



FFA

Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries

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Strengthening national capacity and regional solidarity for sustainable tuna fisheries

FFA MEDIA RELEASE

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Kiribati Tuna poised for EU market access

FFA HQ, Honiara, SOLOMON ISLANDS. –An important milestone towards gaining access to the world’s most stringent consumer market for tuna has been met by Kiribati, making it only the fourth Pacific nation to do so.

The confirmation of the European Commission decision on 16th June to add the Republic of Kiribati to the list of countries whose fisheries food products acceptably conform to the restrictive food safety requirements of the EU market, is an impressive milestone for Kiribati.

“I know that all FFA member nations join me and the secretariat team in congratulating and commending the massive work led by Kiribati which has led to this achievement,” says Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency Director-General James Movick. “Kiribati now joins only three other Pacific Island countries – Fiji, Solomon Island and PNG – in having set up the systems that the EU requires for inspection and certification of all fish products imported into the EU.”

Of the many directorates within the EU, there are two of particular relevance to Pacific nations wanting to export tuna to Europe. These are the DG Sante, which sets the compliance standards and rules for Health and Food Safety, and DG Mare, governing Maritime/Fisheries standards and compliance codes.

The confirmation milestone this month covers the DG Sante standards, where ensuring fish exports meet the EU sanitary requirements includes a so-called ‘competent authority’. In the case of Kiribati this is a Division in the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resource Development.

Over the last three years, the Ministry ensured its competent authority worked hard and diligently to set up the systems needed. These include regular inspections of Kiribati fishing vessels and the country’s only tuna processing plant; as well as a programme of taking samples from fish exports, which must be sent overseas for laboratory analysis. All processes must be rigorously documented, so that fish exports can be traced back from the buyer in Europe to the origin in Kiribati. New

legislation and standards had to be put in place, as well as training of the Competent Authority staff. The next step in the process will be the listing, on an EU website, of the Kiribati vessels and factories that meet EU requirements.

“Approval from EU for our CA is very much welcomed, supporting our efforts to derive maximum benefits from our single important resource – tuna,” says Hon. Tetabo Nakara, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development. “This exciting news comes at the right time as Government aims to increase our people’s participation in the fisheries sector by sustainably harvesting, adding value and marketing our own tuna resources.”

Minister Nakara added demands from customers in Europe who have been awaiting this good news, can now be met. “This is also made possible with a freighter service now operational and able to lift 12 tonnes of tuna every two weeks from Tarawa, meeting demands from the United States, Japan and Australia.” He acknowledged “assistance rendered by FFA as Kiribati would not have been able to meet the requirements by EU without their continuous support.”

One more hurdle remains for the authorities in Tarawa. Kiribati must also be listed, by the DG Mare, as a country that is fully compliant with the EU’s IUU Regulations ensuring fish exports to Europe are properly documented and caught legally.

“This aspect of the EU market access has been most commonly reported in recent years through the ‘yellow card’ warnings from the EU to several Pacific Island countries,” says DG Movick. “Kiribati currently has a yellow card and FFA will continue to support where required, as they work through their plans to strengthen legislation, fisheries management measures, and control systems.”

“The demonstration of solid work and commitment from Kiribati in regards to achieving this milestone bodes well for the ongoing work, momentum, and benefits to come,” he says.—*ENDS*

Photo: Kiribati’s Competent Authority team leading inspections during offloading at the Betio jetty. (Photo: FFAMedia)

ABOUT FFA:

The Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) strengthens national capacity and regional solidarity so its 17 members can manage, control and develop their tuna fisheries now and in the future. Based in Honiara, Solomon Islands, FFA’s 17 Pacific Island members are Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Since 1979, FFA has facilitated regional cooperation so that all Pacific countries benefit from the sustainable use of tuna – a multi-billion dollar resource important for many people’s livelihoods in the Pacific.

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