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**COPING WITH THE LIVE REEF FOOD FISH TRADE  
IN THE EASTERN PACIFIC ISLANDS**

by

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**ABSTRACT**

Whereas the demand among Chinese for live reef food fish is increasing and prices are very high, supplies in Southeast Asia are declining because of widespread overfishing and the use of highly environmentally destructive cyanide. As a result the companies that deal in these fish are now looking upon the eastern Pacific islands as their next "frontier". Such fisheries are/could be an attractive option for islanders in areas where stocks of target species are high, *provided appropriate controls are implemented*. But this is not easy. And in circumstances where it is not practical, consideration should be given to banning such operations entirely, so destructive is their uncontrolled potential. With the exception of Australia, the only places in the eastern tropical Pacific region where *some* effective control is being exercised over these fishing operations is where customary marine tenure or some other form of local control over the fishing grounds exists. To be more effective, however, local controllers need greater government support in the form of supporting legislation, education, assistance with enforcement and with the drawing up of legal agreements between reef owners and fishing companies. Farming of fish for this trade may be a viable future development option in the Pacific Islands. Considerable research and development will be needed first, however. An economical source of food would also have to be found - since the trash fish bycatch in trawl fisheries and used as feed in Southeast Asia are not generally available in the Pacific islands. Baitfish might prove to be a viable alternative in some areas.

