

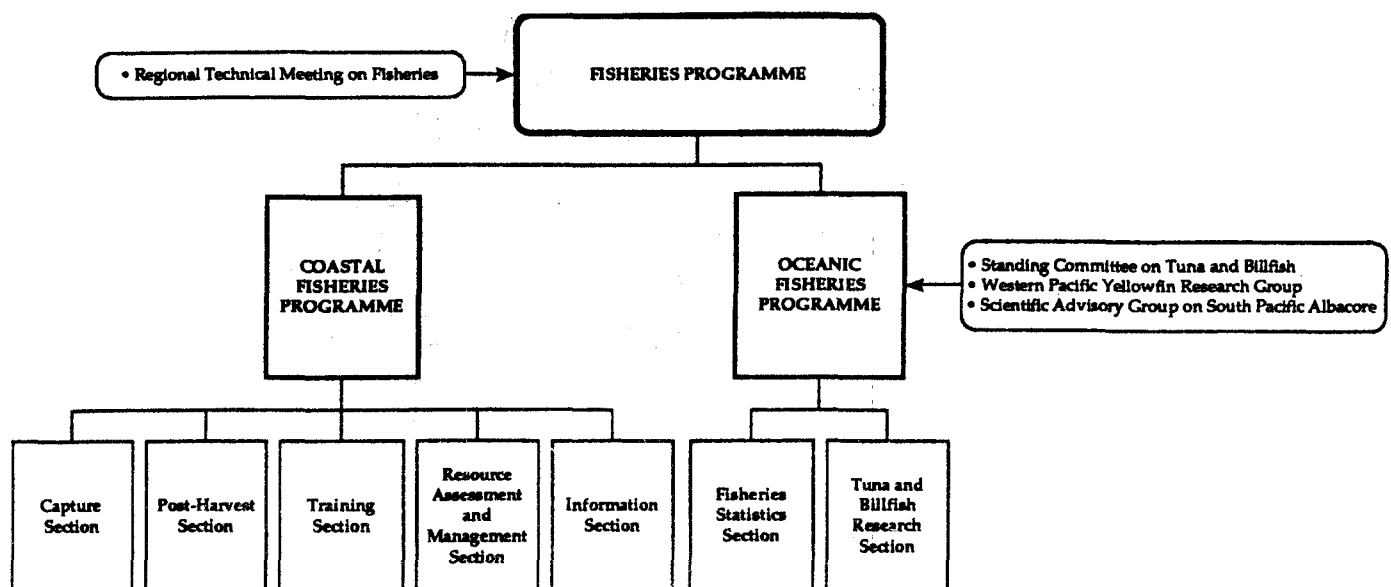
SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

TWENTY-FIFTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES (Noumea, New Caledonia, 14-18 March 1994)

SPC FISHERIES PROGRAMME OVERVIEW (Paper prepared by the Secretariat)

INTRODUCTION

1. This paper provides an overview of the major issues relating to the coordination and management of the Commission's Fisheries Programme. Matters relating to staffing, the work programme, project funding and planning, Secretariat action in response to the recommendations made by the 24th Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries (RTMF), and relations with other agencies having interests in the marine sector are presented.
2. More complete details of the specific fisheries-related work programme activities carried out by the Commission during 1992/1993 are given in WP. 2 (Oceanic Fisheries Programme), and WP. 3 (Coastal Fisheries Programme).
3. The growth and changing direction of the Fisheries Programme in recent years have led to a revision of its organisational structure. In previous years the Commission's fisheries activities have traditionally been divided into two major areas, the Coastal Fisheries Programme (CFP) and the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme (TBAP) which has now been retitled the Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP). These have now been further subdivided into seven distinct "sections" (Figure 1 below) and a range of "projects" or activity areas (Figures 2 and 3) which in many cases correspond to specific extra-budgetary funding arrangements. These activity areas are designed to be complementary and are fully integrated with each other.



