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(Noumea, New Caledonia, 5 - 9 August 1991)

REGIONAL POST-HARVEST FACILITY

PROGRESS REPORT OF THE RPFF PLANNING GROUP

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INTRODUCTION

1. The 22nd Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries (RTMF), 6-10 August 1990, discussed in detail the establishment of a facility in the Pacific to offer teaching, training, applied research and consultancy services to the post-harvest fisheries sector of the Region. Discussions were based on a report by SPC consultant, Mr James Crossland, entitled "The Establishment of a Regional Post-harvest Fisheries Facility for the Pacific" (refer to RTMF 22 paper: SPC/Fisheries 22/WP5).

2. After lengthy discussion, the Meeting approved the following recommendation:

The Meeting expressed its appreciation of SPC's thorough examination of the concept of establishing a RPFF (Regional Post-harvest Fisheries Facility) and unanimously recommended its establishment at a suitable location in Fiji. It further recommended that SPC in developing this proposal to implementation explore as the preferred option the possibility of developing the facility jointly by SPC and USP as a collaborative project associated with the University's Marine Studies Programme.

The Meeting further recommended the formation of a small planning group consisting of representatives of SPC, USP and Pacific Island nations to develop the facility in consultation with the private sector and other institutions with expertise in post-harvest fisheries technology and to promote and explore funding possibilities with donor organisations.

3. The South Pacific Conference, held in Noumea during October 1990, endorsed this recommendation.

4. This report outlines the progress made since the RTMF in August 1990, and briefly describes the modifications and adjustments made to the Project and what actions have been taken. Decisions were reached on these changes by taking into account views expressed during and after RTMF 22, and following discussions held by the planning group in consultation with the University of the South Pacific in December 1990.

PRESENT STATUS

5. It is clear that recommendations for establishing the Regional Post-harvest Fisheries Facility appearing in the Crossland report have largely been accepted and it is the desire of

countries in the region to see that the facility is planned, constructed and commissioned as quickly as possible.

6. Recommendations in the Crossland report relate to a number of issues which affect the establishment, management, activities and funding of this regional facility. Within many of these recommendations a number of different options were offered as being potentially suitable for developing and implementing the project. The planning group, entrusted with developing this proposal, had the task of deciding which of these were the best options and to make suitable refinements and modifications as deemed appropriate. This was done taking into account comments made by country representatives at RTMF 22, and with full consultation with the Vice-Chancellor and senior officials of USP.

7. A number of key modifications and changes were approved which in summary

- placed the facility under SPC management, but cooperating in close conjunction with USP;
- confirmed that the best location was at a site either on the USP Suva campus or close enough to the campus to have access to the University's facilities;
- developed a more detailed proposal for a Certificate course in Post-harvest Fisheries Technology;
- increased the staff complement from four to five staff with the addition of a second specialist;
- identified the need to enlarge the building to allow for extra staff and visiting researchers from other institutes;
- adjusted the budget according to the above alterations.

8. The collaborative nature of the project between SPC and USP continues to develop with one or two legal issues still to be resolved. The University recently made a request to Fiji Government to make available a plot of land on the campus that could be leased to SPC for siting the facility. Once this issue has been resolved a Memorandum of Understanding between SPC and USP will be drafted outlining the cooperative nature of the project and the services each would make available to the other on a user paid basis.

BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DETAILS

Management and administrative control

9. The Crossland report recommended as first choice the establishment of the facility under the administrative control of USP in Suva. This was based on opinions given by countries during the consultants travels around the region, and on practical and technical grounds. The second choice proposed that SPC could take on the management of the facility, provided that agreements are made with the University on factors such as ensuring that facilities such as scientific laboratories, analytical services, classrooms, etc. would be available on a fee paying basis.

10. Discussions with USP officials clearly indicated that the University was not in a position to take an active role in implementing the project or managing the Facility as they had to resolve the issue of moving the Institute of Marine Resources to the Solomon Islands. The University however, as one of the original collaborators in developing this initiative, is keen to support its implementation and provide assistance. USP also foresees the utilisation of the RPFF as being important for courses being developed under the Marine Studies Programme.

11. The second option, of SPC managing the facility, was therefore agreed as being the best option. This decision has been accepted by SPC management who are prepared to take on this responsibility.

Location

12. Locating the facility on the USP campus in Suva close to the support facilities that would be needed by the RPFF is still considered very important. The benefits of this were described in the Crossland report and includes the potential utilisation of microbiology, chemistry and biochemistry laboratories at the University for analytical and teaching purposes, and access to a regular and dependable supply of fresh fish and other marine resources. The University supported this requirement and offered to find a mechanism where a piece of land on the USP campus could be leased to SPC. This would require making a request to Fiji Government as such a procedure is not presently catered for in the leasing agreement the University has with Fiji. The University recently wrote to the Government of Fiji to make such a request.

