

FFA Climate Change Strategy

August 2023

To guarantee the future of our children, we will urgently advocate as a collective to reduce and prevent the causes and impacts of climate change and sea level rise; we will call for stronger global commitment to combat climate change; we will continue to pursue innovative measures to address climate change impacts and disaster risk; and with the support of our partners, we commit to ensuring net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent

Pacific Islands Forum Leaders, 51st meeting, July 2022

Purpose

The purpose of this Strategy is to guide FFA to prepare for and respond to the risks and impacts of climate change to Pacific Island offshore fisheries, in order to ensure that these fisheries and associated economic and social benefits are climate resilient.

Context

“Recognising that climate change presents the single greatest threat to the livelihood, security and wellbeing of Pacific people, Leaders reaffirmed the importance of immediate urgent action to combat climate change”

Pacific Islands Forum Leaders, 49th meeting, September 2018

In response to the Pacific Island Forum Leaders directive, the Forum Fisheries Committee made Climate Change a standing agenda item at their next Governing Council meetings in 2019. At the same meeting, FFC Ministers adopted the FFA Strategic Plan 2020-2025 which included Outcome One that Offshore Fisheries are Ecologically Sustainable. A key strategy to achieve this outcome is to understand and manage the impact of Climate Change on offshore fisheries.

Climate change is predicted to impact offshore fisheries and have environmental, social, security and economic consequences across the region.

Climate change is already being felt in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO): the latest scientific information shows that the area of warm pool is expanding by greater latitudinal extent since 1900, particularly since GreenHouse Gas emissions have increased; and data of sea surface temperature (SST) shows that during the last 20 years, the mean annual SST across the WCPO area has increased 0.26C. These changes in ocean conditions have an impact on tuna and tuna like species life cycles, abundance and distribution and consequently affect fishing activities.

Recent modelling shows that continued GHG emissions are expected to cause substantial changes in the abundance and distributions of Skipjack, Yellowfin and Bigeye tunas within the Pacific Ocean Basin, with predicted shifts in biomass from the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) toward the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), and from areas under national jurisdiction to the high seas. In particular, projections under the worst-case scenario (countries continue to emit GHG in *business as usual*, scenario) show a decrease in tuna biomass in the equatorial western and central Pacific Ocean by 2050 and an increase in abundance in the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean and in some subtropical regions.

The magnitude of this estimated redistribution of tuna biomass is most significant for Skipjack tuna, but also evident for Yellowfin and Bigeye tuna. Future projections of south-Pacific Albacore are more uncertain but also indicate a distribution of biomass but over longer time frames than that estimated for the equatorial tuna species.

In a business as usual scenario, this redistribution may result in significant reductions in the economic benefits some Pacific Island Members derive from these fisheries. The projected redistribution of tuna biomass is significantly reduced under a scenario of moderated global efforts of GHG emission reduction.

Projections for the end of the century show changes in biomass towards the eastern Pacific and poleward with declines of tuna biomass forecast for most of the Pacific Islands. In addition, the impact of climate change on bycatch species that can be of interest for food security projects the negative impact of fishing on most of the edible bycatch and the strengthening of this negative impact by climate change.

Given the all-encompassing and complex nature of climate change, our collective effort is required to prepare and respond to those threats by taking a proactive approach to managing the potential risks and increasing the resilience of offshore fisheries and associated benefits for the people who depend on them. This should be undertaken, maintaining a good understanding of the broader connected impacts of climate change in the region and associated economic, social, security and environmental implications.

Special recognition is accorded to Smaller Island Members who are heavily dependent on fisheries revenue in addressing the impacts of climate change, noting this is the single most important priority for such Members.

Objectives and strategies can be pursued that will move towards climate-resilient pathways for sustainable development, while at the same time helping to improve livelihoods, social and economic well-being and effective environmental management.

There are 6 key objectives with associated specific strategies to deliver on each objective. FFA Members and the Secretariat will work closely in implementing these strategies, under the direction of the Forum Fisheries Committee.

- 1. Actioning Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience**
- 2. Achieving Climate Justice**
- 3. Accessing Climate Finance**
- 4. Contributing to Mitigation**
- 5. Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening**
- 6. Advocacy and Engagement**

Objective 1 - ACTIONING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

FFA Members increase their resilience and adaptive capacity to climate change by managing their fisheries in an ecologically sustainable manner, securing and protecting their rights, and maintaining the offshore fisheries' social and economical benefits despite climate change.

Sub Objective 1.1 – ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY

FFA Members' offshore fisheries resources are managed in an ecologically sustainable manner in the face of climate change.

Strategies

1. Build FFA Members' capacity to assess climate change risks to offshore fisheries in order to prepare and respond to them at national, subregional and regional scales so that these resources remain ecologically sustainable.
2. Continue to support strong, defensible science and information to ensure and inform the development and adoption of climate-informed offshore fisheries policies and management measures at the national level and arrangements at the subregional and regional level.
3. Implement and strengthen the current Climate Change Resolution at WCPFC into current and future Conservation and Management Measures, consistent with FFA members' climate change priorities for WCPO fisheries.
4. Ensure climate change representatives at national, subregional and regional levels are fully informed of the climate change impacts and projections for offshore fisheries to enable better engagement and representation through international processes.

Sub Objective 1.2 – WELL-DEFINED RIGHTS, SECURED AND PROTECTED

FFA Members secure and maintain well defined offshore fisheries rights taking into account climate change and that these rights remain secured and protected.