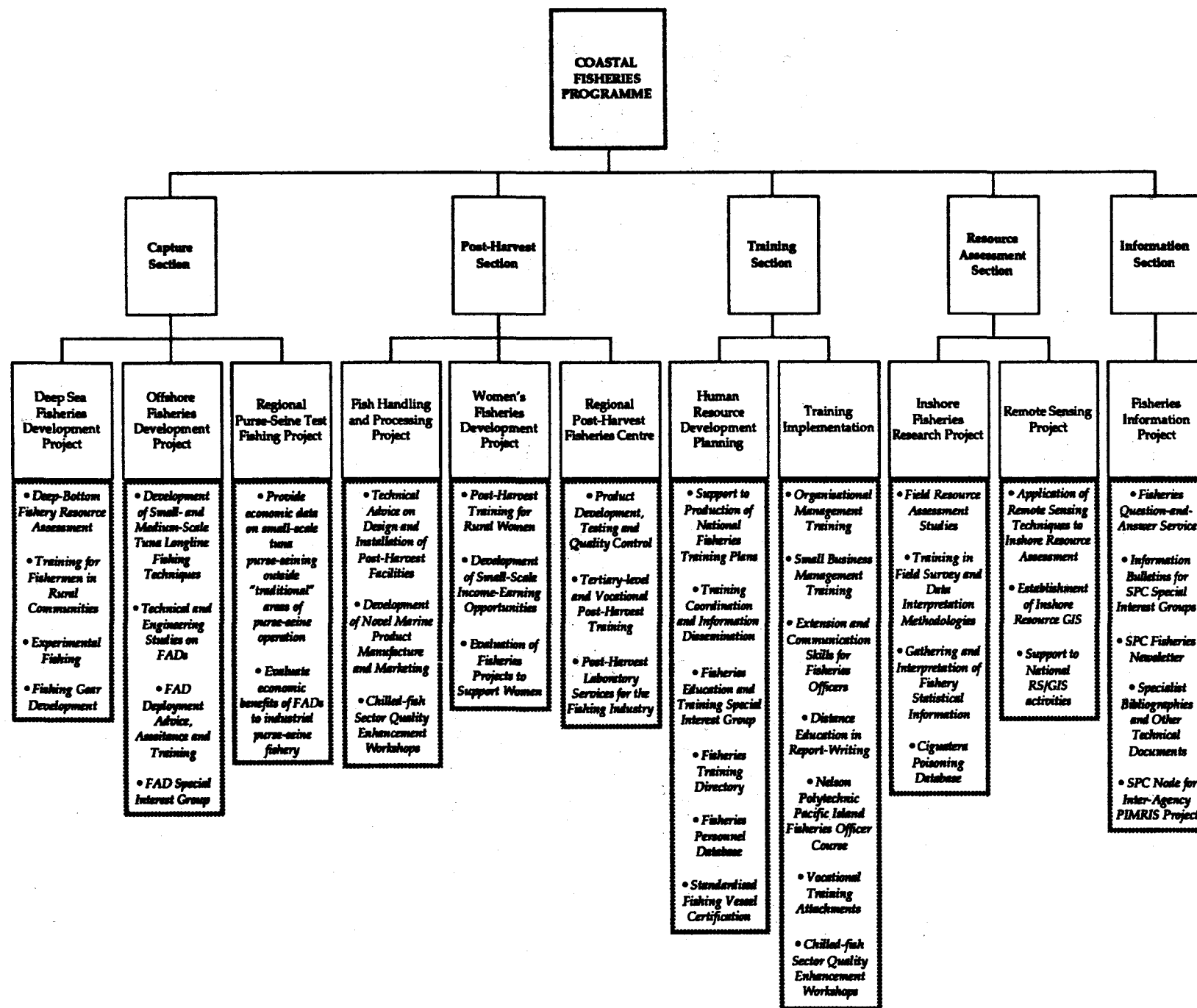


Figure 2. Coastal Fisheries Programme

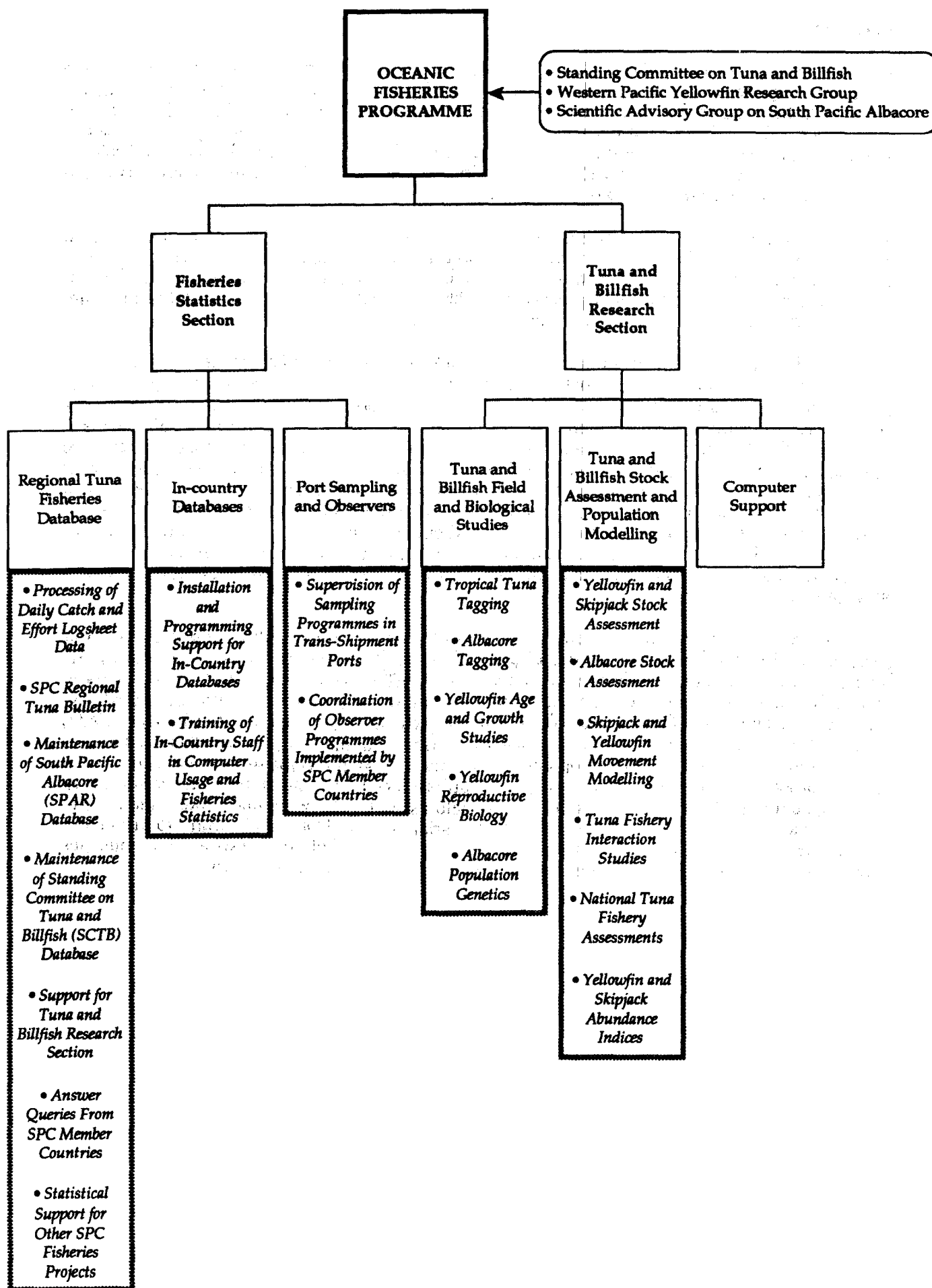


Figure 3. Oceanic Fisheries Programme

STAFFING

4. At the end of December 1993, 20 professional and 9 support staff were employed in the Fisheries Programme out of a total of 52 established positions, leaving 23 positions unfilled. Eighteen of these 23 positions were only recently approved by the South Pacific Conference, held in October 1993, fifteen of them to support activities under the forthcoming South Pacific Regional Tuna Resource and Assessment Project (SPRTRAMP). Funding for the SPRTRAMP has now been committed by the European Union (formerly the European Community), and recruitment to some of the positions is under way.

5. A further five vacant positions have been established for some time under the Regional Post Harvest Fisheries Centre project for which funding is yet to be secured. The other positions are vacant because of funding shortfalls, and this is preventing the completion of a number of approved activities within the work programme. The Secretariat is continuing its efforts to secure the necessary funding to allow these positions to be filled.

6. In the meantime, the Programme has from time to time engaged short-term consultants in order to meet its obligations to member countries in the absence of a full complement of professional staff. During the course of the year, a data processing analyst and a scientist to work on albacore population modelling were recruited under consultancy arrangements within the OFP. In addition, the short-term attachment of a senior scientist from the Australian Bureau of Resource Sciences allowed for the completion of the Papua New Guinea country report on the status of its tuna resources. A one year attachment of a senior National Marine Fisheries Service scientist (La Jolla) was completed in 1992. Within the CFP, a shortage (caused by lack of funding) of established Master Fishermen within the Capture Section led to a number of short term country assignments being carried out by consultants. A consultant Master Fisherman has also been engaged for a one-year assignment to a tuna fisheries development field project in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea.

7. Of great concern to the Secretariat is the reassigning of core funding support for the four positions of Master Fishermen in the Capture Section. This part of the programme assists subsistence and commercial fishermen increase their efficiency and progress towards more productive activity through the development, evaluation, and demonstration of affordable, appropriate technology, fishing gear, fishing techniques and Fish Aggregation Device (FAD) systems. It is through the services of the Master Fishermen that the Commission has been able to assist member countries in the development of artisanal and small- to medium-scale commercial fisheries based on resources that are locally under-utilised, and this type of assistance continues to be in high demand. During 1993, ten in-country field assignments were undertaken and several further requests for assistance lodged with the Secretariat. Every effort will be made to meet these requests. However, given the current funding situation, it is unlikely that assistance to countries through this Programme can be maintained at the same level as in previous years.