Activities of the facility

13. The three main specialised functions of the facility are teaching/training, applied research, and advisory and analytical support services to the industrial and commercial sector.

a. Teaching and training.

The Crossland report described four areas of teaching and training activities in post-harvest fisheries: a certificate level qualification; a much strengthened component of the Diploma in Tropical Fisheries or its replacement; specialised short training courses for government and commercial sector employees; and, thesis studies for advanced educational qualifications.

The planning group decided that the center should concentrate on a Certificate course in Post-harvest Fisheries Technology. This would be jointly developed by the RPFF and USP. It was also agreed that to develop the new certificate programme a curriculum development consultant should be engaged. The certificate course will be reviewed after the first cycle.

The planning group agreed that it was premature to consider other structured courses although post-harvest components should be strengthened in related programmes being developed under the USP Marine Studies Programme.

Short courses lasting around 1 to 3 weeks will be run on specialised topics in post-harvest fisheries and will remain as described in the Crossland report. This will be an important activity of particular interest to the commercial sector providing training in response to their specific needs without losing the services of those individuals for extended periods.

It was agreed that research activities will include provision for the conduct of post-graduate thesis studies, and that these may be linked with appropriate Universities or Institutes for students completing post-graduate diplomas, M.Sc. or Ph.D. degrees.

b. Applied Research

The range of research activities needed by Pacific Island countries and proposed for the facility included such projects as product development (e.g. tuna and shell meat), improved methods of shark utilisation, modified packaging technology, seaweed on-processing, and improved processing procedures (e.g. beche-de-mer). The planning group decided that there was inadequate room to effectively undertake these activities in the original lay-out plan (see later), especially if collaborative research projects and/or study exchanges with other research organisations around the world are to be considered. For example, the post-harvest fisheries institutes in Mexico, Ecuador, Peru and Chile visited during the Latin America study tour, expressed their strong interest in future cooperation with the RPFF once it was established.

c. Advisory and Analytical Services

This component covers such services as advising on design and specifications for processing and refrigerated facilities, quality control procedures, etc; and analytical services for water quality, heavy metals (e.g. mercury), histamine, ciguatoxin, other health related issues, etc. A number of these analytical investigations will be undertaken in facilities belonging to USP. These services when provided to the commercial sector have the benefits of being a potential income generating activity for the facility. Targets for generating income are described in the Crossland Report.

Staffing requirements

14. The Crossland Report recommended a staff complement of four people; a Manager (technical specialist), research assistant, laboratory technician and a secretary. Comments have been received indicating that there may be a need for one additional technical expert of similar qualification* (*the manager to cover the envisaged work programme of the RPFF effectively. One expert would be responsible for the applied research and advisory/analytical support services to the commercial sector (probably the manager), while the other specialist will be responsible for all teaching and training activities. The planning group agreed to the need for this additional position.

Lay-out plan for the facility

15. More space is needed to allow for the extra senior position and for visiting researchers from other institutes around the world (up to two at a time). Some space will also be needed for thesis students undertaking research projects. More office and teaching space as well as extra bench space are therefore planned. Some space has also been included outside the facility to carry out trials on equipment such as solar driers, simple smokers, natural driers, etc.

Plan for implementation

16. The following phased steps will be followed to ensure smooth planning and implementation of the project:

Phase I Planning (first six months of Year 1)

- a. Services of an engineering consultant and architect to prepare detailed building design.
- b. Tendering for building contractor.
- c. Recruitment of manager.
- d. Planning for courses and preparation of curriculum.

Phase II Implementation (second six months of Year 1)

- a. Construction.
- b. Procurement of equipment and materials.
- c. Recruitment of staff.

Phase III Operation (Years 2-5)

Budget

17. The budget for establishing and operating the facility over a five year period (table 1) was recently revised based on all the changes agreed by the planning group. This revision was carried out in July during the preparation of a draft technical dossier prepared for funding consideration. These figures may be subject to further modifications once the RPFF planning group has reviewed the draft technical dossier during the week of RTMF 23.

Table 1: Indicative budget for the first five years for a post-harvest fisheries facility located in Suva, Fiji (figures in 000s ECU).

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Capital costs	603.4				
Operating costs	12.0	124.3	124.3	124.3	124.3
Staff costs	51.2	196.7	185.2	190.5	227.1
Total costs	666.6	321.0	309.5	314.8	351.4
Running total	666.6	987.6	1,297.1	1,611.9	1,963.3

Funding

18. The European Community (EC) has been approached for funding this Project. To meet the requirements of the EC a draft technical dossier has been prepared. This must now be finalised so that it can be submitted to the EC for funding consideration following the 4th Joint ACP/EC Ministerial Meeting to be held in Suva during November.

19. As all members of the planning group will be in Noumea for the RTMF, a meeting of this group will be organised at this time. The draft EC Technical Dossier will be reviewed and any changes and additions considered necessary will be made. Country representatives may inspect the draft of the Technical Dossier and are welcome to make comments.