

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

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**Statement by
FAO Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific Islands**

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific Islands



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BY
FAO SUB-REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE PACIFIC ISLANDS**

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific Islands
Fisheries Programme**

1. The FAO Office in Apia was upgraded to a sub-regional office in 1996, known by its acronym SAPA, and has since expanded its activities in the area of natural resource management in the South Pacific. The establishment of SAPA is a tangible reflection of FAO's desire to decentralize and to bring its operations closer to its member countries of the Pacific. SAPA's mandate is to galvanize regional efforts towards food security.
2. SAPA consists of 22 staff; including 6 Technical Officers (**fisheries**, integrated resource management, farming systems development & marketing, plant protection, forestry resource management, and food & nutrition), a Policy Officer, an Associate Professional Officers (**aquaculture**), a National Professional Officer and a Programme Assistant under overall managerial and administrative leadership of the Sub-Regional Representative.
3. FAO member countries in the region are the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Niue and Palau became the member countries in November 1999. Nauru has formally applied for FAO membership this year. It is anticipated that its application will be confirmed at the FAO Conference later this year. Tuvalu and the Federated States of Micronesia are also considering the membership.
4. FAO provides technical assistance to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Pacific. The overall objectives of the technical assistance programme are to enable the Pacific Island countries (PICs) to adopt and implement policies and measures to ensure that;
 - the capacity of fisheries administrations in the PICs is strengthened,
 - fisheries resources are conserved, managed, developed and utilized in a rational manner,
 - national food security is enhanced, and
 - the utilization of fisheries resources continue to contribute to national economic and social development on a sustainable basis.

The programme is focused on six areas.

- (1) Institutional strengthening and national capacity building.
- (2) Enhanced conservation and management of EEZ fisheries.
- (3) Improved post-harvest fish management and marketing.
- (4) Safety-at-sea.
- (5) Strengthening the economic role of national fisheries industries and the privatization of fisheries investments.
- (6) Aquaculture and inland fisheries conservation, management and development. (see **Appendix**)

The programme will be used as a vehicle to assist the PICs under the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries which comprehensively covers the conservation, management and development of all fisheries, laying out principles and standards for establishing responsible fisheries sectors.

5. To strengthen sustainable management of fisheries resources in the region, an early implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries is highly desirable throughout cooperation of regional organizations. FAO is fully committed to assisting the PICs in the efficient implementation of the Code of Conduct. With the framework of the Code of Conduct, four International Plans of Action (IPOA) have been adopted at FAO's Committee on Fisheries.
 - IPOA for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Long-line Fisheries
 - IPOA for the Conservation and Management of Sharks
 - IPOA for the Management of Fishing Capacity

- IPOA to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) Fishing
6. FAO has recently commenced a five-year regional project on fishery statistics titled “Support for Improvement of Statistics on Coastal and Subsistence Fisheries and Aquaculture” trust-funded by the Government of Japan. The immediate objective of the project is for FAO to assist the PICs to improve existing fishery databases through a series of meetings on data management and data collection systems. As the first project activity, the Pacific Islands Regional Workshop on Fishery Statistics is organized in Noumea, New Caledonia, from 16 to 18 July 2001 in collaboration with SPC. Fifty participants are expected from the FAO member and non-member countries as well as international, regional, bi-lateral and non-governmental organizations.
 7. Technical assistance to the members is provided. Recent projects have included a strengthening of fisheries management in Fiji, Solomon Islands, PNG and Vanuatu, a fisheries sector study in Tonga, a regional initiative in the area of seafood quality control etc. through FAO’s Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) and TeleFood Special Fund (TSF). Past and current projects are listed below.