FUNDING

8. Total expenditure by the Fisheries Programme in 1992 was 3,021,007 CFP units, and for 1993 expenditure is estimated at 2,457,643 CFP units. The reduction in the operating budget for 1993 was largely due to the termination in December 1992 of field activities associated with the Regional Tuna Tagging Project (RTTP). Exact appraisal of 1993 expenditure is made difficult since the OFP financial year does not correspond with that of the rest of the Commission, which is based on the calendar year.

9. Funding for the Fisheries Programme involves both SPC core budget and a wide variety of extra-budgetary donors, who provide the bulk of the programme's funding. The increasing complexity associated with extra-budgetary funding of the programme, the generally increasing difficulty of securing extra-budgetary funds, and recent reductions in core budget allocations to the programme will all play their role in determining to what extent the programme can meet country demand for its services in the future. They will also require a sustained fund-raising effort by the Programme's senior officers and by SPC Management in order that the work programme can be realised.

10. The year-by-year nature of donor contributions to the Fisheries Programme have tended to hamper forward planning of programme activities. In view of this, most donors have been requested to consider longer-term funding arrangements. AIDAB has recently announced its willingness to make a multi-year funding commitment to the Fisheries Programme, and France has also indicated a willingness to consider a similar arrangement. Several projects currently in place or under negotiation with the Governments of the United Kingdom and Canada, with UNDP and with the EU will, if approved, contribute to the financial security of at least parts of the programme over the next 3-5 year period.

11. The OFP continued to be funded entirely from extra-budgetary sources. The primary component of the Programme is collectively funded by contributions from Australia (AIDAB), France, New Zealand and USA (USAID). It should be noted that Papua New Guinea has provided, for the first time, a non-metropolitan member country extra-budgetary contribution of US\$10,000 in support of OFP activity. For Year 12 (1 October 1992 -30 September 1993), the OFP showed a balanced budget. The historical deficit carried by the OFP since 1987 was cleared during Year 11. This was made possible through income generated by external consultancy work undertaken in conjunction with the Philippines Fisheries Sector Programme, as well as by reducing operational costs to a minimum through an austerity budget.

