

SCIFISH

PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Saturday 9 May 2009
Forum Fisheries Agency Conference Centre
Honiara, Solomon Islands

SUMMARY REPORT

1 Introduction

The Third SCIFISH (Scientific Support for Oceanic Fisheries Management in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean) Project Steering Committee was convened at the FFA Conference Centre on Saturday 9 May 2010. The meeting was attended by representatives of Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, as well as representatives of the EU Delegations in Suva and Honiara.

1.1 Opening remarks

Mike Batty (SPC Director of the Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division) welcomed participants to the third meeting of the SCIFISH Project Steering Committee (PSC).

1.2 Selection of Chair

In accordance with convention, it was agreed that Mike Batty would chair the meeting.

1.3 Adoption of agenda

The provisional agenda (Annex 1) was adopted without amendment.

2 SCIFISH administration

John Hampton provided an overview of the administration of the project, reminding PSC participants that SCIFISH is a four-year project funded by the 9th EDF. SCIFISH has separate funding resources for ACPs and OCTs, although project activities are integrated and complementary. The ACP Regional Administrative Officer is the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the OCT Regional Administrative Officer is the Government of New Caledonia. The project activities are being undertaken by SPC, FFA and the Government of New Caledonia, however SPC is the co-ordinating and administrative contact organisation for the project.

3 Project Progress

The logical framework that guides implementation of SCIFISH is outlined in Figure 1. Substantial progress has been made towards achieving the

purpose and objectives of the project, with a strong contribution of the project towards the development of WCPFC conservation and management measures, national tuna management plans and regional tuna stock assessments.

Activities conducted during 2009 contributing to the achievement of the Key Result Areas were presented to the meeting and are summarised in Table 1.

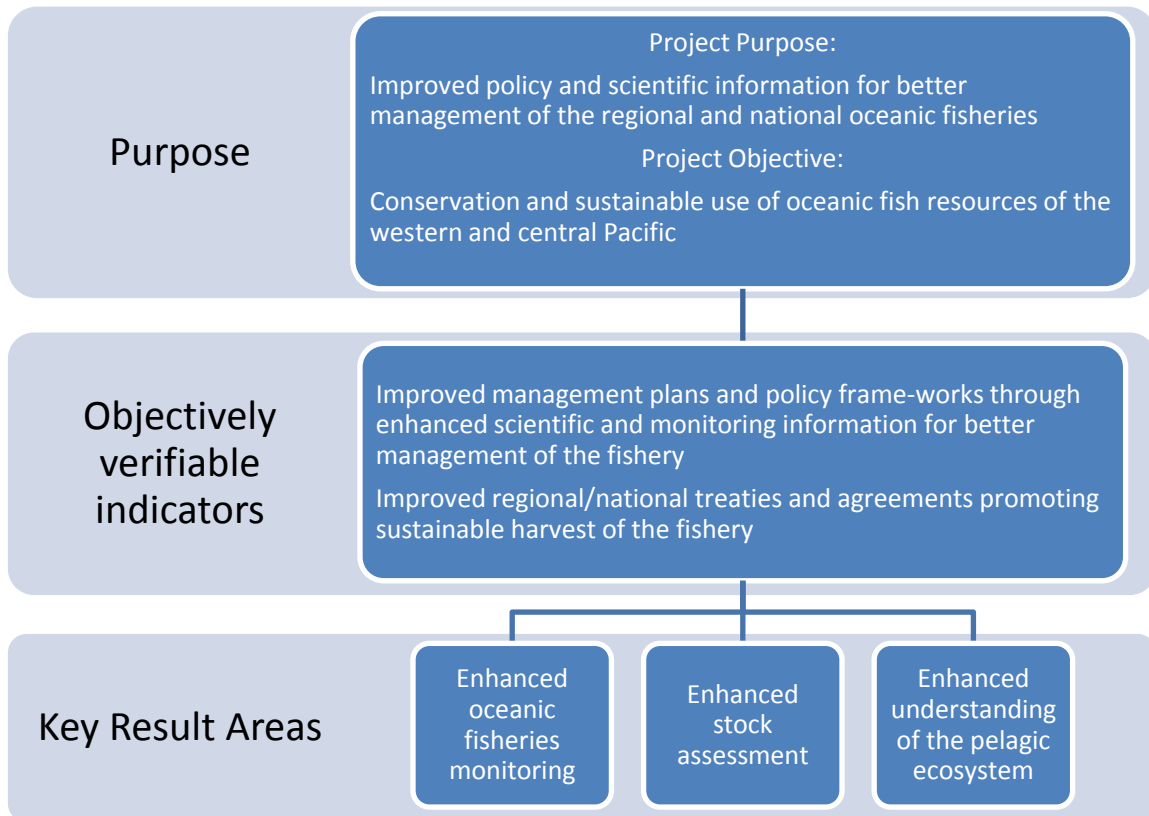


Figure 1. Logical Framework for SCIFISH

Table 1. Activities conducted during 2009 contributing to the achievement of the Key Result Areas.

