



## FOURTH REGIONAL FISHERIES MINISTERIAL MEETING

5 July 2023

<b>Agenda Item:</b>	6.b
<b>Paper No:</b>	RFMM4.WP03 B
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Update on climate actions and climate finance opportunities in fisheries sector</b>

### Summary:

The Pacific fisheries are at risk due to climate change, endangering tuna, coastal fisheries, and aquaculture, and impacting the economies and food security of Pacific Island countries and territories. Extreme weather events exacerbate these challenges, making the climate emergency a pressing concern for Pacific communities. To address this, collaboration among key stakeholders is crucial. During the 3rd Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting, Ministers emphasised the need for cooperation between the Pacific Community (SPC), the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), other CROP agencies, and partners. They called on CROP agencies to develop a comprehensive catalogue highlighting climate change actions and finance opportunities tailored to the fisheries sector. The aim is to actively engage the fisheries sector in combating climate change and leveraging financial prospects.

This paper provides an update on climate change actions and financing opportunities in the fisheries sector, in response to the request made by the Ministers.

### Recommendations

Ministers are invited to:

- i. **Note** and **acknowledge** efforts made by CROP agencies in developing the catalogue highlighting climate actions and finance opportunities

## Introduction/Background

The sustainability of fisheries in the Pacific is under threat from climate change, with the potential to negatively impact the tuna fishery, coastal fisheries, and aquaculture. This poses a risk to the national economies and food security of Pacific Island countries and territories that depend on these fisheries. Extreme weather events will continue to cause havoc in the region, and the climate emergency represents the most immediate challenge and threat to the livelihoods and well-being of the Pacific people.

According to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), there is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a sustainable future for all. The adverse impacts of human-caused climate change will intensify, with widespread and substantial effects on water availability, food production, health and well-being, cities, settlements, infrastructure, biodiversity, and ecosystems. This poses a severe threat to the Pacific region's fragile ecosystem and emphasizes the urgent need for action to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting, the Ministers emphasised the importance of collaboration between the Pacific Community (SPC), the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), the parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), and other partners. They requested CROP agencies to work together in developing a comprehensive catalogue that highlights climate change actions and opportunities for climate finance specifically tailored for the fisheries sector. The aim is to actively engage the fisheries sector in addressing climate change and seizing related climate finance opportunities for adaptation and mitigation.

## Update on climate actions in the fisheries sector

### *SPC's Climate Change Flagship Initiative*

Enhancing resilience and supporting climate action have become integral to the strategic plan of the Pacific Community (SPC) for 2022-2031, reflecting the organisation's commitment to addressing climate change implications. SPC actively engages in climate change adaptation and mitigation activities across its technical divisions, recognising the importance of collective capabilities and organisation-wide efforts. To this end, SPC has introduced the **Climate Change Flagship**. This flagship initiative is part of SPC's broader efforts, which also include the development of flagships focused on Food Systems, Gender, and Oceans. The Climate Change Flagship initiative aims to enhance SPC's ability to address climate change challenges and meet the evolving needs of its members.

Initiated in 2022, the Climate Change Flagship focuses on integrating climate-related impacts and opportunities across all the sectors SPC supports, including fisheries, marine ecosystems, and aquaculture. With a clear objective to bolster climate action tailored to the region's needs, the initiative's goals are

comprehensive. They aim to enhance the management of climate-related resources, discern the required assets to bolster capabilities, and strategically employ climate finance for maximum adaptation and mitigation impact.

*Climate vulnerability assessment for oceanic and coastal fisheries and aquaculture*

The Pacific Community has launched a comprehensive re-evaluation of the climate change vulnerability assessment for fisheries and aquaculture in the Pacific region, originally published in 2011 (for the original report, see [here](#)).

This updated project is engaging multi-disciplinary collaborators, each contributing their unique expertise to drive the different thematic aspects of the study. This collaborative approach will deliver an integrated wealth of information, vital for Pacific Island countries and territories in strategising for the future.

The culmination of this project will be a holistic assessment of the susceptibility of Pacific Island Country and Territory fisheries, aquaculture, and their supporting habitats to climate change. In addition, it aims to provide a diverse array of resources tailored to assist managers, policymakers, and planners in crafting informed decisions and strategies.

In the process of consulting on this project, SPC has actively sought input from various government departments across the Pacific region. This has garnered strong endorsement from stakeholders, showcasing the high demand and support for this updated study.

*The Green Climate Fund “Adapting tuna-dependent Pacific Island communities and economies to climate change”*

The updated Concept Note for the Green Climate Fund's (GCF) regional tuna programme, which initially secured the endorsement at the 12th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting, successfully navigated the approval process of GCF's Climate Investment Committee in May 2021. The completed version of the document can now be accessed on the GCF's official [website](#).

With the financial backing from the GCF, Minderoo Foundation, and USAID, Conservation International (as the GCF Accredited Entity) and the Pacific Community (SPC) (as the proposed project Executing Entity) have commenced the necessary work to prepare the final proposal. To support this undertaking, SPC has catalysed partnerships to generate ten auxiliary studies that will feed into the overarching proposal.

To ensure widespread understanding and commitment, national consultations have been executed with all 14 participating countries. In May, a preliminary blueprint outlining the project's design and activity timeline was submitted to the National Designated Authorities. The lead technical agencies in each of the participating countries have been kept informed on progress and engaged in activity design. Participating countries are expected to review the final design in preparation for endorsement in August/September 2023. This will allow three to

four months for the final compilation and preparation of the project documentation in readiness for submission to the GCF Secretariat in January/February 2024. The Terms of Reference that underpin the studies can be accessed [here](#).

