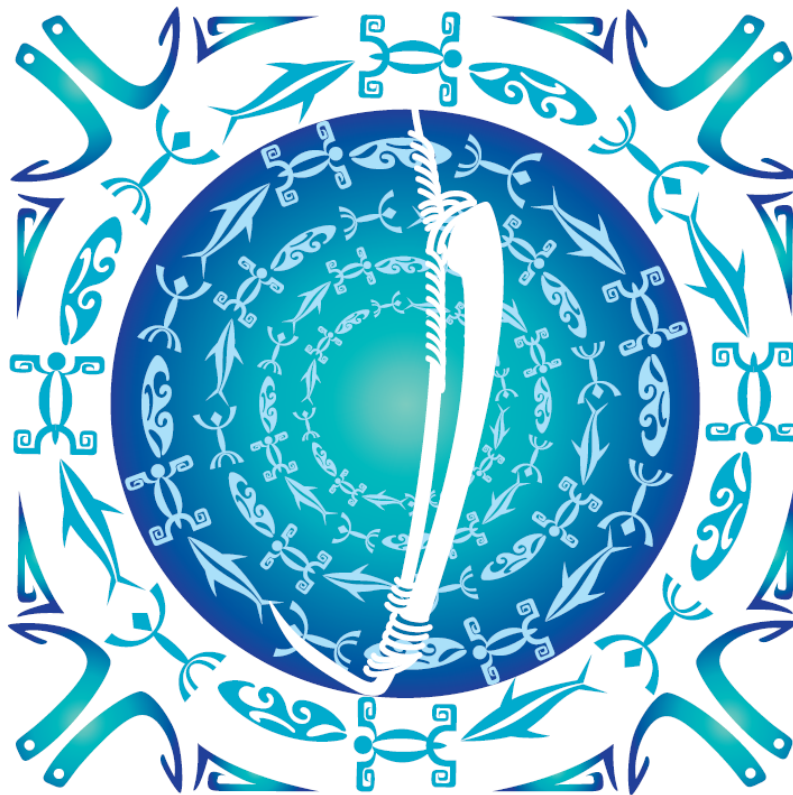


# SciCOFish

SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF COASTAL AND  
OCEANIC FISHERIES IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

## Third Steering Committee meeting report



**Noumea, 7 March 2013**

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Representatives of all Pacific ACP countries met on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2013 at SPC headquarters in Noumea in the third Steering Committee of the EU-funded SciCOFish project. The Committee meeting was in conjunction with the 8<sup>th</sup> SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting held on 4-6<sup>th</sup> March.

Participants at the meeting included:

<b>P-ACP representatives</b>	
Ben PONIA	Cook Islands
Eugene PANGELINAN	Federated States of Micronesia
Sanaila NAQALI	Fiji
Raikon TUMOIA	Kiribati
<i>apologies</i>	Marshall Islands
Monte DEPAUNE	Nauru
James TAFATU	Niue
<i>apologies</i>	Palau
Jeff KINCH	Papua New Guinea
Sealiitu Fonoiaiva SESEGA	Samoa
James TERI	Solomon Islands
Julio da CRUZ	Timor Leste
Sione Vailala MATOTO	Tonga
Samasoni SAUNI	Tuvalu
Moses AMOS	Vanuatu
<b>Others</b>	
Thierry CATTEAU	EU representative
Jerry HUEKWAHIN	RAO representative
Gilles HOSCH	Project mid-term reviewer
Paul NICHOLS	Project mid-term reviewer
Mike BATTY	Project Supervisor
Anne LEFEUVRE	Project Administrator
Lindsay CHAPMAN	SPC Coastal Fisheries Programme Manager
John HAMPTON	SPC Oceanic Fisheries Programme Manager

Observers included representatives of the Marine Resources Directorate of French Polynesia, the Australian Aid Programme, the University of the South Pacific and the Forum Fisheries Agency.

Participants were provided with a number of background documents, including the “SciCOFish Second project steering committee report”, the “SciCOFish Year 3 report and year 4 workplan”.

## **Introduction**

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Mike Batty, Director of the SPC Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division and supervisor of the SciCOFish project opened the meeting and briefly explained that the purpose of the committee was to provide P-ACP representatives with an overview of the project, to describe SciCOFish 2012 activities, and to present the draft 2013 workplan. The main output of the committee was normally to provide guidance on priorities for future work, and approve the 2013 workplan, but this year’s meeting was also an opportunity to hear and discuss the preliminary findings of the project mid-term review and to discuss the longer-term future of activities in priority areas currently supported by the project.