TCPs:

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|---------|--|
| Fiji | - (1996) Strengthening management capability in the Fisheries Division (Phase II) (US\$50,000) |
| PNG | - (1996-1997) Strengthening national capacity for fisheries conservation and management (\$94,000) |
| | - (1997) Sustainable development of national fisheries and support of food security (\$283,000) |
| Solomon | - (1995-1996) Strengthening national fisheries capacity (\$81,000) |
| Tonga | - (1997-1998) Fisheries sector study (\$248,000) |
| | - (1999-2001) Assistance in Fisheries Legislation (\$135,000) |
| Vanuatu | - (1996-1997) Strengthening of national fishery policy (\$145,000) |
| Region | - (1997) Assistance to South Pacific to meet new fish regulations (\$165,000) |
| | - (1998) Uruguay Round Agreement on agriculture: present and future implications for agriculture and fisheries in the region (\$125,000) |

TSFs:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Tonga | - (1998) Improved drying of fish facility (\$7,500) |
| Samoa | - (1998) Lagoon giant clam nursery development in Fusi Safata Village on Upolu Island, Samoa (\$9,105) |
| | - (1998) Lagoon giant clam nursery development in Satoalepai Village on Savaii Island, Samoa (\$5,925) |
| Solomon | - (1998) Kia Village Fishing Project, Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands (\$5,300) |
| Cook | - (1999) Fish Aggregate Device assistance (\$1,666) |

Others:

- | | |
|--------|---|
| PNG | - (1996-1998) Special Programme on food production in support of Food Security in PNG (including inland aquaculture development) (\$744,730) |
| Tonga | - (1998) Second In-Country HACCP Training Workshop in Va`vau, Tonga. |
| Region | - (1994-1999) South Pacific Aquaculture Development Project (Phase II) (\$4,170,000) |
| | - (1998) Regional workshop on economic strengthening of fisheries industries in Small Island Developing States in the South Pacific in Apia, 14-18/9/98 |
| | - (1999, 2000 & 2001) Round table meeting on implications of WTO agreements for the Pacific region |
| | - (2001-2006) Support for Improvement of Statistics on Coastal and Subsistence Fisheries and Aquaculture (\$250,000) |

Pipelines:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Fiji | - Enhancement of Customary Marine Fishery Tenure. |
| Tonga | - Deavelopment of Seaweed (<i>Cladosiphon</i> sp.) Farming |
| Marshall | - Seaweed (Euclidean) Cultivation |

Regional Fisheries - Strengthening the Capacity of National Seafood HACCP Based Quality Assurance and Inspection(as of 6 July 2001)

Aquaculture in Focus: Importance to Food Security

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Aquaculture and Food Security

About 20% of world's population derive at least 20% of its animal protein intake from fish and some small island states depend on fish almost exclusively. As leveling off in production from capture fisheries is anticipated and with no foreseeable check in population increase, many countries have identified a future shortfall in the supply of fishery products. Planners and the industry as a whole look to aquaculture as a means to fill this shortfall in order to avoid the importation of scarce fishery products. **Aquaculture is seen as having greater development potential than capture fisheries.** Moreover, where potential for enhancing off-shore capture fishery production still exist, aquaculture contributes by ensuring supply of valuable baitfish (e.g., cultured milkfish as bait for tuna off-shore fishery)^(1,2).

The impact of aquaculture production not only in ensuring food security but alleviating poverty as well, has been demonstrated especially in developing Asian countries where rural aquaculture, including enhancement and culture-based fisheries has made significant contributions to domestic subsistence and/or income, directly through small-scale household farming of aquatic organisms and indirectly by providing employment for the poor or low-cost fish for poor rural and urban consumers⁽¹⁾.

In recent years, **aquaculture has become the fastest growing food-producing sector in the world⁽³⁾**. An upward trend in world aquaculture production is seen globally over the past decade and potential for further increase in production is evident. Even the African region which has very little tradition of aquaculture and has been beset by external problems which hampered proper aquaculture management and development despite numerous investments made, has shown significant increase in fish culture production⁽¹⁾.

Aquaculture in the Pacific Islands

Contributions to food security and economy

In the Pacific region, despite numerous failures in past attempts to develop aquaculture, the potential of aquaculture as important contributor to food security and national economy has been realized in some of the Pacific Island countries⁽⁴⁾. This is exemplified by the successes, to name a few, of: (i) subsistence tilapia farming in Fiji which led to commercial aquaculture development for the domestic market; (ii) the export-oriented development of pearl farming in French Polynesia and Cook Islands; and (iii) seaweed farming in Kiribati which has become a major export industry.