*The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade "Climate Science to Ensure Pacific Tuna Access"*

In the Pacific Island Forum Special Leaders Retreat in February 2023, New Zealand pledged NZD 25 million to lay the groundwork for an advanced warning system for the impacts of climate change on the regions tuna fisheries. This system aims to help Pacific nations plan for the impacts of climate change on their vital tuna fisheries.

The project's key outputs include:

1. **Setting Up Key Enabling Conditions:** This encompasses ensuring that Pacific countries and territories have access to the science and research assets needed to meet the rising demand for more precise climate modelling data and will promote climate adaptation measures for Pacific tuna fisheries. Activities include redeveloping the Pacific Marine Specimen Bank as a regional reference and training centre for both oceanic and coastal species and defining technical specifications for a new Pacific research vessel.
2. **Establishing Baseline Information:** Activities in this output area are focussed on transitioning fisheries monitoring to include molecular and forensic capabilities necessary for attributing the impacts of climate change on Pacific fisheries resources and associated scaling-up of modelling from basin relevant resolutions to EEZ relevant spatial resolutions for integrating climate impacts into fisheries resource and economic outlooks. Furthermore, efforts will be made to prepare validated climate impact models for the 7th Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report and COP29/30 negotiations.
3. **Enhancing Capability Among Pacific Fisheries Professionals:** The commitment will fund a range of educational opportunities for Pacific Island professionals. This includes graduate, post-graduate and vocational training programs focused on operating the advanced warning system, training for Pacific Marine Specimen Bank samplers, professional development opportunities, and refresher courses for biological sampling in the Regional Observer Programme. The initiative also seeks to boost national capacities through enhanced technical capabilities within regional agencies.

*The Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded 5-year project titled: "Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ2)"*

This project will provide the first evaluation of potential changes in tuna global supply chains. The project budget also includes resources for WCPFC-wide consultation on climate change impacts and adaptation options. A Letter of Agreement with the FAO is expected to be signed by the end of June 2023.

*The Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded Oceanic Fisheries Management Project III (OFMP III) titled: Mainstreaming climate change and ecosystem-based approaches into the sustainable management of the living marine resources of the WCPFC.*

The OFMP III project is for five years, starting 1 July 2022 until 30 June 2027 and is valued at \$10 million USD. It is managed by UNDP and implemented by FFA in collaboration with our partners, SPC, PNAO, WWF and PITIA. The project aims to integrate climate change adaptation and ecosystem-based management approaches in managing highly migratory fish stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.

The project focuses on responding to climate change impacts by enhancing adaptive and sustainable ecosystem-based management of fisheries through the adoption of a suite of new management strategies.

This will be informed by evaluating the impacts on tuna dependent ecosystems and improving understanding and modelling of oceanographic drivers on these key resources. The goal is to expand the knowledge base on ecosystem changes and their effects on bycatch stock distribution, including climate change impacts and connectivity across high seas and EEZs and use this to increase management effectiveness.

In addition to this, the project aims to improve capacity and expertise for overall fisheries management at both the national and regional level, to improve monitoring of catch and bycatch and the movement of catch. The project aims to create new strategies to respond to socioeconomic and food security issues related to climate change.

#### *The Climate Change agenda within the FFA*

The socio-economic impacts of climate change to the Pacific's tuna fisheries have been clearly acknowledged and recognised as a serious threat by FFA Members. The FFA is urgently pursuing actions to ensure that members' offshore fisheries, particularly the sustainable management of tuna resources, are aligned to the overall regional vision of a 'resilient Pacific'. Recent meeting decisions and outcomes by FFA Members (FFCMin19, RFMM3 and the FFC122) all make specific references to climate change and provide directions for Members and the supporting regional organisations (CROPs) to ensure stronger regional responses to this issue.

To ensure a more coherent approach to addressing climate change impacts in Pacific tuna fisheries, the FFA Secretariat hosted a dedicated workshop for Members to further review FFA's role in climate change and to consider a draft FFA Climate Change Strategy. The Inaugural Regional Meeting on Climate Change in the Context of Tuna Fisheries was held in Honiara from 17 to 19 April 2023.

The outcomes of the meeting were:

## FORUM FISHERIES COMMITTEE EYES ONLY

1. An increased awareness by Members on the impacts (including solutions) of climate change in the offshore fisheries sector;
2. Clarity on how offshore fisheries issues (including fishing management measures) can be better integrated in the climate agenda of Members and vice versa;
3. An increased understanding on the climate finance options that are available to fund fisheries adaptation responses in Pacific Island Countries;
4. An increased understanding on the partnership opportunities that are available to Members; and
5. Clarity on the role of the FFA Secretariat in the Climate Change space.

The FFA Secretariat continues to develop the FFA Climate Change Strategy together with Members.

### *Conclusion*

Through these efforts, the SPC and the FFA aim to enhance the region's ability to adapt to the challenges posed by climate change, particularly in the vulnerable fisheries sector. By increasing knowledge, building resilience and supporting climate smart policies, SPC, FFA and their partners can support the long-term sustainability of Pacific fisheries, ensuring that they continue to provide food security and economic opportunities for Pacific communities.

### **Recommendations:**

Ministers are invited to:

- i. **Note** and **acknowledge** efforts made by CROP agencies in developing the catalogue highlighting climate actions and finance opportunities