

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

Twenty-second Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 6-10 August 1990)

COORDINATION OF SPC WORK ON CIGUATERA

(Paper prepared by the Secretariat)

1. Several previous SPC RTMF's have noted the importance of ciguatera fish poisoning to countries of the region. This importance appears to be growing. Coastal development programmes that result in environmental damage or change (causeways, reef blasting), pollution (poisoning of corals, eutrophication caused by excess nutrients), destructive fishing methods (bleach and dynamite fishing) and natural disasters (cyclones, El Nino-associated changes in water temperature) and accidents such as shipwrecks continue to provoke sporadic ciguatera outbreaks or chronic ciguatoxicity in an apparently increasing number of incidents.
2. The local problems that ciguatera may cause are numerous. As well as the direct health risks to consumers of the fish, work days may be lost as the health of local populations is diminished and individuals become sensitized, making them more likely to suffer repeated poisonings with reducing amounts of toxin. Easily accessible coastal fishing grounds may become essentially unfishable because of the ciguatera threat. Development of export marketing ventures are hampered by fear of ciguatoxicity, as are local marketing operations in some cases, and there is the possibility of litigation against vendors of toxic fish products.
3. Because of these reasons, ciguatera is not only of concern to fisheries workers, but is also of importance to health workers, economists, environmentalists, and others involved in various aspects of development. While the interdisciplinary nature of problems associated with ciguatera draw together a range of different technical areas and the perspectives associated with them, it also makes approaches to problems less straightforward and more difficult.
4. This problem of focus has been experienced with the production of a new SPC Ciguatera Handbook, as recommended by the 20th RTMF. There are numerous difficulties inherent in producing a handbook that provides the right level of technical coverage of the biological, medical, environmental and economic issues involved, and that is equally relevant to the needs of each of the interest groups to which it should be addressed. These difficulties are not insurmountable but, because there has so far been no organised interdisciplinary approach to ciguatera issues within the SPC, they have seriously hindered the production of the handbook, which is still in draft form.

5. SPC continues to receive requests for assistance on ciguatera-related problems in member countries. These may include requests for information, advice, technical assistance or funding support, and may be channeled through the Fisheries, Health, Environment or other programmes. As a result, the Commission has formally established a ciguatera committee, which comprises members of each of these sections, and which will serve as a means of coordinating SPC activities in this field.

6. The Committee met for the first time in June 1990 and discussed ciguatera-related areas in which SPC was active, or could become active. The following actions were agreed:

- the Fisheries Programme will give priority to completing the draft Ciguatera Handbook, with support from other sections, especially Health. The Fish Handling and Processing Officer will assume responsibility for completion and publication of the draft as soon as possible;

- the Fisheries Programme will accelerate the establishment of a Special Interest Group (SIG) on ciguatera, and with the support of all other sections will prepare an Information Bulletin on the topic. The Fisheries Information Officer has received commitments to actively participate in the SIG, and to contribute to the Bulletin, from ciguatera researchers world-wide. A first draft of the Bulletin is available from the Secretariat;

- the Health Programme will actively encourage the reporting of information on ciguatera cases and outbreaks, and will make this information available via the SIG. As part of this activity, the Health and Fisheries Programmes will develop and distribute a standard case investigation form that can be used by medical or fisheries personnel to report ciguatera information that could be logged into an accumulating regional database. A draft form is attached as appendix 1;

- the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPEP) will develop planning guidelines for coastal development projects that will make development planners aware of the potential ciguatera risk;

- all Programmes will attempt to strengthen links with institutions involved or interested in ciguatera research, and will support their efforts in as far as possible. Priority will be given to the study of ciguatera and types of reef disturbance, and to arranging for the testing of fish samples.

Action required

7. This meeting is invited to:

- comment on the above approach to studying and improving our understanding of ciguatera;*

- suggest additional areas of emphasis;*

- suggest potential areas of collaboration between the Commission and other bodies at both national and international levels.*

**South Pacific Commission
SEAFOOD POISONING REPORT FORM**

Please fill in the answers to the questions completely. Tick the boxes where appropriate.

Details of person filling in report form:

Name _____ Job/ Position _____
 Contact address _____
 Date: _____ Signature _____

Poisoned person's details:

Name _____ Sex (M/F) _____ Age (yrs) _____
 Address _____

Details of the seafood that caused the poisoning: (tick all the boxes that apply)

Type of food	Where caught	How preserved	What eaten	How eaten
Fish _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	River _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Fresh, no ice _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Head _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Unprepared (raw) _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Crab _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Mangrove _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Fresh, iced _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Flesh _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Marinated _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Lobster _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Beach _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Frozen _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Skin _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Cooked _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Other crustacean _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Reef patch _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Salted _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Liver _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	
Gastropod* _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Lagoon _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Dried _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Roe _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	
Bivalve* _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Outer reef _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Smoked _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Other organs _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	How many others
Other mollusc _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Open sea _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Pickled _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	(specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	ate this meal? _____
Other (specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	_____ <input type="checkbox"/>	felt sick? _____
Unknown _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	were admitted _____
				to hospital? _____

What is the local name of the seafood? _____
 What is the English name of the seafood? _____
 Name of vendor or restaurant (if bought) _____
 Name of place it was caught (if known) _____
 When was the food eaten? Date _____ Time _____
 When did you first feel sick? Date _____ Time _____

* *Gastropods are one-shelled seafoods like snails, trochus, conches, etc.
 Bivalves are two-shelled seafoods like clams, mussels, cockles, oysters, etc.*

Symptoms: (tick all the boxes that apply)

Burning or pain when touching cold water _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Pin pricking sensation on touching water _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Tingling or numbness sensations _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Strange taste in mouth _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Difficulty or pain in urinating _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Skin itching or redness _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Difficulty in breathing _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Excessive salivation _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Difficulty in walking _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Excessive sweating _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Difficulty in talking _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Diarrhoea _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Eye irritation _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	Vomiting _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
	Fever or chills _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
	Headache _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
	Joint aches _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
	Muscle cramps _____ <input type="checkbox"/>

Medical data:

Pulse _____ Blood pressure _____ / _____ Pupils _____

In case of death:

Date of death _____ Autopsy findings _____
 Other information _____

*Please return this form to: South Pacific Commission, P. O. Box D5, Nouméa CEDEX,
 New Caledonia*

THANK YOU