

Figure 3. Annual incidence of fish poisoning in the Republic of Kiribati, 1982 to 1989. Data provided by the South Pacific Commission Epidemiological and Health Information Services and includes mostly cases of ciguatera fish poisoning. The arrow indicates the start of moray eel collections.

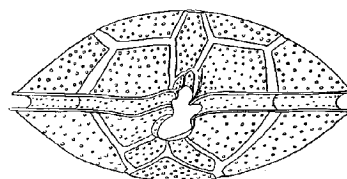
### Improvement of ciguatera case history reporting

by P. Dalzell  
South Pacific Commission  
Noumea, New Caledonia

Outbreaks of ciguatera can have a deleterious effect on fisheries development, since fishing grounds may be closed and certain fish species prohibited for sale. This is particularly critical in the small islands and atolls of the South Pacific where economic opportunities are limited and fresh fish comprises a substantial portion of the national diet.

The South Pacific Epidemiological and Health Information Service (SPEHIS), based at the SPC, records between 3,400 and 4,700 cases of fish poisoning each year (see tables on p. 10), although not all of these are due to ciguatera intoxication. However, at present the number of ciguatera cases reported throughout the region is thought to comprise only between 10 and 20 per cent of actual poisoning incidence. That there is a need for some form of initiative on ciguatera in the South Pacific is evident. However, the effect that this fish poisoning has on island societies is largely unknown due to the poor reporting of case histories. A first step to improve the current under-reporting is to encourage both health and fisheries workers in the region to record case histories on a standard ciguatera reporting form, and to send them to SPC where they can be collated in a database. The SPC Health Programme has circulated the form attached to this bulletin to regional health workers via the SPEHIS monthly news sheet.

The form is reproduced here for fisheries workers in the region to record cases of ciguatera poisoning that they encounter. The copy (in English and in French) attached with this bulletin can be used as a template for making multiple copies, or, where copying facilities are unavailable, the SPC Inshore Fisheries Research Project will be happy to supply copies. As this form is still undergoing trials in the field, we would be glad to hear from persons who have criticisms or suggestions for improving the form. Finally, we would encourage fisheries workers in the region to work in co-operation with their colleagues in their health departments to record all incidents of ciguatera that they hear about. Only with your help can we gauge the true extent of this problem and plan and co-ordinate future work accordingly.



### Monthly summary for fish poisoning for 1989 and 1990.

SPC Island member countries	Jan 89	Feb 89	Mar 89	Apr 89	May 89	Jun 89	Jul 89	Aug 89	Sep 89	Oct 89	Nov 89	Dec 89	Cum. Total 1/89 - 12/89 Cases Rate*	
American Samoa	0	4	1	2	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	12	0.3
Cook Islands	30	5	3	5	6	14	13	16	25	10	12	7	146	8.5
Fiji	100	79	54	37	9	52	89	74	138	65	249	79	1025	1.4
French Polynesia	81	54	55	41	73	95	89	101	88	81	54	48	860	4.9
Fed. St. of Micronesia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Guam	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	1	28	2	2	0	38	0.3
Kiribati	35	29	33	26	95	39	43	28	58	73	72	22	553	8.2
Marshall Islands	11	12	13	5	6	7	5	15	2	6	7	12	101	2.7
Nauru	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
New Caledonia	0	0	0	0	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	154	180	1.1
Niue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	1.6
North. Mariana Isl.	3	2	4	0	1	1	3	1	4	1	1	3	24	1.2
Palau	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Pitcairn Isl.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Papua New Guinea	10	11	8	10	0	41	37	41	30	8	0	0	196	0.1
Solomon Islands													0	0.0
Tokelau	0	7	0	0	2	0	3	0	0	7	3	0	22	13.8
Tonga	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	4	0.0
Tuvalu	1	0	0	7	3	15	0	9	9	8	13	0	65	7.6
Vanuatu	93	54	129	75	95	80	65	45	71	87	60	34	888	6.1
Wallis and Futuna	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Western Samoa	2	1	1	0	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	33	0.2

\* Number of active cases per 1,000 population

SPC Island member countries	Jan 90	Feb 90	Mar 90	Apr 90	May 90	Jun 90	Jul 90	Aug 90	Sep 90	Oct 90	Nov 90	Dec 90	Cum. Total 1/90 - 12/90 Cases Rate*	
American Samoa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0.0
Cook Islands	8	2	11	0	0	0	0	6	9	3			39	2.3
Fiji	17	19	62	4	68	62	39	57	64	84			476	0.7
French Polynesia	130	79	62	60	60	54	60	117	97	83	62	35	899	5.1
Fed. St. of Micronesia	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				1	0.0
Guam	0	4	0	24	0	7	0	0	2	6	2		45	0.4
Kiribati	71	224	93	93	83	235	41	100	142	144	37		1263	18.7
Marshall Islands	22	15	14	11	14	10	13						99	2.6
Nauru	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0			3	0.3
New Caledonia	11	13	15	13	36	16	6	9	7				126	0.8
Niue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0.0
North. Mariana Isl.	2	1	1	0	0	2	10	4	3	7	2	0	32	1.6
Palau	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0.0
Pitcairn Isl.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Papua New Guinea	0	0	0	0									0	0.0
Solomon Islands													0	0.0
Tokelau	0	1	4	2	1	0							8	5.0
Tonga													0	0.0
Tuvalu	14	16	12	10	15	34	2	10	0				113	13.3
Vanuatu	46	77	11	13	82	13	27	49	38	55	23	14	448	3.1
Wallis and Futuna	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	0	0		38	2.6
Western Samoa	4	1	2	3	6								16	0.1

\* Number of active cases per 1,000 population

Definition of fish poisoning: Vomiting, diarrhoea, sensory changes and/or rash or itching following consumption of fish (may be ciguatera, scombroid, or other)

(Source: SPEHIS — unpublished data)