



12th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting

12–14 May 2020 – Virtual meeting



Original: English

HoF12 outcomes

(19 May 2020)

Background

1. The 12th SPC Heads of Fisheries (HoF) Meeting was held online utilising the ‘Zoom’ platform, from the 12th to the 14th May 2020, chaired by Mr Fakavae Taomia, Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries and Trade, Tuvalu.
2. HoF is a regional meeting of the heads of SPC member country and territory fishery agencies, or their appointed deputies, covering the entire range of interests for which they have responsibility and on which the SPC Division of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) provides advice and assistance. The HoF meeting plays a unique role in providing strategic guidance to FAME.
3. SPC acknowledges the financial support of the Australian Government for the 12th HoF Meeting.
4. The following outcomes constitute the main points of consensus among delegates that the meeting felt necessary to document, to guide the management of the FAME work programme, to draw to the attention of other regional agencies and development partners, to signal agreement on issues that require attention by members themselves, and to inform the planned regional Forum Fisheries Ministers’ Meeting (RFMM), SPC Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA) and the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting.
5. Given the online format of the meeting, the outcomes were circulated to, and confirmed by members, after the closure of the meeting.
6. The meeting was opened by Stuart Minchin, Director General, SPC, in his first address to HoF as the new Director General of SPC.

FAME 2019 results reporting

7. Heads of Fisheries:

- a. Noted with appreciation the results achieved by the oceanic fisheries, and coastal fisheries and aquaculture programmes of FAME in 2019, and supported the development of the FAME results dashboard to enable members to explore regional and individual member level results (Working Paper 1).

FAME priorities and direction in 2020 and beyond

8. Heads of Fisheries:

- a. Reviewed and provided overall support for the FAME oceanic, coastal and aquaculture priorities and directions outlined (Working Paper 2).
- b. Noted that it was an ambitious work programme and requested SPC FAME to further prioritise, particularly in light of the current COVID-19 context.
- c. Asked SPC FAME to continue to ensure that priorities aligned to member needs.
- d. Identified the following key areas to help guide FAME's prioritisation:
 - i. Development of an overarching data governance policy covering data ownership, data sharing, integration and dissemination.
 - ii. Improved integration of the data management, analysis and reporting tools currently available from SPC for fisheries.
 - iii. Continue the capacity development work programme, including an increased focus on follow up to strengthen overall impact and the participation of women.
 - iv. Scaling up community-based fisheries management and the implementation of 'A New Song for Coastal Fisheries'.
 - v. Integrated activities to support food security.
 - vi. Aquaculture development, including evidence of what is working and what is not.

COVID-19 impacts

9. Heads of Fisheries:

- a. Identified the need for further understanding on the impacts of COVID-19 among members and resulting member needs, including resources and capabilities within Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) to respond, and longer-term strategies for resource management.
- b. Identified three key initial impacts of COVID-19, these being fish production, increased importance of food security, as well as the impact on observer placement, MCS and verification of reported fishing activities.

- c. Noted the need for ongoing adaptations of FAME's oceanic, coastal and aquaculture work programmes in response to COVID-19, donor flexibility and ongoing opportunities post-COVID such as electronic meetings like online HoF and remote support to members.

Review of the Coastal Fisheries Working Group and increasing the engagement of non-state actors in Pacific Islands regional coastal fisheries mechanisms

10. The HoF12 was invited to review and provide feedback and guidance to the consultant, Andrew Wright (MRAG Asia Pacific), on the Draft Report: 'Review of the Coastal Fisheries Working Group and options and recommendations for increasing the engagement of non-state actors in Pacific Islands' regional coastal fisheries governance' (Working Paper 6).
11. HoF members were asked to consider two options for incorporating Community-based Fisheries Management (CBFM) into the RTMCF format as well as the issue of chairing or convening arrangements for the CBFM session, and guidance on the invitation process to ensure appropriate representation and participation.
12. HoF members were invited to provide additional feedback on the Draft Review Report directly to the consultant. The final report submitted to SPC will be circulated to HoF members prior to SPC presenting it to the RFMM.
13. A small working group met after the Day 2 session and provided recommendations to be trialled for the 2020 RTMCF4, for the HoF meeting to consider.
14. The working group's recommendations are as follows:
 - a. The approach of the 2-day CBFM session being incorporated into the RTMCF4 meeting in 2020.
 - b. An independent consultant be appointed as the convenor of the CBFM session during the 4th RTMCF in 2020.
 - c. Invitations to participate in the CBFM session will be extended to a range of non-state actors with relevant technical expertise who are representative of civil society rather than representatives of organisations.
 - d. The CBFM session will discuss and recommend a chair for its future, and forward that to HoF13 for approval.
 - e. The CBFM session would operate in its first year under the terms of reference proposed in the review, and
 - f. The CBFM session would continue to be refined through advice from HoF to the RFMM.
15. These recommendations will be incorporated into the revised consultant report due to be accepted by SPC by 17th June 2020. The final report will then be circulated to members prior to submitting the paper on the review to the RFMM. Members will have an opportunity to provide comments to SPC on the final report that they may wish to have conveyed to the RFMM.

Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries (RTMCF3) Actions

16. The Third SPC Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries (RTMCF3) took place at SPC Headquarters in Noumea, New Caledonia, from 5th to the 8th November 2019. The purpose of RTMCF3 was to discuss and address some of the main technical issues affecting coastal fisheries and aquaculture in support of better science-based resource management and equitable access to resources.
17. The RTMCF3 was the first phase of the new, but still evolving, strategic direction setting framework, information flow and decision-making process for Pacific coastal fisheries and aquaculture, from the RTMCF to the HoF to the Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting and on to the Forum Leaders. This information flow does not affect governance of SPC's strategic direction by the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA) and Conference.
18. The RTMCF3 participants were asked to identify, discuss and agree on clear priority coastal fisheries and aquaculture technical issues and opportunities that the RTMCF3 and the subsequent Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture MCS&E workshop could submit to HoF12 for consideration and action. HoF addressed these actions through an online survey to address 21 actions, and plenary discussion to consider 4 actions from the RTMCF in greater depth.
19. Heads of Fisheries:
 - a. Acknowledged the Report to HoF12 from the 3rd SPC Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries presented by the RTMCF3 Chair, Mrs Tooreka Teemari, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development, Kiribati (Working Paper 5 and Background Paper 4).
 - b. Noted and endorsed 24 actions referred to HoF from the RTMCF3 and the Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture MCS&E workshop which followed. Further discussion was requested for Action 16¹ by one member, to be followed up by the RTMCF3 Chair and SPC.
 - c. For Action 9², HoF noted the sentiment expressed in action items 9a., b. and c., and emphasised that PICT fisheries administrations may take appropriate local level action, where feasible.
 - d. In light of RTMCF3 Action 9, discussed and emphasised the need for further development of compliance in the coastal fisheries sector, including capacity development and appropriate protocols, mechanisms and tools to be used.
20. Given the high number of actions which were submitted by RTMCF3 to HoF12, clear guidance should be provided to RTMCF4 on drafting actions suitable for consideration by HoF.

¹ Action 16: RTMCF encourages PICT governments and administrations to share national Aquatic Biosecurity strategies, legislation, policies and plans, and provide resources in order to capture the benefits of effective biosecurity at the national level.

² Action 9: Members identified the need for countries to address chronic understaffing of science and fisheries staff to conduct fishery and socio-economic surveys: a) RTMCF requests HoF to discuss and agree on a plan to address the capacity limitations, which is limiting effective coastal fisheries data collection, analysis and use in management; b) RTMCF requests HoF to discuss the need for clear and delineated roles for fisheries staff (e.g. the need to separate compliance from science roles); c) RTMCF recognises the problems related to short-term funding arrangements and requests HoF to consider ways to build longevity in funding programmes, through government and donors, for coastal fisheries science and management.

Scaling-up community-based fisheries management in a COVID-19 context

21. In January 2020, SPC FAME circulated a survey to members and observers to identify priority topics for HoF12. Scaling-up Community-Based Fisheries Management (CBFM) across the region was the highest ranked topic selected by both members and observers, and, was therefore retained as an agenda item for the electronic meeting.
22. The purpose of the session was to prompt discussion around scaling-up CBFM in a COVID-19 context.
23. Recognising that the various PICT responses to COVID-19 are resulting in a significant increase in reliance on community-based fisheries for both food security and livelihoods, and noting that CBFM is an individual national PICT responsibility, the session identified immediate common impacts and challenges faced for scaling-up CBFM and also identified support needs from FAME to assist with the scaling-up of CBFM in a COVID-19 context.
24. Heads of Fisheries:
 - a. Identified the following immediate impacts and challenges faced for scaling-up CBFM in a COVID-19 context:
 - i. Food and nutrition security - increased demand for local food supply, increased price of imported food and increased dependence on coastal fisheries resources.
 - ii. Economic impacts including domestic market access, limited exports and employment.
 - iii. Limited government and partner capacity to support communities due to travel and other restrictions, including reduced relief efforts to Tropical Cyclone Harold.
 - iv. Increased fishing of coastal fisheries resources and FADs.
 - v. Need for further information and assessments.
 - b. Identified the following support needs from FAME to assist with scaling up CBFM in a COVID-19 context:
 - i. Developing management measures for specific fisheries / species.
 - ii. Methods and data collection tools to monitor the impact of COVID-19, catch and effort, effectiveness of anchored FADs and simple monitoring for communities on effectiveness of CBFM.
 - iii. Development of marine-based livelihoods for communities and local fishers, which may include assistance in FAD deployment and monitoring, aquaculture, and implementation of food safety standards and value-adding.
 - iv. Deliver capacity development of fisheries staff through remote means.
 - v. Long-term preparedness and community resilience in relation to natural-disasters and COVID-19.

- vi. Other needs including fish preservation, supporting existing CBFM sites, aquaculture, leadership development and community engagement.
- c. Requested FAME continue to work in collaboration with other SPC Divisions, key partners such as the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and other development partners to support members to adapt activities to the COVID-19 context, implement CBFM and avoid duplication of effort.
- d. Requested FAME to work with members and partners to carry-out an assessment on CBFM and scaling-up approaches in the region to assist members in developing and implementing effective CBFM scaling-up approaches which are appropriate to specific contexts.

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25. Heads of Fisheries:

- a. Noted that the virtual meeting was a genuine success and was able to make the best use of available means to allow for meaningful discussion.
- b. Recognised the benefits of this format for future SPC meetings and activities, which offers the potential to increase diversity and participation in shorter, more focused sessions with reduced financial and environmental implications.

Specific outcomes for the Regional Fisheries Ministers' Meeting

- 26. A report from HoF12 will be provided to the Regional Fisheries Ministers' Meeting (RFMM) and this will provide input on the relevant RFMM agenda items, including the review of the CFWG.