The project is on schedule to complete in mid-2014, and has spent approximately two-thirds of its overall budget, as planned.

Mike Batty was elected chairman of the Committee, and introduced the first presentation.

## **SciCOFish Component 2 – Coastal Fisheries**

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Lindsay Chapman, SPC Coastal Fisheries Programme Manager, made a presentation on Component 2 of the project, covering progress in Coastal Fisheries for 2012 and activities planned for 2013. These activities are summarised in Annexes 1 and 2.

The Committee then discussed coastal fisheries progress and priorities for future work in some detail, and provided feedback on individual activities and advised on needs and opportunities for the timing of forthcoming activities in individual countries.

In general, appreciation was expressed by P-ACP countries for the assistance of the project thus far, particularly in developing national coastal fisheries survey and data management capacity, and in assisting with the development of coastal fisheries management plans. Several countries were expanding their staffing cadres as a result of increased emphasis on coastal fisheries conservation and management, or were undergoing staff turnover, and there was a particular need for ongoing training in several areas supported by the project.

There was also some concern about the gradual loss of regional capacity for coastal fisheries scientific support to members as the project entered its final phase, particularly as there was likely to be a gap between EDF10 and EDF11, and since there is currently no firm prospect of other sources of support for the entire range of work currently supported under EDF10. Although this gap can be partly filled using consultancy funds remaining in the project, a more sustainable mode for regional coastal fisheries scientific support is preferable.

It was noted that the EU has generously provided almost continuous assistance to SPC fisheries work, first in Oceanic Fisheries (since 1975) and later also in Coastal Fisheries (since 2003), even though the terms of support involve no obligation to extend or expand activities beyond the lifetime of individual projects. The committee however hoped that the excellent progress being shown by this project in helping Pacific Island countries tackle some very difficult problems in areas of critical national importance, would be seen as evidence that continued assistance would be well targeted.

## Summary of requests, priorities and comments

PNG	Assistance in provincial coastal fisheries data capture programme
Niue	Update Coastal Fisheries Management Plan Invertebrate survey (follow-up on PROCFISH baseline)
Vanuatu	Further management plans for designated coastal fisheries Improvement of export data management software to EU standards
Solomon Islands	Export database software is anticipated keenly Database for creel survey that was recently started Invertebrate fishery management is a major political issue
Cook Islands	Looking forward to completion of market and creel survey manuals Asked about terms under which PROCFISH country data is released to external researchers, answered by project coordinator.
Nauru	Supports component 2 of the 2013 annual work plan and looks forward to continued support on the creel and market survey pilot project and commencement of the beche-de-mer survey and management plan. Requested that this survey be extended to other aquatic flora and fauna of the intertidal zone as well.
Kiribati	Next priority is a deepwater snapper management plan Finalise coastal fisheries management planning WRT climate change Standardisation of forms for artisanal fishery monitoring
FSM	Assistance in harmonising coastal fisheries data collection methodologies and data management in the different states Management plans for beche-de-mer and trochus fisheries in all states
Fiji	Follow-up to invertebrate survey Capacity development in creel survey Database skills training for new graduate recruits
Tonga	Additional priorities in Tonga are beche-de-mer and other invertebrate management
Tuvalu	Discussed priorities with Lindsay directly
Timor Leste	Management of spear fishery WRT interaction with tourism potential

## SciCOFish Component 1 – Oceanic Fisheries

John Hampton, SPC Oceanic Fisheries Programme Manager, made a presentation on Component 1 of the project, covering progress in Oceanic Fisheries for 2012 and activities planned for 2013. These activities are summarised in Annexes 1 and 2.

During the discussion that followed, P-ACP fisheries representatives put particular emphasis on the value of national observer programme enhancement, particularly training of observers and debriefers, that SPC had been implementing through the SciCOFish project and other sources of co-funding. Particular note was made of the role of the project in helping countries successfully accomplish the enormous task of achieving 100% observer coverage aboard purse-seiners fishing in the region, and the even greater task that remained of increasing the level of observer coverage aboard longliners, as well as the development of national capacity for efficient national observer de-briefing, observer training and data-management.