12. Funding for the South Pacific Regional Tuna Resource Assessment and Monitoring Project (SPRTRAMP), has now been approved by the European Union. This five year project, budgeted at 5 million ECUs, is being funded under Lomé IV regional funds. The project will enable the OFP to implement continuous scientific monitoring of the region's tuna fisheries and to undertake and refine the tuna resource assessment work based on the results of the EC-funded Regional Tuna Tagging Project.

13. Within the CFP, three professional positions and a limited set of activities were supported by SPC core funds during 1993, with all other staff positions and activities being funded from extra budgetary sources. In the Training Section, funding for the three staff positions and substantial activity support was provided by Australia (AIDAB) and France, as well as an extra-budgetary contribution of 10,000 CFP units by New Caledonia. Additional funds for individual training initiatives were also received from the Government of Canada, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation, the Government of New Zealand and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Resource Assessment Section staff positions and activities were funded by the British Government through the Inshore Fisheries Research Project, with supplementary support for specific activities from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the FAO South Pacific Regional Aquaculture Development Programme (SPRADP). Funding for the Post-Harvest Section was provided by the British Government, with supplementary funding for individual projects from ACIAR and the Government of Canada. The Government of France continued to provide funding for the Information Section, which has also received activity support from ACIAR, USAID and, until March 1993, the Japanese Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation. Within the Capture Section, the SPC core budget financed two professional positions and some activity costs, while extra budgetary funding was provided by UNDP and USAID in support of two additional positions, consultancy services, and a wide range of activities.

14. With the termination of the FAO/UNDP Regional Fishery Support Programme in August 1992, FFA and SPC were invited by UNDP to develop a joint project proposal for the utilisation of funds earmarked for supporting regional fisheries activities. The joint proposal, which seeks funding support of US\$1,740,800 over a three year period, was finalised early in 1994 and has now been submitted for UNDP's approval.

15. As noted earlier, the SPC core budget allocation to the Capture Section, which until 1992 funded the positions of three full-time Master Fishermen, has been declining, and as of 1994 will no longer support any Master Fisherman positions. Whilst the situation regarding overall funding security for the Fisheries Programme has improved since RTMF 24, the continuing decline in core budget support is cause for concern. During 1993, the core contribution amounted to 276,600 CFP units or 6.4 per cent of the overall Fisheries Programme budget. The loss of core budget support has occurred within one of the Commission's longest-running and most successful projects. The Secretariat is seeking extra-budgetary funding to allow continuation of the activities of the Master Fishermen.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

16. Relations with other regional organisations with mutual interests in the fisheries sector continued to strengthen during the year. During 1993, staff from the Commission's Fisheries Programme attended meetings and workshops convened by FFA, SPREP, USP, SOPAC and the FS, and used these opportunities to discuss specific work programme activities with the relevant agencies, thus ensuring harmonisation of activities among agencies. At senior Management level, several meetings of the South Pacific Organisations Coordinating Committee (SPOCC), which brings together the heads of 8 regional organisations, have dealt with a number of fisheries-related issues with the aim of improving coordination of regional activities in the marine sector.

17. The second FFA/SPC colloquium, which was held in Nadi during April 1993, reviewed progress in implementing resolutions agreed at the first colloquium. While noting the improvements in the area of information exchange, the meeting felt that this could be further enhanced through the exchange of quarterly work activity reports and the submission of 3 monthly work plans. The meeting recognised that the potential for duplication was greater when servicing member country needs in the area of inshore fisheries development. In an attempt to minimise this, it was agreed, subject to member countries' approval, to exchange information on country requests for assistance to ensure that the best possible service is provided. The third SPC/FFA colloquium, held in Honiara on 7 February 1994, reviewed progress in implementing these resolutions and noted that, while the information exchange was still not perfect, good progress had been made and this had led to better harmonisation of agency activities.

18. Joint SPC/FFA projects carried out last year in the CFP included the production of the updated version of the Fisheries Address Book, the development of a joint project proposal to UNDP for the utilisation of funds under the 5th Cycle allocation, and contributions to the FFA publication on "Inshore Marine Resources of the South Pacific". With the temporary closure of the FAO South Pacific Regional Aquaculture Project, SPC and FFA have also joined forces to provide interim technical "back-stopping" to the aquaculture sector until the FAO project resumes operations in 1994.

19. In the OFP, collaboration between SPC and FFA continues in the management of the regional tuna database, the development of an improved observer programme, the provision of scientific advice at a number of fora such as the annual multilateral fisheries treaty consultations and to the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) meetings, and in the area of port sampling. It has been agreed that a joint approach by FFA and SPC in the development of transshipment procedures at nominated transshipment ports within the region should be implemented as soon as possible.

20. FFA noted the importance of the work undertaken by the OFP which supported some of the services that it provides to its member countries. It is pleasing to note that there is an increasing wish from within both organisations to share work where this appears to be mutually beneficial. A number of these activities were identified and include the possible joint development of the observer and port sampling programmes to meet the information needs of both organisations. These types of mutually supportive arrangements serve to strengthen complementary elements of the work programmes of both agencies.

REVIEW OF REGIONAL INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS IN THE MARINE SECTOR

21. At the first SPC/FFA colloquium, held in Port Vila in March 1992, it was noted that a number of regional agencies other than SPC and FFA were becoming increasingly active in marine resources development and management at either regional or sub-regional levels. The colloquium expressed concern that there was an increasing danger of duplication of activity among these agencies and urged SPC and FFA member countries to provide direction with respect to strategic planning for medium and long-term regional institutional arrangements in the marine sector.

