



FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

WCPFC & OTHER INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT INSTRUMENTS

As the global community was concluding the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982, the Pacific Islands met at a Workshop on Harmonisation of Fisheries Policy which was sponsored by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The Workshop provided options and strategies for the development of institutions, programmes and capacities at a national level and initiated a number of regional initiatives designed to support Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) as they established their national tuna management regimes. The regional initiatives were directed to science, compliance and development and have since come to form a unique body of collaboration in international fisheries management.

Supported by this framework of cooperation, Pacific SIDS have shown considerable leadership in contributing to the development and application of global instruments for oceanic conservation and management. They led the process of opposition to large-scale driftnetting as it developed in the late 1980s and culminated UN resolutions calling for a moratorium on large-scale driftnet fishing.

Despite competing interests represented at the Earth Summit in 1992, many principles adopted as a result have been utilized to allocate and prioritise resources to ecosystem management in Pacific Islands – such as the notion developed countries should provide funding, share information and transfer appropriate technologies to developing countries, the Barbados Plan of Action and Strategies for Small Island Developing States. Agenda 21 also in Chapter 17 set out 7 key programs of relevance to fisheries management in the Pacific Islands: Integrated management and sustainable development of coastal areas & EEZ, Marine environmental protection, Sustainable use and conservation of LMR in high seas & areas of national jurisdictions, Addressing critical uncertainties for management of marine environment & resources, Strengthen international and regional cooperation and Sustainable development of SIDS.

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 (WSSD), Pacific Islands renewed their commitment to ocean management, effective cooperation amongst regional and international organizations, development and implementation of national ocean policies to support & enhance sustainable development, promotion & implementation of the Ecosystem Based Management approach. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation from WSSD included the following action point: 58 (b) “Implement further sustainable fisheries management and improve financial returns from fisheries by supporting and strengthening relevant regional fisheries management organizations, as appropriate, such as the recently established Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and such agreements as the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.”



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Pacific Islands played a full role in the negotiation of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, providing 7 of the 30 ratifications, which brought the Agreement into force in 2001.

Then, using the features of the Earth Summit Conference on Straddling and Highly Migratory Stocks, they led the development of the WCPF Convention which is the first major regional application of the provisions of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, providing 10 of the 12 ratifications (with Australia and New Zealand) which brought the Convention into force on 19 June 2004 and the set up of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) is the central decision making body for management of tuna fishing in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Conservation and management measures (CMMs) of the Commission are legally binding and apply to all WCPFC members and the Convention area.

Members of WCPFC are FFA members and distant water fishing nations. WCPFC's current members include Australia, China, Canada, Cook Islands, European Community, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, Japan, Kiribati, Korea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Chinese Taipei, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America and Vanuatu. Out of a total of 32 participating territories and members of WCPFC, over half (17) are FFA members, forming a significant voting bloc (although the norm is for decisions to be made by consensus).

The Western and Central Pacific Ocean accounted for 54% of the world's tuna catch in 2007 making tuna a key economic resource. Increasingly industry, environmental organisations and the international community are closely monitoring the outcomes from WCPFC annual meetings.