It was also noted that funding from Papua New Guinea and Korea for tuna tagging comes to an end at the end of this year and this would probably see the end of the current large-scale pole-and-line based tagging programme. SciCOFish has been supporting smaller scale bigeye tagging in the central Pacific. Continuation of this programme has been recommended by the recent

peer review of the Bigeye tuna stock assessment, although again there is no immediately available source of funding.

#### Summary of requests, priorities and comments

FSM	Attachments to OFP for new staff including understanding implications of SEAPODYM, and participation in any tagging cruises Looking forward to data audit Need to harmonise national IMS with SPC data systems Status of N Pacific Albacore stock implications for FSM fisheries & EEZ Evaluation of potential of commercial fishery in territorial sea E-reporting trials
Vanuatu	Integration of TUFMAN with national FIMS Bioeconomic analysis of VU longline fishery, particularly advice on national limits, quotas, and licence numbers
PNG	Looking forward to collaboration on final tagging cruise and PNG NFA would be open to other funding requests addressing data gaps, including tagging or other research needs in oceanic fisheries. Thanks to SPC for assistance in developing and delivering observer training courses in PNG, and invite observers from other Pacific Islands to train at PNG national fisheries training college.
Timor Leste	Analysis of data resulting from trial longline fishery in EEZ Adaptation to E Timor of SEAPODYM modelling work in Indonesia
Kiribati	Analysis of economic implications to Kiribati of FAD closure Characterisation of fishing and changes in Phoenix Islands MPA Assistance with observer data processing
Nauru	Supports component 1 of the 2013 annual workplan.
Niue	TUFMAN training for new staff Continued scientific support to assist in taking effective part in regional fisheries management discussions and design of management measures
Solomon Islands	Training for additional observer debriefers Review of fishing potential in archipelagic waters – high level of interest by fishing companies for access
Tuvalu	National observer debriefers needed
Fiji	Thanks for scientific input in MSC certification of a Fiji albacore fishery TUBS training needed Attachment to OFP on logsheet and port sampling data management
Tonga	Additional Tongan observers need to be trained Ongoing assistance and training on data management

Although Timor Leste has received rather less support than other P-ACP countries from the project, Mike Batty explained that a recent visit by SPC to the country had identified several activities that could be carried out by SciCOFish in 2013, and these are noted in the tables above.

After this discussion, the Committee had no hesitation in approving the workplan for Year 4,

#### Special Presentations

Mike Batty explained that every year a different facet of the project was described to the committee in detail.

Franck Magron made a presentation on the Coastal Fisheries databases, explaining how the various software and data components were being developed and managed. Servers will be deployed in all P-ACP coastal fisheries administrations by the end of the project, with secure, backed-up storage and will also contain digital libraries and other intranet resources as well as the facilities for coastal fisheries data management and analysis. During discussion various Committee members expressed their appreciation and foresaw lasting utility coming out of this entire body of work. Creel and market survey are becoming increasingly important to P-ACP countries and with this project coastal fisheries monitoring and data-management across the entire region finally appears to have prospects of becoming sustainable.

Simon Nicol described the evolution of the SEAPODYM environmental- and trophic-forced fishery assessment model and its increasing utility and relevance to understanding tuna stock dynamics at relatively fine geographical scale, in helping project future trends, and in predicting the disposition of tuna in areas where no fishing has yet occurred. He pointed out the major improvement that had resulted from the availability of a new fine-grained oceanographic dataset running up to the end of 2012 and the correction of a temperature bias that had been discovered in climate model data for the equatorial Pacific, plus the integration of tagging data. The analysis of skipjack recruitment to PNG fisheries that resulted from integrating the tagging data into the SEAPODYM model was viewed with particular interest by the meeting, particularly the projection by the model of the main source of skipjack larvae centred around High Seas Pocket #2. Dr Nicol did however point out that outputs still need to be viewed with a high degree of caution – they should be used as an aid to better understanding and a pointer to the most promising avenues for more detailed investigation, rather than be used to directly drive management interventions – given the sensitivity of the model to changes in certain parameters.

The committee was impressed by the progress that was being made towards fine-tuning, validating, and generally increasing the robustness and applicability of the model, and looked forward to the time when it could be used to answer routine regional fisheries management questions. Conventional models that are more dependent on fishery data, although robust on a regional scale, struggle with questions on the scale of individual EEZs, or about areas where no fishing has occurred.

### **Midterm Review Consultant Briefing**

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The SciCOFish mid-term (and SCIFish end-of-project) review consultants, Gilles Hosch and Paul Nichols, presented a preliminary report on their analysis of the project, and the results of their discussions with P-ACP countries.