Conditions favoring aquaculture development and sustainable resources management

Considering the vast water (marine) resource available to the Pacific Island nations coupled with declining natural stocks of living aquatic resources due to overexploitation, aquaculture can help not only in ensuring food security but also in replenishment or enhancement of natural stocks of economically important species, for example, the current restocking efforts of giant clams in many island nations.

Natural conditions in the Pacific region that favor the development of aquaculture and stock enhancement for sustainable coastal resources management include⁽⁵⁾: (i) availability of endemic aquatic species that are highly valued as export-grade seafoods (e.g. grouperfish, sea cucumbers, spiny lobsters) for the Asian market, as important commodities in aquarium trade (e.g. giant clams, corals, clownfish), and as sources of chemicals (e.g., seaweeds/algae, sponges, sea horses) for the pharmaceutical trade; (ii) availability of pristine reef habitats suitable for grow-out culture of many species; and (iii) other socio-economic factors that favor the export trade of Pacific Is. fishery products, e.g., proximity of the islands to seafood markets in Asia and rich nations along the Pacific rim and relatively inexpensive labor.

Constraints in development

Owing to an extent the lack of aquaculture tradition in the region, progress of aquaculture has been very slow in the Pacific. Constraints to the development of aquaculture can be mainly

attributed to lack of funds or investment by island nations in promoting research, extension services, training and education to increase technical capacity for the promotion of aquaculture development. Often the island nations relied heavily on foreign aid for technical expertise and funding of aquaculture development projects and failed to follow-up on initiated projects upon expiration of external assistance.

Cooperative Efforts for the Development of Aquaculture

FAO-NACA Bangkok Declaration and Strategy for (Aquaculture) Development

Issues and concerns that are needed to be addressed for the success of aquaculture development are complex and often transcend boundaries of various disciplines. These include, to name a few, disease control, conflicting land uses and general environmental problems arising from aquaculture development such as critical habitat loss, species introductions and pollution.

Experienced stakeholders in aquaculture view that cooperative efforts geared toward improvements in new and adaptive research and management are necessary for the successful and sustainable development of aquaculture. This is embodied in the FAO/NACA's (Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific) "Aquaculture Development Beyond 2000: The Bangkok Declaration and Strategy"⁽⁶⁾ which states, *inter alia*, that:

" the aquaculture sector should continue to be developed towards its full potential, making a net contribution to global food availability, household food security, economic growth, trade and improved living things;

"in pursuing development, States, the private sector, and other legitimate stakeholders should co-operate to promote the responsible growth of aquaculture;

"strengthened regional and inter-regional co-operation should increase the efficiency and effectiveness of aquaculture development efforts".

Pacific Regional Aquaculture Development Strategy

The increasing recognition given to the importance of aquaculture in contributing to food security and enhancing socio-economic conditions especially in developing countries is exemplified in the formulation of the abovementioned Bangkok Strategy; formation of a special Sub-committee on Aquaculture under the FAO (global) Committee on Fisheries (COFI), and renewed investment for the promotion of this sector in the Pacific region, e.g., support of the Government of Canada to the Pacific aquaculture training program implemented through the University of the South Pacific to strengthen aquaculture manpower resources in the region.

Currently, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community is initiating a '**Regional Strategy for the Development of Aquaculture**'⁽⁵⁾ which aims to promote aquaculture development for increasing aquatic production and sustainable management of resources through training, research, extension, information exchange and regional and inter-regional cooperative activities (e.g. with NACA in Southeast Asia). Partners in this initiative include the government of Australia, the International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management, USP, FAO and Pacific Island nations.

It is hoped that through the efforts in the regional strategy and the increasing attention given by island states to aquaculture, the full potential of aquaculture development in contributing to food security, sustainable resources management and enhancing economies can be realized in the Pacific region.

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