

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION**

**TWENTY-FOURTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES**  
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 3-7 August 1992)

**COUNTRY STATEMENT**

**PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

## Introduction

Several important developments have occurred in the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Fisheries Sector since the last RTMF meeting. The most important of these was the signing of an agreement between the PNG Government and the Guam based Z-Fishing Group of USA in May 1992, to establish a tuna cannery in Madang on the north coast. The other developments included a successfully negotiated Programme Loan worth K30-40 million (PGK @ \$US1.00 approx.) with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) aimed at maximising the economic and social potential and benefit to PNG people; the gazetting in May 1992 of a "Notice of Prohibition of the Taking of Sedentary Organisms" limiting size and harvest methods; and the commencement of stocking of an additional exotic fish species (*Tilapia randalli*) into the Sepik and Ramu River systems aimed to improve nutrition and subsistence fisheries of inland, flood plain areas. Funding has been approved for the stocking of other species into the higher altitude rivers (> 1000 m above sea level).

## The Fisheries Sector

The fishing sector of PNG is not well developed, with only a small proportion of the large and diverse resource base currently being harvested. Total domestic catch (subsistence and commercial) is probably in the order of 15-16,000 mt per annum. Unfortunately this figure cannot be substantiated. Past studies have estimated that this figure probably represents less than 3% of the total potential sustainable yield. Declared catches of tuna by foreign licensed fishing vessels have amounted to 100,000 mt in some years. The total catch taken from PNG waters declined in recent years and the PNG Government is taking steps to improve it by resolving access questions and introducing various investment incentives and export promotional policies. Prawn, lobster, barramundi, and some sedentary resources in some areas are being exploited at or near maximum sustainable yield; the underutilisation of other species provides a substantial basis for future expansion.

## Production Sector

Currently there is no domestic tuna fishery although small quantities of tuna are caught by coastal fishermen throughout the country. Most tuna is taken by distant water fishing nations, principally the U.S., Korea, Taiwan and Philippines, employing purse seine vessels. Purse seine effort is more intense in the northwestern area of the Declared Fishing Zone (DFZ) with relatively lower effort in the old domestic pole-and-line fishing grounds (Bismarck Sea), the Solomon Sea and the Coral Sea. No pole-and-line fishery has developed since the brief operation in 1984-85. During 1990, the total revenue accrued from tuna access fees was approximately K24 million, and by 1991, seven access agreements had been signed while 11 other potential proposals were registered. About K0.7 million was obtained from domestic licence fees that same year.

The PNG prawn fishery is centred on the Gulf of Papua adjacent to the Gulf and Western Provinces. This fishery has a total annual production of about 1,200 mt of prawn tails. The catch predominantly comprises the banana prawn (*Penaeus merguierensis*) and the present effort consists of 8 vessels.

Coastal and near shore commercial fish landings are generally small, limited by poorly developed markets, socio-economic and cultural constraints. Combined inland and coastal fish landings of barramundi (*Lates calcarifer*) range between 200-400 mt per annum. Landings in the Daru based dive fishery for lobster (*Panulirus ornatus*) range between 70-100 mt tails annually. Sedentary resources, principally trochus and beche-de-mer, constitute 800-1000 mt per year, i.e. 500-600 mt trochus, 300-500 mt beche-de-mer. No current data is available on landing of small coastal pelagics but reef and lagoon fin fish landings amount to about 10,000 mt per year. Inland fisheries are generally concentrated over a limited number of coastal flood plain systems such as the Fly and Sepik/Ramu Rivers. The current estimated production here is about 8,300 mt per year. Fish resources in most other inland waters are however inadequate or rather depauperate of suitable fish species to support commercial fisheries.

Freshwater aquaculture primarily for food production has been promoted in the highlands areas for over 40 years. However, there has been little documented success. Efforts in promoting fisheries in this region have focused primarily on promotion of carp and trout farming, though a number of other species have been introduced from time to time. Given the extent of the unexploited state of coastal fisheries resources, there seems little point in promoting small-scale mariculture of fin fishes. That of giant clam (*Tridacna spp*) however has substantial potential.

#### Post Harvest Sector

Imports of fisheries products reached a value of approximately K34.5 million in 1989. This principally comprised canned fish and represented over 38,000 mt product weight or 56,000 mt harvest weight. If canned fish is excluded from these figures, the quantity of imported fish product would have been around 1,000 mt representing 3,300 mt whole fish weight valued at about K1 million.

With the exception of some of the sedentary resources, all fish and marine products caught in PNG are destined for human consumption in the fresh, smoked, chilled or frozen state. Other than preservation, there is only limited processing, i.e. some filleting. Approximately half of the artisanal catch is delivered and sold directly by fishermen to urban markets throughout the country. The remainder of the coastal fish is handled by the coastal fishing operations.

#### Fisheries Administration

Fisheries became a department (Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources) in its own right in 1986 and was established in line with government policies on economic development and self reliance. Making up DFMR, there are currently three divisions (Resource Development, Extension and Training; Research, Economics and Marketing; and General Services) and nine branches, with an approved establishment of 283 positions. The current budget for DFMR, for implementation of 11 activities/projects is about K7.0 million.

The provision of policy guidelines and promotion of fisheries development in PNG are actively carried out by a number of government and other organisations. These include the National Fisheries Council comprising the National Fisheries Minister as the Chairman and Provincial Ministers responsible for fisheries matters; the National Fisheries Advisory Committee comprising the Secretary of DFMR as the Chairman, Provincial Fisheries Officers and National Fisheries Divisional Heads; and private sector organisations such as the PNG Fishing Industry Association (FIA). The latter was established in early March 1991 with members mainly from the fishing industry. Since its formation, the FID has become an invaluable advisory group to DFMR promoting marine resource development. A newly formed Tuna Development Committee comprising the Secretary of DFMR as the chairman, selected DFMR divisional heads, Foreign Affairs and Attorney General's Office negotiates and considers proposals relating to tuna.

#### **Assistance provided by SPC Fisheries Programme**

The SPC Fisheries Programme provided the following assistance to the PNG DFMR during the past twelve months.

1. Editorial assistance with fisheries technical report production.
2. Fish processing and marketing workshops specifically aimed at women in small scale fisheries.
3. Assistance in formulation of national FAD programmes, including initial FAD deployment in NCD.
4. Assistance in preparation of technical and funding dossier for development of tuna longline fishery in East New Britain Province.
5. Attachment training of Fisheries Research Branch scientists on surveys of sedentary resources in member countries.
6. Interim activity reports on RTTP visits and summary results for the DFZ.
7. Provision of management advice on archipelagic fisheries policy.
8. Routine data entry and update of national tuna database.
9. Training opportunities for DFMR fisheries officers in the Regional Chilled Training Workshop (Suva) and the 13th SPC/Nelson Polytechnic Pacific Islands Fisheries Officers Course.