22. As a result, FFA proposed to SPOCC that a formal review of regional institutional arrangements in support of the marine resources sector be undertaken, and this was endorsed by the other SPOCC agencies, for implementation by FFA with SPC assistance. The Forum Fisheries Committee (Palau, April 1993) officially approved FFA's involvement in the review, and this was subsequently endorsed by the 24th South Pacific Forum (Nauru, August 1993), whose official communique "welcomed the review of the institutional arrangements for the management of living marine resources and urged (SPOCC) to complete the review as quickly as possible".

23. Given that SPC has a different membership than FFA or the other Forum agencies, the Secretariat sought the views of its member countries before embarking on the review. During the 19th meeting of the SPC Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (October 1993) the Secretariat presented a paper on this subject in which it recommended the following approach for the conduct of the multi-agency review of regional institutional arrangements in the marine sector:

- SPC and FFA to jointly carry out a preliminary information-gathering phase by questionnaire (Nov - Dec 1993);
- questionnaire results to be analysed and compiled by SPC and FFA and circulated to Pacific Island countries for information (Jan 1994);
- results to be discussed in depth at RTMF 25 (March 1994);
- RTMF recommendations to be considered by FFC 24 (April 1994) and CRGA 20 (May 1994);
- further action regarding deployment of consultancy team or other appropriate review mechanism to be determined by FFC 24 and CRGA 20.

24. These recommendations were endorsed by CRGA and subsequently approved by the 33rd South Pacific Conference in October 1993.

25. In the event, however, it has not been possible to adhere fully to the above schedule, due primarily to difficulties associated with the preparation of the questionnaire, a task which has proved more time-consuming and complex than anticipated. This has effectively delayed the implementation of the other parts of the preliminary information-gathering phase to the point where it has had to be substantially reduced in extent in the interests of implementing the review without significant further delay.

26. An alternative method of proceeding with the implementation of the review has therefore been agreed to by SPOCC. This calls on SPC and FFA to finalise the terms of reference for the review, and reach agreement on the composition of the consultancy team, who will be required to use a scaled-down version of the questionnaire as a framework for information gathering during their visits to Pacific Island countries. The questionnaire will be forwarded to SPOCC official contact points prior to the consultant's field visits in order to sensitise recipients as to the complexity of the issues to be discussed, and, hopefully, to promote in-country discussion of these issues prior to the consultant's visits.

SECRETARIAT ACTION IN RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH SPC REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES

27. The recommendations made by RTMF24 are listed below, together with brief commentaries on action taken by the Secretariat in response to each one.

28. Recommendation No. 1

Noting the world-wide peer recognition of the scientific calibre of the programme's work, the Twenty-fourth Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries was unanimous in its commendation of the scope, expertise and implementation of the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme. Such a vigorous, scientific research programme was essential in support of what has become the world's largest tuna fishery. The Twenty-fourth Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries was strong in the view that the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme should continue to fulfil that role, and recommended that the Secretariat make efforts to secure funding to that end.

29. **Action taken:** The Secretariat has continued its efforts to seek extra budgetary funding to support the work of the Offshore Fisheries Programme (formerly the TBAP). Funding has been received from all four of the OFP/TBAP traditional donors, although the total amount is well below that of previous years.

30. Recommendation No. 2

The Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme Strategic Plan, initially endorsed by the Twenty-third Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries and reaffirmed by the Twenty-fourth Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries, presented a framework for the future activity of the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme, and a five-year operational plan was now in preparation. The Twenty-fourth Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries recommended that the Secretariat seek urgent commitment by extra-budgetary donors for funding on a multiple-year basis for the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme.

31. **Action taken:** Donors have been approached to consider longer term funding for the OFP. The Secretariat is pleased to advise the meeting that the Australian Government, through AIDAB, has agreed on a 4-year (1993-1996) funding cycle to the Fisheries Programme. The US Government has recently signed a Grant Agreement with the Commission in which USAID will provide funds to TBAP over a period of 2 years. The Secretariat will continue to seek a commitment to longer term funding from other donors.

32. Recommendation No. 3

Recognising the magnitude and complexity of the logistics of the Regional Tuna Tagging Project, the Twenty-fourth Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries congratulated the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme on the successful implementation of the field component of the Project. However, its full benefit to Pacific Island countries would be dependent on analyses yet to be carried out. While such analyses remained of the highest priority, there had been no success to date in securing adequate funding to undertake them. In view of the urgency of the situation, the Twenty-fourth Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries recommended that the Secretariat make every effort to secure funding from the European Community, or other potential funding sources, so that the analyses of the Regional Tuna Tagging Project results could proceed without disruption.

33. **Action taken:** During 1993 the EU generously provided bridging funds of 527,000 ECU under the 6th EDF, to allow RTTP extension. EU funding will continue under the South Pacific Regional Tuna Resource Assessment and Monitoring Project (SPRTRAMP) for which funding approval has been given by the EU. It is understood that the Financing Agreement will soon be signed and will set out how the funds are to be spent during the life of the project. A draft annual work programme for the first year of the project has been completed and recruitment procedures for project staff are being implemented.

34. **Recommendation No. 4**

The Meeting recommended that the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme Draft Strategic Plan be adopted.