Key Result Area	Evaluation against ACP indicators	Evaluation against OCT indicators
1. Enhanced oceanic fisheries monitoring		
1.1 Improvement in the observer and port sampling coverage and quality of data to meet the required regional standards	>95% PS coverage in P-ACPs (increase from 8% in 2007), however at this stage in development the majority are cadet observers who are monitoring compliance and not yet undertaking sampling or catch estimation and verification (334 observers trained under SCIFISH, including 236 trained in 2009). Competency-Based Observer Training (CBT) and standards implemented in WCPO	>5% (objective) LL coverage in P-OCTs (7.4% FP, 6.6% NC) >10% (objective) port sampling coverage in P-OCTs (61% FP, 20% NC)
1.2 Improved regional coordination of national databases to track and monitor fisheries data for compliance with management requirements	All P-ACPs issued with TUFMAN Version 5.0 with the exception of PNG and Samoa (who operate their own database) and Tokelau (deployment scheduled for 2010). Reporting module for TUFMAN, which specifically addresses the reporting obligations by ACP countries to the WCPFC included. TUBS (observer management system) and Observer Trip Viewer System and CES updated.	
1.3 More comprehensive IUU compliance assessments undertaken	Regional IUU risk assessment and compliance audit undertaken. TUFMAN developed to generate exception reports by comparing logsheet, VMS and unloading data.	
1.4 Improved detection of IUU fishing through strengthening existing technologies and trial of new technologies		Satellite vessel detection study completed, report available.
2. Enhanced stock assessment		
2.1 Tagging of tropical tunas using conventional and electronic archival tags	259,663 conventional and 886 archival tags have been released between 10°N and 10°S latitude and 120°E and 140°W longitude for bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack. Approx 37,000 tags recovered. Specific visits to promote and facilitate tag recovery have been undertaken throughout the region.	A total of 2766 albacore were tagged and released with 1457 of these fish also receiving an injection of oxytetracycline (OTC) for the age validation experiments A total of 473 albacore sampled (177 French Polynesia, 226 New Caledonia, 70 New Zealand) for otoliths & gonads.
2.2 Improved assessment on status of tuna stocks by developing more accurate stock assessment model	Biological parameters and spawning biomass calculations for yellowfin and bigeye tuna in the WCPO have been adjusted. Comprehensive stock assessments for bigeye, yellowfin, south Pacific albacore and skipjack accepted by RFMO scientific and management committees.	Standardized CPUE for fleets targeting south Pacific albacore
3. Enhanced understanding of the pelagic ecosystem		
3.1 Produce better management policies through further development and application of the Spatial Ecosystem and Population Dynamics Model (SEAPODYM)	Skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin models developed to assess of impacts of climate change and for evaluating CMMs	South Pacific albacore model developed to assess of impacts of climate change and for evaluating CMMs
3.2 More accurate estimates and assessment of impacts of exploitation in EEZs.	High resolution extraction methods of developed for skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin SEAPODYM models	High resolution SEAPODYM South Pacific albacore model developed to assess of impacts of exploitation in NC and FP

The following points were raised in discussion of the 2009 project report:

