

ORIGINAL: FRENCH

**SPC/FFA WORKSHOP ON THE MANAGEMENT
OF SOUTH PACIFIC INSHORE FISHERIES
(Noumea, New Caledonia 26 June-7 July 1995)**

COUNTRY STATEMENT - WALLIS AND FUTUNA

1. General situation

Since acquiring the status of a French Overseas Territory, the islands of Wallis & Futuna have experienced an undeniable economic and social upswing, essentially due to aid from metropolitan France, which has brought the creation of infrastructures, closer contact with the rest of the world and a higher standard of living.

However

- demographic growth has caused pressures on land with worrying consequences on the environment;
- the trade balance is seriously in deficit and price levels are high.

The majority of the working population (80 %) live off traditional agriculture and fishing. Only 20 % of the population is in paid employment, mainly in service industries. The government employs 60 % of the salaried workers and the private sector (importation and building) employs 40 %. The employment situation, with 54 % of the population under 20 years of age, is already a cause for concern.

In November 1994, we sent the SPC an extract from the 1993 fisheries report, an extract of the draft development plan proposing action to be taken in this area, with special attention for the area of training, and the maritime fishery regulations adopted in June/July 1994. These documents were given to participants.

In the Territory, the potential demand for fish, based on a daily consumption of 150-200 grams (SPC figures) is thought to represent nearly 900 tonnes. Fisheries activities must be developed in order to provide this indispensable source of dietary protein.

The quantity produced in 1994, estimated at 300 tonnes, remains significantly below the potential demand although production has grown steadily (40 tonnes in 1989, 70 tonnes in 1991, 140 tonnes in 1992, 280 tonnes in 1993).

The problems encountered by the Territory of the Islands of Wallis & Futuna in the area of inshore fishery resources can be summarised as follows

1. Priority problems

1.1 Insufficient resource knowledge

The inshore waters are relatively rich in trevallies, barracudas, mackerels, bottom fish (snappers groupers, amberjack, goat fish all highly sought after) and, at least at certain times of the year, tuna.

Two more in-depth studies of fisheries potential, one concerning the outer reef slopes, the other on the 200-mile zone, have been proposed as part of the development plan, in order to gain precise data on the stocks available and the harvesting possibilities, with a view to developing deep water and migratory tuna fisheries.

These two studies were not included in the 1995-2000 Development Agreement between the French National Government and the Territory, signed on 2 March 1995. However, they could be highly useful. Could the SPC give us some assistance in this area?

1.2 Inadequate training of local fisherman (techniques, safety, management)

Even if fishing activity has decreased as a result of restrictions introduced to keep whole families from going out fishing together, it still concerns a large proportion of the population.

In order to establish a true artisanal fishery supplying a local market showing active demand, a training session for 10 participants was carried out in 1994 with the participation of master fishermen from the SPC and the Marine Trade Training School in Noumea. Its objective was to instruct on fishing outside the lagoon, as yields would be much higher than those from fishing within the lagoon.

These training sessions are followed up by technical support for fishermen setting up in business. They should become a regular feature, as they are the only realistic option to launch commercial fisheries in the Territory.

A second session is scheduled in 1996, then one every two years thereafter.

1.3. Poor suitability of current boats for fishing conditions outside the lagoon (safety, seaworthiness)

The flat-bottomed boats currently in use are very well-adapted for fishing within the lagoon of Wallis. However, their modest seaworthiness, questionable strength and the fact that they are not equipped with watertight flotation compartments make them unsuitable for fishing outside the lagoon or in Futuna.

Training in the construction of "West System" models is planned for 1995. A single type of boat will then be selected, i.e. one which is more seaworthy, stronger (reinforced members, use of glue rather than nails for assembly), self-bailing, and safer (watertight flotation compartments) - a boat built solely for fishing.

2. Secondary problems

2.1 Improvement of mooring conditions for boats in Futuna

Construction of a covered boat ramp at Vele will have to be envisaged, in order to improve boat launching conditions for vessels. This boat ramp will be protected from winds and currents by two breakwaters.

2.2 Insufficient beacons in the passes off Wallis (the Northern Pass in particular)

The current beaconage of the Wallis Lagoon is satisfactory. The beacons in the Southern Pass (Honolulu) can be considered adequate, in spite of frequent failures.

In contrast, the three passes on the west coast (Fatumanini where the few beacons were destroyed by Fran in March 1992 and not replaced, Fuga Uvea and Ava Tolu), which are frequently used by fishermen as they are to windward, have no markers at all. In bad weather, the risk of accidents is high. Development of fishing outside the lagoon will thus have to begin with the installation of the minimum number of beacons required.

2.3 Fishery working conditions

1993 saw the deployment of three fish aggregation devices (FAD) in November 1992. The objectives (sea-time savings, an improvement in safety due to the concentration of fishermen and an increase in catches) have all mostly been attained. The annual increase in catches has been estimated at 2 to 3 t per device.

Two FADs have since been lost. Their replacement is scheduled for July as part of the Franco-Japanese fishing agreement, plus two standby FADs to cover likely losses. A total of three moored FADs is currently considered sufficient.

2.4 Unstructured commercial sector

This problem will arise when the artisanal fishermen currently setting up business and their future colleagues become aware of the need for an infrastructure which guarantees them reasonable prices in exchange for regular, high-quality catches. For the moment, this issue remains too theoretical to really be considered.

