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FIFTEENTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES  
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 1 - 5 August, 1983)

COUNTRY STATEMENT - FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

COUNTRY REPORT ON THE  
FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA  
FOR THE FIFTEENTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES  
OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

The Federated States of Micronesia's most valuable natural resources for export revenue and for achieving economic development are the stocks of tuna swimming through the three million square kilometers of FSM's Fisheries Zone. These include predominantly the large deep-dwelling yellowfin and big-eye tunas, which can be caught with long lines using dead baitfish, and the smaller surface-feeding yellowfin and skipjack tunas, which can be caught by trolling, purse-seining and using live bait with poles and lines. The amounts of these highly migratory pelagic species are not readily estimable. However, the Micronesian Maritime Authority (MMA) has assessed that in 1981 about 22,000 metric tons (MT) of tuna were caught by foreign longliners and over 55,000 MT of shallow schooling tuna were caught by foreign purse seiners and pole-and-line boats, all in the FSM Fisheries Zone. These foreign fishing fleets are licensed to fish in the FSM waters by the MMA. Until 1979 the foreign companies fishing within the 200 mile Extended Fisheries Zone of FSM provided no payment, employment or other benefits to the residents of the FSM. Satisfactory negotiations for foreign fishing permits as well as any management of the FSM tuna resources depend critically upon the SPC Tuna Programme for data analysis.

The management and development of local FSM fisheries has been supported by various state level offices in Kosrae, Ponape, Truk and Yap States including Marine Resources Divisions, Fishing Authorities, Maritime Authorities, and Economic Development Authorities. In 1983, the first FSM Chief of Marine Resources has been employed to start national level involvement in local fisheries.

In 1980, Truk State began a project using pole-and-line boats with Micronesian crews to fish for skipjack tuna commercially. Recently, three government boats and several private ones have been crewed and managed by Micronesians. In 1981, the government boats caught over 105 tons of skipjack and other tuna and exported some to Hawaii for canning. This fishery was temporarily forced to stop during the cholera epidemic of 1982 and 1983 and has only restarted since May of 1983. Most fish produced are consumed locally.

The other states do not have large diesel powered boats, such as Truk's, fishing commercially for tuna at this time. But small amounts of tuna are being caught in all states by fishermen in small outboard powered boats and canoes. They either troll for the surface tuna or handline for deeper fish. In Yap and Kosrae they provide small numbers of fish for their families and for local shops, while in Ponape they have produced an estimated average of 100 tons per year for local markets.

The national government and an inter-governmental task force is pursuing a means of establishing large scale development of the tuna resources.

Small scale fishermen and women either working from shore or using small boats provide many species of reef fish and shellfish; including spiny lobster and mangrove crabs, for local sales and a small amount of export. For example, Ponape State is estimated to have exported in 1981 over \$7,500 worth of reef fish, \$11,200 worth of mangrove crabs, \$209 worth of lobster and \$378 worth of freshwater eels. These were mostly sent to Guam, Kwajalein, Saipan and Honolulu where prices are higher than the local rates of fifty cents to a dollar per pound.

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A Chris White designed 30 foot sailing outrigger has been built of plywood in Truk and is under trial as a village operated fishing vessel. It may be used for bottom fishing, net fishing and trolling.

The deep bottom fishing resources of FSM are barely being touched. Abbreviated training programs by SPC master fishermen have not yet led to expansion of this fishery and extended visits of such trainers is required in each state.

FAD trials are proposed for all states, pending advice from the SPC study on FAD's. Appropriate fishing techniques around these devices could be introduced with SPC technical support. Two of eight payaos installed in Truk and Ponape in October 1982 were still in place eight months later.

To aid outer island fishermen in producing fish to sell in population centers, facilities consisting of blast freezers, seawater ice machines, cold storage and generators have been installed in early 1983 in Kosrae, Truk, and Yap States. Compatible freezers have been installed on Government owned transport ships to transfer fish to the markets. These facilities are not yet fully in operation.

A well established export item from Yap, Truk and Ponape is trochus shell. Average annual exports have been around 40,000 pounds from Yap, 25,000 from Truk and 200,000 from Ponape. Short seasons for trochus harvest are set by state governments to attempt to manage this resource.

A pilot project to produce Eucheuma seaweed in Ponape State for export is under way. Commercialization and expansion to other states is planned for the near future.

Culturing of Tridacna and Trochus in Ponape State is being developed in coordination with Palau's Micronesian Mariculture Demonstration Center.

General funding for fisheries development is provided by the FSM Congress with matching funds of up to \$250,000 available to each state annually on a two-to-one ratio. The states must provide five-year marine resources development plans as a part of the qualifications for this funding.

The major use of marine resources throughout all the FSM is for subsistence. Necessary protein in most family diets is derived from animals caught in the marine environment. It is presently impossible to put a monetary value to these individual family harvests, but they probably surpass commercial production.