- SPC committed to providing a greater level of detail on project indicators in SCIFISH annual reports and to providing imbedded web links within those reports where they refer to information in other reports or papers;
- A number of enquiries were made regarding various aspects of the tagging programmes for both tropical tuna and albacore. SPC provided the following information in response:
 - a. The relatively low level of subtropical tag recoveries is likely to be largely a function of the location of the purse seine fishery, this being the fishery responsible for most tag recoveries. Evidence of southerly movement of tuna may become evident as those fish become vulnerable to longline fisheries. Southerly movement of tagged fish has been observed in past tagging projects when pole and line operated more broadly across subtropical latitudes.
 - b. SPC has undertaken significant activities to ensure that the reporting of tag recoveries is maximized, including setting up tag recovery procedures in areas outside of the immediate region (e.g. South America, Korea, Thailand etc) where tuna may be transhipped for processing.
 - b. SPC indicated that bigeye and yellowfin tuna archival/electronic tag recovery rates were much higher than the skipjack recovery rate (in contrast to the conventional tagging trends), possibly due to higher mortality of archival-tagged skipjack because of the stresses of the tagging procedure, or simply due to chance because of the relatively low number of skipjack deployments.
 - c. SPC clarified that the tagging programme has concentrated its efforts in tropical waters because:
 - i. Of the primary need for the project to contribute to regional stock assessments by obtaining better information regarding fishing mortality rates in the **core** areas (tropical) of the fishery;
 - ii. Tagging vessels are restricted to operating in areas where sufficient baitfish are available; and
 - iii. The need to tag sufficient numbers of bigeye tuna, which seem to be more available for tagging by pole and line in equatorial waters.However, SPC acknowledged members desire for increased tagging of tropical tuna in subtropical EEZs, to enhance understanding of movement in those areas.
 - e. SPC indicated it would be contacting members individually to discuss the acquisition of fishing permits to allow the upcoming albacore tuna tagging cruise (operating out of Tonga in August-September 2010) to operate across the South Pacific region and tag in areas with the best fishing conditions.
- In response to an enquiry regarding the potential for using information regarding tuna spawning areas and periods in setting conservation and management measures, SPC indicated that the area of spawning is very broad across the tropical Pacific and is generally not fixed to specific seasons. Rather, tuna will tend to spawn when the environmental conditions are suitable and adult condition is high. As such, the potential to use such information for management might be limited.
- Interest was expressed in current or future tagging programme data being used to assist consideration of coastal tuna fisheries management issues, in particular as relate to localised depletions and fishery interactions.
- In response to an enquiry as to how tagging data might be used provide information to spatial management measures, SPC indicated that a significant aim of the current tagging project was to explore the relative spatial vulnerability of bigeye tuna to fishing in the Convention Area. Hence the programme has focused significant recent

tagging effort in the eastern area of the fishery. Ultimately this information should be useful to fisheries managers consideration of possible spatial provisions within conservation and management measures.

- In response to an enquiry regarding overhead costs charged by SPC within SPC implemented projects, SPC indicated that in general, it charges 15% for projects that are funded by non-members of SPC and 7% for members of the organization. However, there is flexibility around this which allows for negotiation and in the case of EU-funded projects, it has been agreed that the organisational overhead will be set at 7% of the direct project costs.

4 2010 Workplan

The provisional work plan for year 3 (2010) of the project was presented to the meeting and is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Provisional SCIFISH work plan for 2010.

PROJECT ACTIVITY	INDICATORS ACP COMPONENT	INDICATORS OCT COMPONENT
Project Administration		
Recruitment	All recruitment undertaken in 2008, no anticipated recruitment in 2010.	
Finance	Year 3 audit and financial reports completed.	
Monitoring & Evaluation	Develop measurable and time-bound criteria for project purpose and result OVis Present project and WP to PSC. Prepare six-monthly and annual progress reports. Include achievements towards achieving the project purpose, and on impacts, in half yearly reports.	
Result 1: Enhanced Oceanic Fishery Monitoring		
1.1 Observer/port sampling workshops	6 national or sub-regional observer training courses resulting in 90 new observers Certification of 150 "cadet" observers to regional standards Regional Observer Coordinator's Workshops to strengthen national and regional observer program coordination	Participation of New Caledonia and French Polynesia in observer trainings as required Participation of New Caledonia and French Polynesia in Observer Coordinator's Workshops
1.2 Training attachments	3 fishery monitoring attachments to SPC	
1.3 Operational support for observer/port sampling programmes	Review/development of fishery monitoring support MOUs with ACPs Provision of operational support as per MOUs	Port sampling & observer support NC and FP
1.4 Quality control of observer/port sampling data	Development of under-pinning knowledge tools for Pacific Island Regional Observer (PIRFO) Competency-Based Observer Training (CBT) Observer debriefing and debriefing training conducted Debriefer certification workshop Assessment training for CBT development work	Development of French version of CBT documentation Observer debriefing and debriefing training conducted
1.5 Develop and trial new technologies for enhancing quality of data and timeliness of data collection	Assessment of spill sampling methodology for at-sea observers – target of 50 trial observer cruises by end of 2010 Trial the use of data loggers on selected observer cruises	
1.6 Develop harmonised fisheries monitoring / data sharing protocols (FFA)	Consultancy on implementation of the Niue Treaty Subsidiary Agreement Consultancy to develop standardised indexes and templates to identify and determine data and databases in the region that may be harmonised to enhance MCS and fisheries management	All task completed in 2009

