

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

SEVENTEENTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 5-9 August 1985)

REVISED PRIORITY ITEMS FOR THE TUNA AND BILLFISH ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

(Paper prepared by the Secretariat)

1. Collection and evaluation of fisheries data and maintenance of regional oceanic fisheries assessment data base.

This revised priority includes previous priority item number one and also recognizes the potential importance of data other than catch and effort statistics, such as size composition of catches, for the evaluation of fisheries. Further, the role of the SPC as the repository for regional fisheries data is recognized. This work is seen as a major preoccupation of the Tuna Programme.

2. Assessment of interaction between fisheries for oceanic species.

This revised priority item is identical to previous priority item number two. Assessment of interaction is an implicit aspect of the assessment of levels of exploitation of stocks and could potentially be included under revised priority number three, but is included separately to emphasize its importance at this time.

3. Assessment and monitoring of the levels of exploitation of stocks of commercially important tuna and billfish species.

This revised priority is an extension of previous priority item number three so that the scientific assessment of tuna stocks, previously not explicitly included, is a stated priority of the Tuna Programme. Revised priorities two and three jointly are considered to be the second major preoccupation of the Tuna Programme.

4. Studies of the biology and ecology of commercially important tuna, billfish and bait species.

This revised priority includes previous priority items number four, ecology of tuna and billfish, and number five, baitfish. Collection of environmental data for ecological studies will be left to other organisations. The role of the Tuna Programme will be to utilize this data and, in association with regional fisheries data, develop descriptions of the habitats of major species of tuna and billfish. Work on baitfish will remain in the form of responses to requests from individual countries.

5. Provision of fisheries observers and advice on development of observer programmes.

The Tuna Programme continues to receive requests for observers which have been met under the umbrella of evaluating fisheries statistics. The first hand experience in the fishery has been of considerable value both to the countries which have made the requests as well as to the work of the Tuna Programme. It is re-included in the Programme priorities to recognize this value. Work on this item will remain in the form of responses to requests from individual countries.

6. Monitoring the use of fish aggregating devices (previous priority No. 6).

Very little work is foreseen for this activity unless the proposal for the FAD management study receives strong support.

7. Provide assistance to countries in the implementation of appropriate systems to monitor artisanal and subsistence fisheries.

The Tuna Programme has received requests from countries for work in this area which often goes beyond tuna fisheries. At present it is difficult to meet these requests with existing staff. Explicit inclusion of this work as a priority item enables existing staff to be diverted from other activities.

8. Provide assistance to countries in training fisheries biologists in various aspects of quantitative fisheries methods.

The success of the statistical training course and the requests from countries for assistance with training observers warrants inclusion of this item as a specific priority. Potential activities would be further training in fisheries statistics, and workshops on fisheries evaluation.