Strategies

1. Support the assessment of climate-induced risks to FFA Members' rights to their offshore fisheries resources and their associated economic and social benefits managed including identifying any adaptation policies that would be appropriate to addressing these.
2. Continue to strengthen FFA Members' capacity to define and secure rights to their offshore fisheries resources, including securing and protecting maritime boundaries and zones
3. Support a WCPFC allocation framework accounting for redistribution of stocks from the EEZ into the high seas.
4. Enhance global recognition and adoption of Zone-Based Management and protection of FFA Members' fisheries rights in new climate change scenarios.
5. Ensure the adaptability of Monitoring, Control and Surveillance systems and tools despite climate change threats.

Sub Objective 1.3 – SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

The economic and social benefits obtained by FFA Members from their offshore fisheries continue to grow in a sustainable manner, notwithstanding the impacts of climate change.

Strategies

1. Identify climate-induced threats to the economic and social benefits derived from FFA Members' offshore fisheries resources, and any adaptation and mitigation policies that would be appropriate to addressing these.
2. Continue to identify and progress opportunities to enhance social and economic returns to FFA Members from their offshore fisheries under climate change.
3. Drive the inclusion of equitable social and economic considerations in climate related policies and measures consistent with FFA Members' social and economic objectives and their developmental aspirations for WCPO tuna fisheries.
4. Integrate gender and social inclusion principles into climate change responses for offshore fisheries by prioritising equitable social and economic factors within climate-related policies and measures.

Objective 2 – ACHIEVING CLIMATE JUSTICE

FFA members are supported to achieve solutions to avert, minimise and address climate change induced economic and non-economic loss and damage to their offshore fisheries resources.

Climate justice may be pursued through arrangements including at national and sub-regional level.

Strategies

1. Support Members to develop and articulate well-thought out approaches and defensible positions and achieve solutions and mechanisms to avert, minimise and address climate change induced loss and damage to their offshore fisheries to present to the relevant fora.
2. Strengthen FFA Members' capacity to negotiate and access solutions and mechanisms to avert, minimise and address climate change induced loss and damage to their offshore fisheries resources, including to participate in and contribute to global processes underway through the UNFCCC and under the Paris Agreement to operationalise new funding arrangements, including a fund, to support particularly vulnerable developing countries, including Pacific Island Countries.
3. Strengthen FFA Members' capacity to liaise with partners and to engage and progress issues related to climate justice in international fora, such as the WCPFC and the UNFCCC and the International Court of Justice.

Objective 3- ACCESSING CLIMATE FINANCE

FFA Members' access climate finance from external sources to fund national and regional offshore fisheries related climate activities and initiatives.

Strategies

1. Enhance FFA Members' and FFA Secretariat's understanding of the processes and steps involved in mobilising climate finance to support Members' priorities.
2. Strengthen FFA Members' and FFA Secretariat's capacity to access sustainable climate finance mechanisms through a collaborative partnership approach with their relevant counterparts in-country, such as focal points for climate financing and relevant CROP agencies and other partners.
3. Develop climate finance plans to mobilise resources to support the Members and the Secretariat's work towards increasing the resilience of the offshore fisheries sector.

Objective 4 – CONTRIBUTING TO MITIGATION

FFA Members' offshore fisheries sector contributes to reducing GHG emissions.

Strategies

1. Enhance and support FFA Members capacity to meet national commitments to minimise FFA Members' offshore fisheries GHG emissions, including reporting of those efforts.
2. Evaluate the feasibility of development and implementation of mitigation measures for FFA Members' offshore fisheries.
3. Drive positive action at WCPFC towards commitments to GHG emission reductions.
4. Contribute to and support the development of science and technology for mitigation efficiency.
5. Assess and reduce the FFA Secretariat's emission profile.

Objective 5 – CAPACITY BUILDING AND INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

FFA Members' offshore fisheries are resilient to climate change through strong and effective national, and sub-regional fisheries organisations.

Strategies

1. Enhance the capacity of national fisheries administrations to increase the resilience of their offshore fisheries to climate change.
2. Strengthen the capacity of national fisheries administrations to engage with national climate change administrations for mainstreaming offshore fisheries into climate change policies.
3. Enhance FFA Members' capacity for stakeholder engagement and participation in climate change and fisheries decision-making processes.
4. Enhance the technical capability of FFA Members' and their fisheries to prepare for, and adapt to, the impacts of climate change.

5. Strengthen FFA Secretariat's capacity to support FFA Members' needs on offshore fishery-related climate change priorities, and to coordinate their engagement at national, regional and international fora.

Objective 6 – ADVOCACY AND ENGAGEMENT

FFA Members advocate and generate strong collaborative mechanisms and partnerships for increasing the resilience of the offshore fisheries and influence positive change.

Strategies

1. Strengthen FFA Members collaborative mechanisms and partnerships at all levels to engage in relevant regional and international fora on their offshore fishery-related climate change priorities.
2. Ensure that FFA Members' fishery-related climate change priorities influence regional and international fisheries related plans, policies, strategies and frameworks.
3. Enhance the collaboration within other RFMOs to help develop workable solutions to address loss and damage induced by climate change on offshore fisheries.
4. Strengthen FFA Members collaborative mechanisms and partnerships to engage relevant inter-governmental agencies at the national-level on their offshore fishery-related climate change priorities.
5. Identify how offshore fisheries conservation and management measures can be better integrated in Members' climate change agenda.
6. Ensure the significance of Members' offshore fisheries is advocated in other relevant climate change fora such as the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties.

IMPLEMENTATION

The FFA Secretariat will work with Members to develop an implementation plan as a matter of priority. This plan shall include key components such as how to progress risk assessments for the strategies, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on progress, and a review to take place after 5 years. This approach would form the basis for prioritising the work of FFA on Climate Change, engagement with donors and partners as well as engagement in the development of the Implementation Plan for the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and coordination with related regional architecture.