

Java lagoon, has resulted in a situation where over-exploitation is becoming a serious problem. Too much beche de mer is being harvested. Without some form of regulation, the market forces could easily drive the Ontong Java beche de mer resources to commercial extinction. To prevent over-exploitation of this precious resource, the leaders of Ontong Java have devised a home grown management system. To assure sustainability, the island's authorities close the island for beche de mer during alternate years.

During the closed years, the lagoon is open to trochus diving. Although there are problems (coordination between the two villages, commercial temptation to keep the season open), it seems to reduce somewhat the fishing pressure on the beche de mer, while providing alternate employment for the divers during the closed season.

The future for Kelaepa and his diving team is unsure. Whether they will be able to continue with their favoured occupation of beche de mer harvesting depends largely on this management system and the determination of Ontong Java's leaders to make the system work.

The Ontong Java visit was done in the context of the Pacific Islands Comparative Coastal Management Study supported by the World Bank. For further information about the study or the Ontong Java visit, please contact Mr Robert Gillet at Box 3344 Lami, Fiji.

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NEW CALEDONIA

Export market

The territory is once again on the list of countries authorised to export seafood products to the European Union after its special export dispensation expired on 1 January 2000. On March 23, the European Union approved the territory's new food hygiene and sanitation regulations.

However, the test is not over until European Union inspectors visit the territory later this year to ensure the required standards have been attained.

Meanwhile, companies have been invited to submit their candidature for the construction of a prawn packaging factory in the northern province, where prawn farming is a major activity. Currently the territory's only prawn packaging factory, situated in its southern province, cannot cope with the amount of production. The majority of New Caledonia's prawns are destined for overseas markets.

Source: *Islands Business*, May 1999

WALLIS AND FUTUNA

The fisherwomen of Futuna

The Territory of Wallis and Futuna lies 600 km northeast of Fiji and 300 km west of Samoa. It is the smallest of France's three South Pacific territories and remains relatively isolated from its neighbours geographically, culturally and politically. The Wallisians are descended from the Tongans, while the Futunans are descended from the Samoans, and the local language spoken on each island reflects these roots. The total population is around 14,400 with a similar number estimated to be living in New Caledonia.

The majority of the working population of Wallis and Futuna (80%) live off traditional agriculture and fishing. In Futuna the women are very involved in fishing as well as reef gleaning. The men look after the gardens which are often located a long way from the villages, on the steep slopes of the hills, while the women need to stay closer to home.

Fishing and reef gleaning enable them to work close to the family.

It is interesting to see the way the geography of Wallis & Futuna has dictated the traditional roles of men and women—on Futuna, the villages are built around a very narrow coastal strip and the gardens are planted on the mountainside, which rises abruptly from the sea. To work the gardens means a steep climb and time away from the home. Men do go fishing in small boats (trolling, and bottom fishing), use cast nets and spear lobsters, but it is mainly the women who provide the daily seafood on Futuna. The island of Wallis is relatively flat compared to Futuna and gardens do not have to be made in difficult terrain so far away from the villages. The women of Wallis are not involved in fishing in the same way as the Futunan women.



The gardens on Futuna are built on the steep hillsides due to a lack of flat land



Women preparing to go fishing by rubbing tumeric and coconut oil onto their skin

Harvesting

The women of Futuna have a number of beliefs and ways of behaving about fishing which can make it difficult for an outsider to study the fishing techniques. They believe you shouldn't talk about fishing before you go, you must keep quiet and serious when preparing the gear "so the devil doesn't follow you and prevent fish from entering the nets." Men have some of the same beliefs and feel atten-

tion shouldn't be drawn to the fact that they are going fishing, they and their family will avoid talking too much about it. Both men and women believe that you should not have a child crying in the house when you go fishing.

Before the women go fishing they rub tumeric mixed with coconut oil into their skin as protection against the sun. The women are quiet and cautious about being observed while actually fishing. When

returning at low tide to pick up nets set at high tide, the quiet atmosphere changes—the women now talk loudly, joking and laughing. The catch is divided up by the most senior woman and shared amongst the fisherwomen.

Processing and Handling

Processing techniques include gutting and cleaning, boiling and frying, salting and smoking over an open fire. The initial handling of the fish is quite rough and they are often left lying in the sun for some time; quality and shelf-life could be improved by some simple modifications of the way the fish are treated immediately after capture.



Marketing

There is no local market or central place for selling seafood or other products. Fish are sold for CFP600/kg directly to the people or CFP700 to the shops. The manager of one supermarket finds it cheaper to import frozen fish from New Zealand (mullet, cod, salmon) than to buy local fresh fish. It is likely, however, that Futunans will continue to prefer local fresh fish. There is no ice made on Futuna and no fish are sold to Wallis, making the further development of marketing difficult.

Dividing up the catch after fishing

There is still a relatively low use of imported, poorer quality proteins such as tinned beef, tinned fish, mutton flaps etc. (compared to other parts of the Pacific).

Source: SPC Community Fisheries Section Travel Report for Wallis and Futuna, (unpublish.) May 1999

FIJI

Indigenous Fijians to get ownership of traditional fishing grounds

Fiji's Cabinet has approved the drafting of new legislation which would give indigenous Fijians ownership rights of their customary fishing grounds or qoliqoli. A Cabinet statement said the decision honours a long-standing request from the Great Council of Chiefs and on the recommendation of the Prime Minister and Minister for Fijian Affairs, Sitiveni Rabuka.

Presently the customary fishing rights of Fijians to their qoliqoli are limited to the right of usage. The ownership rights to these areas are vested in the State under the Crown Lands Act. The Fijians customary rights of usage of their qoliqoli are provided under the Fisheries Act. The Cabinet statement said the draft legislation would be referred to the new Government and Parliament for approval after next month's general election.

"In taking this decision, Cabinet assures other communities in Fiji that their rights or access to the waters and fisheries concerned will continue to be respected. All they need to do is to continue what they have been doing now; seek the permission of the traditional fishing right owners for access to their customary fishing area for subsistence purposes," the statement said.

"For commercial fishing activities, the requirement for a licence will continue to comply. The general right of access to the public, and the right of transit passage by boat owners and vessel operators through these waters, will also continue to be respected."

Source: PACNEWS, April 1999