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Forum Fisheries Agency Observer Programme (Agenda Item 21)

4th Meeting of the Pacific
Meteorological Council (PMC-4)
FFA Conference Center

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HONIARA
Solomon Islands



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Outline

- ☐ Purpose.
- ☐ Background.
- ☐ Role of Observer.
- ☐ What information observers collect?
- ☐ Update.
- ☐ Access more data from fishing boats.
- ☐ Oceanographic observation.
- ☐ Issues arising in Oceanographic observation.
- ☐ Way forward.
- ☐ Recommendation.



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Purpose/Objective

- ❑ This presentation will provide a brief overview of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) Observer Programme.
- ❑ It will further define the role of the fisheries observers and the information they collect for fisheries management purposes.
- ❑ Finally, this presentation will briefly address broader issues of cooperation and coordination in oceanographic observation



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Background

- ❑ All FFA member countries have observers, who are trained and supported by FFA and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) under a common framework (PIRFO).
- ❑ The Pacific Islands Fisheries Observers are deployed on Tuna fishing vessels (Purse Seine, Longline) that are fishing in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean and overlaps to Eastern Pacific Ocean.
- ❑ FFA observer programme first established in 1986 with UST deployments commencing in 1988. That continues to now.
- ❑ Since 2011 a number of PNA members pool observer coverage under the PNAO, but across the region nationally administered programs remain important.



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Background cont..

- ❑ FFA does not have a pool of observers, but sources observers from member's national observer programmes
- ❑ Observer Training includes not only how fishing is done and how to report on it but also how to work on a boat at sea, firefighting, navigation, basic first aid and sea safety training.
- ❑ Observers also receive training for participation in scientific research done by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) such as further training in collecting scientific samples and tagging tuna.
- ❑ Supporting Observers are a network of certified Observer managers, trainers and de-briefers.



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Role of Observer

- ❑ The primary role of Observers is to **Observe**, **Collect**, **Record** and **Report** on fishing activities both at sea and in port. Fisheries Observers play a critically important role in the fisheries management process, providing fundamental scientific information and serving an indispensable role in monitoring the compliance of Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs), national fisheries laws, and being the eyes and ears for their country and the region.





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Observer on vessel deck for Fish Sampling & Recording

Getting Ready



Fish Grabbing



Fish Sampling



Recording





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What information Observers Collect?

- ❑ Observer collect valuable and reliable data such as:
 - Date & time, fish by species, weight, size, quantity, condition of fish, method by which, area by which, depth at which fish are taken, effects of fishing methods on fish and the environment; and all aspects the operation of any fishing vessel; and processing, storage, or disposal of any fish, and any other matter that may assist managers to obtain, analyse, or verify information;
 - Basic weather details such as Wind (speed & direction); and Sea state (current & direction)



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Update

- ❑ Across the Pacific region, there are about 800 active observers, trained by FFA/SPC and employed by their national governments. Observers may also work across the region, travelling across many countries and some will be employed by other governments.
- ❑ Pacific Islands Fisheries Observers are trained under the Pacific Islands Regional Fisheries Observer (PIRFO) minimum training standards that is recognised in the region. Observers collect relevant fisheries data on the prescribed format adopted by the WCPFC.



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Update cont...

- ❑ Apart from Science and Compliance data, observers also record basic weather information, such as wind speed & direction from the vessel's equipment and sea state, using their best physical eye judgement especially on purse seiners;
- ❑ Some fishing vessels have equipment that can monitor other oceanographic information such as, **sea height, sea surface temperature, sea current & direction, sea surface salinity, and phytoplankton**;
- ❑ Most fishing vessels also have satellite weather monitor/ weather fax on-board which help fishermen to monitor weather pattern while fishing.



Accessing more data from fishing boats

- ❑ PIRFO Observers are trained to collect fisheries management and compliance related information, however, they can be provided with specific additional training by the relevant agencies to also collect additional weather or meteorological information;
- ❑ Data from vessels would have to be negotiated. As the number of PIC flag vessels increases that could be easier, particularly if those recordings and transmissions are done automatically. *BUT would that data actually be used?*
- ❑ Funding issues to be addressed include for additional training and any materials as well as consideration for appropriate remuneration of Observers for the additional tasking.



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Oceanographic observation

- ☐ Both remote and direct/in situ oceanographic observation is being carried out across the region, albeit in an ad hoc manner;
- ☐ After the UN SDG14 Oceans Conference we can expect even more offers or requests to undertake oceanographic research in the region;
- ☐ This raises some important questions and issues for consideration



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Issues arising in oceanographic observation

- ☐ Whose research interests and questions are being served?
- ☐ Is regional science and research capacity being utilized and developed and in a sustainable manner;
- ☐ Are the results and data from research being made available to regional stakeholders in a timely manner that they can use;
- ☐ How are research and analysis results being properly reviewed and verified, especially when it may be used to inform high level policy making



The way forward in regional oceans observation— coordinated, regional, sound, sustainable

- ❑ The Pacific Island region needs to consider a framework for transparent and coordinated and regional oceanographic and climatological research and observation that meets regional needs now and into the future



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Recommendation

- ❑ The Meeting is invited to:
 - Note that the possible utilization of fisheries observers and fishing boats to collect meteorologically significant data has implications for training, costs, operations and risks faced by fisheries administrations, observers and boats and that these elements would have to be technically addressed by SPREP, SPC, FFA and PNAO and would require national observer program approval.
 - Note the growing interest and importance of oceans observations in the PIC/WCPO region and provide its views on relevance and importance of a coordinated, sustainable, accessible, validated and region-driven framework for oceans observation.