35. **Action taken:** The TBAP Draft Strategic Plan is intended to guide the work programme of the TBAP through the specification of a mission statement, objectives, and strategies to meet these objectives. Conference last year approved the Draft Strategic Plan. This decision allowed the TBAP to use this document as the template for the development of a 5-year operational plan (1994-1998). This 5-year operational plan was discussed and agreed to in principle at the recent meeting of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish held in Pohnpei.

36. **Recommendation No. 5**

The Meeting recommended that the South Pacific Commission continue and expand its participation in PIMRIS, and if possible, formalise this participation through the mechanism of an inter-agency agreement with other PIMRIS participants.

37. **Action taken:** The Secretariat is continuing its efforts to secure additional funding support to the Fisheries Information project to enable expansion of the Commission's work under its obligations to PIMRIS. The question of an inter-agency agreement has been discussed since the establishment of PIMRIS and is a logical progression which will both assist coordination of fisheries information services by the agencies participating in PIMRIS, and strengthen the image of PIMRIS in the eyes of funding donors. Conference last year approved this recommendation which will allow the Commission to collaborate fully with other PIMRIS participants in the establishment of the proposed agreement. A report on progress with this matter will be presented as part of the 1993 PIMRIS steering Committee report.

38. **Recommendation No. 6**

The Meeting recognised the value of the South Pacific Commission Fisheries Information Project in the collection and dissemination of information on marine resources of importance to the region, but expressed its concern that the level of financing to the project was still not sufficient to permit it to fully achieve its objectives, especially the establishment of 12 Special Interest Groups. The Meeting recommended that the Secretariat establish a position of Fisheries Information Assistant, and seek funding for this post in order to improve the capacity of the project to respond to the expressed needs of South Pacific Commission member countries in the provision of fisheries information.

39. **Action taken:** It was agreed that this newly proposed position would be utilised on a shared basis with the Regional Fisheries Training Project. A decision on the establishment of this position was approved by the South Pacific Conference last year. Funding for the position for a period of two years was allocated within the framework of an agreement recently signed between the Commission and USAID under which SPC will implement the Regional Impact Component (RIC) of the USAID Pacific Islands Marine Resources Project (PIMAR). However, recent policy decisions in regard to the future of USAID funding to the region now make this funding somewhat uncertain. Recruitment into the position is thus being postponed pending clarification from USAID as to how PIMAR-RIC funding will be affected.

40. **Recommendation No. 7**

The Meeting acknowledged the important role that the Inshore Fisheries Research Project (IFRP) had played in assisting and promoting the development of national fisheries research capabilities, and strongly recommended that the Secretariat make every effort to secure continued funding for the IFRP so that its activities could be continued without interruption when the present funding cycle expired in early 1993.

41. **Action taken:** Interim funding for a period of one year was received from the UK Government to see the project through to December 1993. A combined review of the IFRP and the Fish Handling and Processing Project (FHPP), which is also UK-funded, was carried out in September 1993. The review was carried out as an internal exercise by the UK Government and its findings have not been made available to the Commission. However, subsequent to the review, the Secretariat was invited to submit a further funding proposal for consideration by the UK Government, and this has now been done. Funding for both projects has been extended until June 1994 to allow for consideration of the new proposal, which incorporates follow-up work based on elements of both the IFRP and the FHPP.

42. **Recommendation No. 8**

The Meeting recognised the important contribution being made by the South Pacific Commission's Fish Handling and Processing Project in support of the post-harvest sector of national fisheries. The Meeting recommended that the Secretariat make every attempt to secure continued funding for the project so that its activities could be continued without interruption when the present funding cycle expired in early 1993.

43. **Action taken:** As in para 41 above.

44. **Recommendation No. 9**

The Meeting expressed its concern that extra-budgetary funding for the establishment of the Regional Post-harvest Fisheries Centre had still not been secured, in spite of the best efforts of the Commission. The Meeting recommended that all possible funding avenues be pursued, including application for uncommitted funds that might still be available under Lomé II and III programmes. The Meeting requested that country representatives of ACP member countries actively seek formal support from their Governments.

45. **Action taken:** Since the RTMF, further discussions have been held with representatives of the European Community (to whom this project was initially directed for funding consideration) and of the Forum Secretariat, which is the Regional Authorising Office for Lomé II and III programmes. These discussions involving the possible reintegration of the project into the first financial protocol of the Lomé IV cycle were not successful. The Secretariat intends to submit the project for funding consideration under the second financing protocol of Lomé IV, but success will be entirely dependent on the degree of support received at an official level from the ACP SPC member countries.

46. **Recommendation No. 10**

The Meeting expressed its concern at the uncertainty of the year-to-year funding arrangements under which the Regional Fisheries Training Project presently operates. The Meeting recommended that the Secretariat secure long-term funding for the Project to ensure continuity and forward planning of activities.

47. **Action taken:** As noted earlier, Australia has kindly agreed to provide its funding to the Fisheries Programme on a multiple-year basis. Longer term funding has also been discussed with the Government of France, and a decision on the future form and level of French support for the Fisheries Programme is currently under consideration.

48. Recommendation No. 11

The Meeting expressed its concern at the cuts in core budget allocations to the South Pacific Commission's Deep Sea Fisheries Development Project that were recommended by the Sixteenth Meeting of the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance and value of the practical fisheries development assistance provided to member countries by the Deep Sea Fisheries Development Project, and strongly recommended that the Project's core budget allocation be reinstated at least to 1992 levels by fiscal year 1993/94. The Meeting urged representatives to ensure that their delegates to the forthcoming Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations and the South Pacific Conference were fully briefed on this issue.

