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TWENTY-SIXTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 5 - 9 August 1996)

COUNTRY STATEMENT

TUVALU

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COUNTRY STATEMENT - TUVALU

Background

Tuvalu's fisheries developments is managed by two institutions under the Ministry of Natural Resources; these are the National Fishing Corporation of Tuvalu (NAFICOT) and the Fisheries Department. NAFICOT deals with marketing while the Fisheries department deals with research and extension work. At present NAFICOT is the only exporter of fish in Tuvalu, exporting about 200 to 300kg of its catch of deep-bottom fish a fortnight. The local commercial fishermen do not sell their catch overseas due to the high cost of export duties coupled with the lack of sufficient money within the private sector to meet such operations. The extension programs of the fisheries department includes trainings in outboard motor maintenance, fishing techniques, fish-processing, safety at sea etc. The research programs includes fish catch survey, trochus and giant clam restocking, and ciguatera monitoring. This paper serves to give an insight into the different programs and projects within our fisheries developments in the past 3-4 years.

Present status of the fishing industry

- Marine resource exploitation is still primarily a subsistence activity.
- Local commercial fishing is limited to a small artisanal fleet of 14-16ft trolling skiffs, targeting skipjacks and yellowfin, plus flyingfish caught with scoop nets during new moon.
- Reef fish are occasionally sold in the local market but usually as excess from subsistence fishing.
- Small overseas export trials by RDA International Inc began in late 1991 under the Tuvalu Deep-Water Snapper project. Project evaluation established that more than 100 tonnes of snapper can be fished from Tuvalu seamounts each year on a sustainable basis. A snapper fishery management plan for the fishery has been documented.

Constraints to development.

- Lack of effective means to transport fish products to overseas markets;
- Lack of supporting infrastructure, especially shore facilities.
- Lack of consistent data-gathering required for accurate assessment of fisheries resources and monitoring of activities.
- Lack of suitable marketing centres for local sale and handling of fish.
- Lack of adequate training or experience of local personnel in management of commercial venture.
- Lack of incentives to attract local fishermen to participate in a commercial venture.

Significant developments in the past 3-4 years.

- Licensing of foreign fishing vessels. Before 1994 Tuvalu has no bilateral fishing agreement with Asian distant water fishing nation (ADWFN) except for the United States Multilateral Treaty on Fisheries. During and after 1994 Tuvalu has successfully concluded its bilateral fishing agreements with Japan and Taiwan.
- Surveillance of the Tuvalu EEZ has greatly improved with the provision of a patrol boat from the government of Australia, (Australia's Defense Corporation Program) to conduct policing activities on foreign fishing vessels in Tuvalu's EEZ. This can be part of a reason why a number of Distant Water Fishing Nations whose last agreements with Tuvalu had lapsed, have negotiated new licensing agreements. 1995 records one of the highest economic returns from these agreements.
- A slow progress towards an export oriented fishery. The USAID funded Deep-Water Snapper Project (1991-1994) has proven the viability of the commercial exploitation of deep-water snappers. The government is encouraging the private sector to become involve in this enterprise, but the lack of sufficient money within the private sector hinders such developments. The government therefore is planning to either lease out its National fishing Corporation of Tuvalu (NAFICOT) assets to the private

investor(s) to exploit the resource or to encourage the participation of the private sector in joint ventures with overseas partners in exploiting the resource. The Tuvalu Ika Corporation (one of two representative bodies of private fishermen on Funafuti) is currently in the process of establishing a joint venture with a New Zealand fish processing Company.

- **Infrastructure development**

Three community fishing centres have been established in the outer islands under Tuvalu's Community Fishing Project. Two are AIDAB funded (started operation in 1995) and the other is funded by the government of Japan (started operation in 1993). The centres served as markets where local fishermen can sell their catch. These centres process fish by natural drying process (sun, salt and smoke drying), and their current products (fresh & salted fish, tuna jerky) are sold in the local market, intending to sell overseas. At present the operation of these centres are being met by the government but they will finally be given to their respective island communities to manage their operations.

Reconstruction of the Vaitupu wharf/jetty destroyed by hurricane Nina in late 1993, a few months after it was completed. The jetty was built together with the Vaitupu community fishing centre for fish landing. The project was funded by the government of Japan.

Communication improvement. Construction of the National Coordinating Centre (NCC) with the installation of the Maritime Surveillance & Communication Network and the Peacesat Network makes communication with the Forum Fisheries Agency etc and other Peacesat station more efficient.

- **Marine Park project.** The Funafuti (Capital of Tuvalu) Town Council, with assistance from the government is establishing a marine park/conservation area in the Funafuti lagoon, the first in Tuvalu. The project is funded by UNDP and administered through SPREP. The Marine Park covers an area of 40 square kilometers and include six islets and adjoining reefs and waters in that zone. The overall goal of the project is to "conserve marine and terrestrial biodiversity of Funafuti atoll based on the sustainable use of natural resources."

- **FADs programme.** New FADs were deployed in 1995 and 1996. Feedbacks from local fishermen reveals that the FADs have been very useful in saving both fuel and time during fishing. The programme was carried out with technical assistance from the SPC Fisheries Development Officer.

- **Aquaculture.** The construction of the first aquaculture project pond (1560sq.metres) on Vaitupu island was completed in early 1996. The project was funded under the

FAO Regional South Pacific Aquaculture Development Project. A successful aquaculture enterprise in Vaitupu would serve as a model for other atolls to copy and adapt to their needs. A subsistence aquaculture in Tuvalu would provide fish when supply is scarce as during periods of inclement weather or during episodes of ciguatera.

- The Fisheries department monitors a small sanctuary of 129 giant clams, Tridacna derasa, which survived from an original shipment of 1,000 juveniles from Palau in 1988. A storm in the same year accounts for the high death rate.
 - Trochus niloticus was introduced from the Cook islands in 1988 to five of the islands. To date the Fisheries is monitoring the survival of the species. Two of the islands were surveyed in 1994 and there were no sign of recruitment, and very few adults were found.
 - Ciguatera Monitoring. Tuvalu has experienced a few ciguatera outbreaks and in 1988 had one of the worst ciguatera epidemic in the Pacific. Because of this the Fisheries department established a Ciguatera Monitoring Program with the technical assistance offered by Dr.U.Kally of the University of Townsville. The program was fully funded by the government of New Zealand.
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