The reviewers felt that Results Area 1 (oceanic fisheries) was perfectly aligned with the Project Purpose, but that Results Area 2 (in coastal fisheries) was more heterogeneous and the project design could have usefully divided this into more result areas. They did however feel that project was highly relevant and continues to build upon the investments that have been made through previous projects, with lessons learned being taken aboard.

P-ACP countries had been asked to assess their progress in four key indicators of coastal and oceanic fisheries topics that were the subject of project assistance. Noting that the indicators

were considerably broader and less specific for coastal fisheries (improvement in overall coastal fisheries science knowledge, and improvement in national coastal fisheries conservation) than for oceanic fisheries (improvement in capacity to run the national observer programme, and improvement in capacity to respond to WCPFC requirements for data), the Committee heard that when consolidated across the region, P-ACP perceptions were that national capacity in these coastal fisheries result areas had improved and that capacity in these oceanic fisheries result areas had improved substantially.

The reviewers felt that component one (oceanic) is likely to achieve its targets and that SPC remains firmly in place as the key driver of tuna science for the region. It was however suggested that, over time, the prospects for cost recovery for the direct services provided by regional agencies need to be more actively explored by national fisheries departments, particularly using the levies that are charged by most countries on industrial fishing to finance observer training in addition to the observer placements that they currently fund. Pacific Island countries should not need to be reliant on donor funding for such essential services, particularly when a potential “user-pays” mechanism was already in place.

In component two (coastal), the reviewers questioned the validity of Underwater Visual Census as the primary assessment tool for coastal finfish, since there appeared to be little interest from countries in this work, and most of the requests in this demand-driven project are for the development of fishery monitoring and database systems and management plans. The increasing emphasis of the project in these latter areas however made it likely that targets would be achieved by the end of the project.

The reviewers noted that EU funding for P-ACP fisheries work through SPC had been significant, and had shown an increase over the years, but EU funding as a percentage of total SPC fisheries programme funding had fallen from 44% to 28% over the past decade. The ability of SPC to source funding from elsewhere was seen as a positive development.

The reviewers also noted that project funding engenders serious inefficiencies, in terms of reporting duplication, mis-matching of staff contracts with project periods, and integration of activities within each programme. A programme funding modality, supporting an integrated work-programme in agreement with other co-funders, would be preferable.

It was pointed out that EDF11 is not likely to be implemented consecutively with EDF10, and that a significant gap will occur in EU funding support between the end of SCICOFISH and any new EU funding that may be approved under EDF11. The reviewers felt it important that the highest priority activities common to both SCICOFISH and any new project continue without losing momentum, and that an application for bridging funding would be justifiable.

The EU indicated that: 1- funding for fisheries under 11th EDF is likely but dependent upon ongoing programming discussions between the region represented by the RAO and the EU; 2- a shift towards a programme-based approach with larger financial contribution potentially co-financed with other donors – notable Australia and New Zealand - programme is in line with EU guidelines and could be discussed should fisheries be retained as an area of intervention under 11<sup>th</sup> EDF; 3- sustainability of fisheries should be sought with stronger inclusion of the private sector.

The Committee discussed the impressions of the review team in concert with the ongoing and new priorities expressed by members in the earlier part of the meeting and recommended that:

- For the last period of the project, in addition to ongoing commitments, and bearing in mind the fundamental basis of the project – that excellent science is the key to excellent decision-making at both the regional and the national levels – highest priorities for strengthened country support would be in:
  - observer programme training,
  - bioeconomic modelling,
  - coastal fishery database and survey development, and
  - beche-de-mer fishery assessment and management.
- SPC make an application for a project cost overrun and extension of project duration, as soon as possible, to allow continuation of these important services;
- That the EU and RAO seriously consider that any future funding for SPC fisheries work under EDF11 be delivered through programmatic support, and that SPC should develop linkages between EU and other primary SPC fisheries programme donors with a view to joint agreement on a future SPC fisheries work programme covering oceanic and coastal fisheries.

With this, the Committee finished its deliberations and, after the chairman had thanked participants, the meeting was declared closed.



**Annex 1**

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Description of Activities in 2012 (from pages 15-27 of the “Year 3 Progress Report and Year 4 Workplan”)

**Annex 2**

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2013 Annual workplan (from pages 30-38 of the “Year 3 Progress Report and Year 4 Workplan”)