

**SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION
TWENTY-FIRST REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 7-11 August 1989)**

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATION IN PEARL OYSTER RESEARCH
DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT AMONG PACIFIC ISLAND STATE
(by Julian Dashwood)**

BACKGROUND

A locally owned pearl culture industry has recently been developed in the Cook Islands, and will be further expanded. While French Polynesia possesses a well-established industry, problems are still reported with farm mortalities. Other Pacific Island States have expressed interest in increasing the attention given to pearl oyster stocks and pearl culture potential.

Other sectors of Pacific fisheries involve broad cooperative programmes among the countries, in many aspects of research, development and management. Pearl oyster issues could also be approached from a regional perspective.

AIMS

There are four main areas where Pacific Islands pearl oyster industries could benefit from closer cooperation. These are:

- 1. Development:** Cooperation and coordination of introductions and stock re-establishment programmes. Trials of spat collector and culture methods and materials. The technology for pearl grafting and hatchery culture techniques should be further developed, and shared on a regional basis.
- 2. Management:** Methods for conservation and enhancement of wild stocks for breeding or for pearl shell fisheries. Needs and means of management for culture operations -licensing and leasing arrangements, and farm handling, husbandry, and disease preventing aspects.
- 3. Investment and Marketing:** Increased access to information on auctioning and wholesale outlets and marketing practices. Requirements of foreign expertise and capital, and means of controlling outside investment in pearl culture industries.
- 4. Research:** Stock census methods, and techniques for assessing growth, reproductivity, and pearl production quality need to be developed. Other priority areas include pathology studies and disease monitoring, selective breeding experiments, and hatchery trials.

METHODS

Options for increased cooperation range from greater information exchange through existing newsletters and standing meetings, to the establishment of a special-interest group either independently (similar to the Giant Clam project), so within current frameworks (e.g. the SPC Inshore Fisheries Project).

DISCUSSIONS

The Cook Islands would like to determine the level of interest of other countries in cooperative pearl oyster work. What are the priorities of such work, and how are these best achieved? The meeting may wish to adopt one or several of the above options.