49. Action taken: The 1992 South Pacific Conference deferred discussion on this issue to CRGA 18 which met in May 1993. Unfortunately, the matter was not discussed during this meeting and was again deferred to CRGA 19 which took place in October 1993. During CRGA 19 and the 1993 Conference, major work programme restructuring and associated budgetary reallocations took place but other priorities assumed precedence over the recommended restoration of core funding to the Deep Sea Fisheries Development Project. As reported earlier, therefore, it will not be possible to support any of the Master Fishermen positions from the core budget during 1994, or, under the present circumstances, thereafter.

50. Recommendation No. 12

The Meeting recommended that the Secretariat seek such supplementary extra-budgetary funding as would allow the Deep Sea Fisheries Development Project to increase the range and level of its support to regional small and medium-scale fisheries, particularly in the increasingly important development of offshore fisheries and economically viable, sustainable fish aggregation device programmes.

51. Action taken: Shortly before the 1992 RTMF, UNDP announced its agreement to finance the Offshore Fisheries Development Project (OFDP), which is specifically designed to complement the work of the Deep Sea Fisheries Development by providing support particularly to the development of FAD systems and small-scale longline fishing enterprises, as well as attachment training in this area. Funding for the first three years of the project has been committed by UNDP, with the fourth year subject to approval of a project revision that will depend in part on the outcome of a tripartite review to be held in conjunction with the present meeting.

52. SPC has also requested inclusion in the project of a new component relating to boatbuilding and naval architecture. This element was originally expected to function through other UNDP-supported programmes which have subsequently not been funded. UNDP has expressed itself reluctant to finance further boatbuilding work based, but this could be discussed further during the OFDP tripartite review.

53. Recommendation No. 13

The Meeting commended the Secretariat on its efforts to promote a collaborative regional approach to the development of pearl oyster culture in the Pacific Islands. Delegates noted with considerable interest the offer by French Polynesia to play an active role in furthering such arrangements, as well as the research initiative under development by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, in collaboration with the South Pacific Commission and several Pacific Island countries. The Meeting reiterated the economic importance of pearl oysters and other shell resources to some countries, especially those without substantial tuna fisheries, and recommended that support to the development of shellfish resources be given a high profile within the South Pacific Commission's Fisheries Programme. As a first initiative, the Secretariat should establish a working group on the economic development of pearl oyster resources, consisting of nominees from interested pearl-producing member countries. The Meeting noted the absence of readily available data on the pearl market and recommended that the Commission undertake, as a matter of urgency, a pearl market study which would address the following issues:

- describe the present world market for pearls and identify potential new market opportunities that should be investigated;*
- assess the potential of existing and new markets to absorb increased production from the region;*
- explore the various options and alternatives for a coordinated regional marketing arrangement for pearls.*

54. Action taken: The Secretariat has not so far been in a position to convene the proposed working group on the economic development of pearl oyster resources. The situation of the industry in French Polynesia and Cook Islands since RTMF 24, with market prices falling and substantial restructuring occurring in both private and public sectors, did not lend itself to the convention of the working group. However, indications of a reversal of this situation are now apparent and, subject to reconfirmation of interest from the present meeting, the working group concept could be pursued by the Commission during 1994.

55. As regards the market study, FFA assistance in this area was informally committed in principle, but the protracted delay in filling the FFA Marketing Advisor position has prevented FFA professional staff participating in the study. The Secretariat has no marketing specialists on its staff, and so began to search for funding to allow the proposed market study to be undertaken by consultants.

56. Towards the end of 1992, however, the Secretariat became aware of two other proposed pearl marketing studies being planned by or on behalf of selected countries in the region. In order to avoid wasteful duplication, therefore, the Secretariat postponed its own attempts to organise a study pending completion of the other studies. The Secretariat is attempting to arrange for the findings of at least one of these studies to be made available to the present meeting.

57. Recommendation No. 14

The Meeting, acknowledging the importance of the SPC Fisheries Training Directory as a tool for the identification and planning of appropriate fisheries training programmes, recommended wide distribution of the directory and ongoing attention to the updating of relevant information.

58. **Action taken:** Funding was provided by ICOD for the revision and updating of the Directory. This has now been completed, and printed copies of the directory have been widely distributed in the region.

59. The information contained in the Directory is maintained on a computerised database and is constantly updated, to allow the Commission to provide current information on training opportunities in response to enquiries. Copies of the database can be made available to interested users from the region.

60. **Recommendation No. 15**

The Meeting reaffirmed its support for the proposed Western Pacific Fisheries Consultative Committee study tour of Associations of South-East Asian Nations fisheries training and education institutions to be held in October 1992 and recommended that a representative of the University of the South Pacific be included in the tour.

61. **Action taken:** The Professor of the University of the South Pacific's Marine Studies Programme was included in the study team tour and co-authored the study tour report, in which potential areas of cooperation in the field of fisheries training and education between the two regions were identified.