1.7 Undertake compliance audits and IUU risk assessments (FFA)	National compliance audits and risk assessments completed for each ACP	
1.8 Develop and implement methodologies to verify fisheries data (SPC-FFA)	Development of TUFMAN computer package to generate exception reports by comparing logsheet, VMS and unloading data TUFMAN training course for national MCS trainers	
1.9 Develop and trial new technologies, including satellite based technologies for the detection of IUU fishing activities	Pilot study for selected ACP(s) prepared, acquisition & interpretation of satellite images, analysis of targets against VMS and other reports	all task completed in 2009
Result 2: Enhanced Stock Assessments		
2.1 Large-scale conventional and electronic tagging / biological studies	Operational plan for regional tag-release programme in 2010 established. Western Pacific tagging cruise #4 completed (subject to additional donor support) 1 central Pacific cruises completed Continued implementation of equatorial Pacific wide tag seeding program. Data processing conducted. Tag recovery procedures implemented	Albacore tagging cruise 2 completed (NZ) Albacore tagging cruise 3 completed (Tonga/Fiji) Data processing conducted. Tag recovery procedures implemented Biological sampling training implemented
2.2 Analysis of tagging, biological and fishery oceanographic data	Analysis of population dynamics of yellowfin, skipjack and bigeye from conventional and electronic tags Analysis of PNG tagging data for estimation of FAD effects Tagging reports prepared for PNG, Solomon Is, FSM-Palau, Kiribati-RMI-Tuvalu.	Analysis of population reproductive & growth of albacore Data analyses commenced, preliminary results reported to WPFC-SC6. Tagging reports completed for NC & FP
2.3 Incorporate data / analytical results into stock assessment models	Skipjack tagging data included in 2010 stock assessment	Albacore reproductive ogive and growth curves estimated
Result 3: Enhanced Understanding of the Pelagic Ecosystem		
3.1 Ecosystem model development and enhancement	Mixed resolution forcing data sets compiled for SPC member countries. Incorporation of multiple cohort tagging data into SEAPODYM MSY extraction code developed for SEAPODYM Seapodym Mixed resolution models for PNG and Kiribati.	Report documenting South Pacific albacore SEAPODYM model. Seapodym Mixed resolution models for NC and PF.
3.2 Use of models for research / management applications	Evaluation of time-area closures for tropical tuna management Reports on EEZ-scale evaluations of tuna fisheries for selected ACPs using SEAPODYM model	Report documenting EEZ scale oceanographic effects evaluated in the context of current South Pacific albacore fisheries management.

The 2010 work plan was endorsed by the meeting.

5. Conclusion

The PSC expressed its strong support for the SCIFISH project, noted the progress of 2009 activities towards achieving the objectives and purpose of the project and endorsed the 2010 work plan as presented.

Attachment 1

SCIFISH

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8 May 2010
FFA Conference Centre
Honiara, Solomon Islands

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

- 1 Introduction**
 - 1.1 Opening remarks
 - 1.2 Selection of Chair
 - 1.3 Adoption of agenda

- 2 Report of SCIFISH Year 1 (2009)**
 - 2.1 Project administration
 - 2.2 Result 1: Enhanced Oceanic Fisheries Monitoring
 - 2.3 Result 2: Enhanced Stock Assessments
 - 2.4 Result 3: Enhanced Understanding of the Pelagic Ecosystem

- 3 Work Plan 2010**
 - 3.1 Result 1: Enhanced Oceanic Fisheries Monitoring
 - 3.2 Result 2: Enhanced Stock Assessments
 - 3.3 Result 3: Enhanced Understanding of the Pelagic Ecosystem

- 4 Discussion and Recommendations**

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

SCIFISH – Annual Report 2009 – Year 2

SCIFISH – Provisional 2010 Work Plan and Cost Estimate (1 January 2010
– 31 December 2010)