62. **Recommendation No. 16**

The Meeting recommended that:

- *the SPC/Nelson course not be upgraded to a Certificate programme, but continue in its present form;*
- *the institution of the proposed Certificate programme be postponed pending the re-establishment of the Institute of Marine Resources in the Solomon Islands. Once the Institute is functional, the concept of the Certificate as a multi-institutional course involving modules at the Institute of Marine Resources, Nelson Polytechnic, and possibly other institutions, be re-examined;*
- *in the interim, the South Pacific Commission's Regional Fisheries Training Project make a concerted effort to canvass each Commission member country with the aim of further documenting the vocational fisheries sector training requirements of the region and the likely future demand for both a Certificate programme, and the present SPC/Nelson course;*
- *the South Pacific Commission's Regional Fisheries Training Project consult extensively with training institutions in the region in order to determine the extent to which they could participate in a Certificate in Fisheries Studies programme, with a view to moving towards standardisation of appropriate certificate-level curricula.*

63. **Action taken:** During the past year, the Secretariat has undertaken considerable consultation with fisheries administrations and training institutions as to potential demand for a Regional Certificate programme. Several national institutions already have national Certificate programmes or related courses which could be incorporated into a standard Certificate curricula but the potential mechanisms for the introduction and management of such have not been examined in detail. The Secretariat will report in more detail to the present meeting under the relevant agenda item, and will continue to consult with interested parties on further development of this issue.

64. **Recommendation No. 17**

In acknowledgement of the potential for the increased employment of Pacific Island nationals in the industrial fisheries sector, the Meeting recommended that the South Pacific Commission undertake a study of the feasibility of introducing standardised fishing deckhand certification in the region, with the proviso that such a study should not take priority over existing SPC training-related activities.

65. **Action taken:** The Secretariat has supported the preparation of a draft curriculum for deckhand certification and the planning of a pilot training course. The draft curriculum has been widely circulated for comment and consultation and presented to a regional forum of training institutions. Trial courses have been implemented or are planned at two fishermen's training institutions in the region. This topic will be discussed in more detail under a separate agenda item.

66. **Recommendation No. 18**

While recognising the need to establish a new position within the Regional Fisheries Training Project to meet the increasing country requirements for training co-ordination, the Meeting, in its concern to meet immediate needs without the financial burden of hiring additional staff recommended that:

- *the newly proposed Fisheries Information Project staff position endorsed by the Meeting be utilised on a shared basis by the Regional Fisheries Training Project in the enhanced dissemination of information relating to fisheries training and education;*
- *the Regional Fisheries Training Project seek funding to allow for the attachment of national officers to the project, with a view to developing the capabilities of both parties to undertake the dissemination of information relating to fisheries training and education.*

67. **Action taken:** As reported under recommendation 6, the establishment of the proposed new position, which will serve both the Information and Training Sections, was approved by the South Pacific Conference in October 1993. Funding of the position has been allowed for within the framework of the USAID Pacific Island Marine Resources Programme's Regional Impact Component.

68. In respect to training attachments, the Secretariat is seeking funding under a number of different proposals which, if approved, will allow for various types of attachment training for national officers, including to the Information Section.

69. **Recommendation No. 19**

The Meeting noted an on-going need for management training within fisheries administrations and recommended that the South Pacific Commission continue to provide assistance in the implementation of appropriate management training.

70. **Action taken:** Extensive consultations have taken place between the Secretariat and fisheries administrations in order to develop an appropriate management training programme. Initial funding for this type of training has been incorporated into the FFA/SPC joint "Regional Fisheries Support and National Capacity Building Project" proposal to UNDP. It is likely that the collaboration of external agencies will be needed for individual training exercises, and national fisheries departments have been contacted for their views on possible options whereby this training could be delivered. This will be discussed more fully at the present meeting under a separate agenda item.

71. Recommendation No. 20

The Meeting, while noting the preference of some countries to hold the Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries annually, recommended that it be held on a biennial basis while finance remained a constraint, with the proviso that extraordinary meetings be convened to deal with issues of major concern to the region when they arose. Such meetings should only be convened after adequate consultation between countries and the Secretariat. The meeting also recommended that the Secretariat secure funding for such meetings.

72. Action taken: The 14th South Pacific Conference in 1974 approved the holding of the RTMF on an annual basis, and this was again endorsed by the 29th South Pacific Conference in 1989. The present recommendation is at variance with this principle and was made following discussions relating to the difficulty experienced by the Secretariat in securing funding for RTMF 24.

73. The 32nd South Pacific Conference in 1992 approved the above recommendation and this year's RTMF is considered the first in the series of biennial meetings. The Secretariat is therefore looking forward to the guidance of the present meeting in providing advice to the work of the Fisheries Programme over the coming two year cycle until the next RTMF is to be convened. The meeting is also asked to consider how best to deal with the annual technical committee meetings (eg Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish, South Pacific Albacore Research Group, the Western Pacific Yellowfin Working Group) which report to RTMF.

74. Recommendation No. 21

The Meeting recommended that the South Pacific Commission, the Forum Fisheries Agency and the FAO/UNDP Regional Fishery Support Programme meet with the United Nations Development Programme as soon as possible to re-programme the US\$ 2.3 million available from the fifth cycle of UNDP regional funding for fisheries projects.

75. Action taken: Shortly after RTMF 24, UNDP confirmed its decision not to continue supporting the FAO Regional Fishery Support Programme. Since that time, several meetings have been held between FFA and SPC regarding programming of the available funds. The final proposal for the "Regional Fishery Support and National Capacity Building Project", which will be executed by FFA and implemented collaboratively by FFA and SPC, is now with UNDP and at the time of writing is being reviewed prior to final approval. Copies of the project document can be made available to interested national delegations.
