



**FFA**

# Proposal for a Regional Support Unit for Sanitary Competent Authorities in Pacific Island Countries

A proposal from the Forum Fisheries Agency

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# EU funded DEVFISH project

- The Development of Tuna Fisheries in the Pacific ACP Countries Project (DEVFISH)
- €8.2 million 2011 to 2016
- Components;
  - fisheries development
  - control of illegal fishing
- *2015 study: “A Scoping Exercise for the Establishment of a Dedicated FFA Support Unit for Member Countries Competent Authorities to Gain And Maintain EU Market Access for Fisheries Products”*

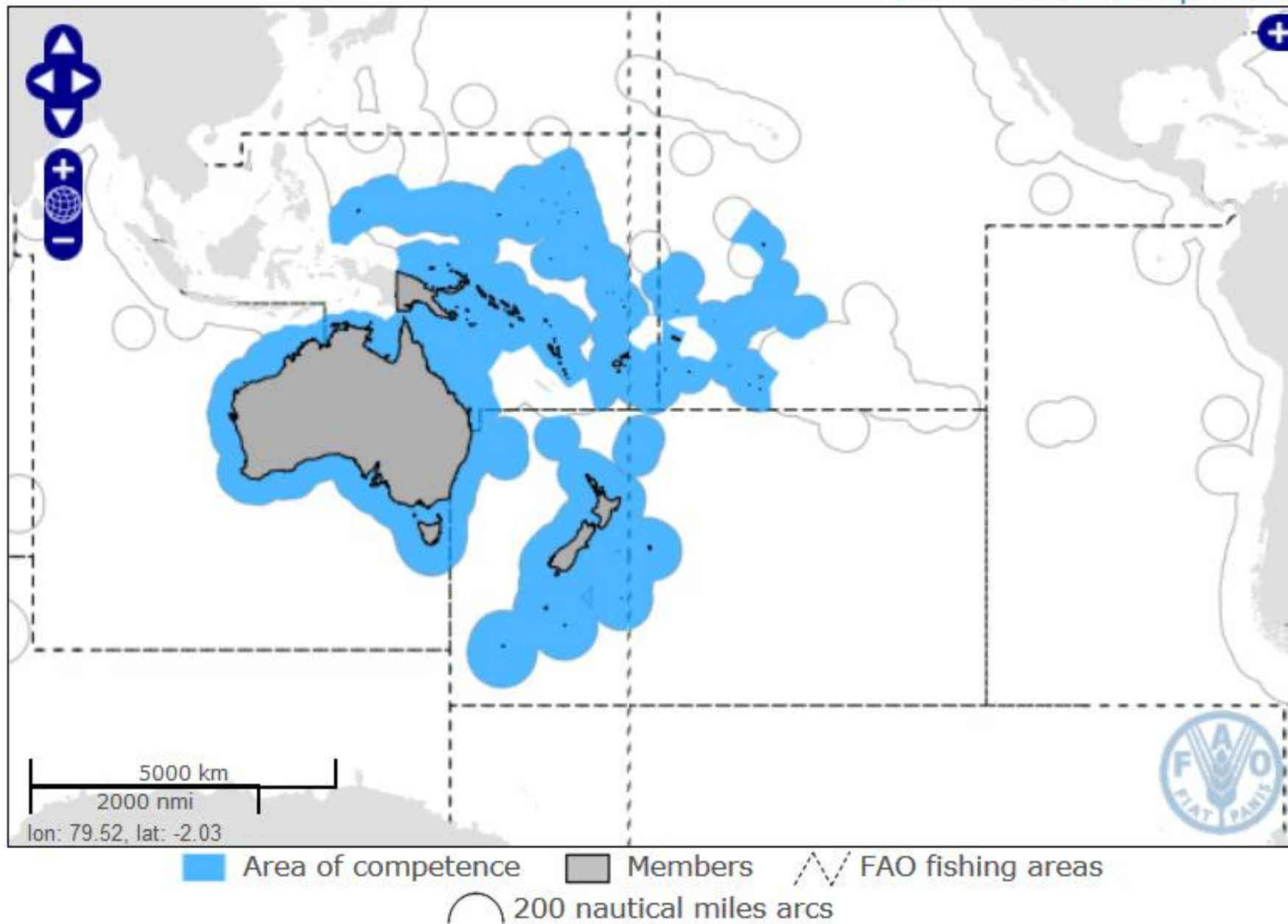
# Background – Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency

- Objective: to enable Member Countries to manage, conserve and use the tuna resources in their Exclusive Economic Zones and beyond, through enhancing national capacity and strengthening regional solidarity.
- 17 Members: Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, Niue, Palau, Tokelau, Nauru, Cook Islands, Republic of Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Fed.States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu\*

*\*10 members are Pacific ACP States*

## FFA area of competence - High seas, National waters

[Launch the RFBs map viewer](#)



**Table 1: EU imports of fishery products from FFA countries, 2014**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Import Value (CIF €)</b>		
	<b>Prepared/ Preserved fish (HS Code 1604)</b>	<b>Frozen/others (HS Code 03)</b>	<b>Total fishery products</b>
Solomon Islands	37,190,008	18,896	37,208,904
PNG	104,637,775	1,905,246	106,543,021
Fiji	0	3,148,471	3,148,471
<b>Total</b>	<b>141,827,783</b>	<b>5,072,613</b>	<b>146,900,396</b>

Source: EUROSTAT

# SW Pacific tuna catches

Catch area	Flag	Tonnes	Value (US\$ million)
SW Pacific Region	all	2,600,000	6,100
EEZ 10 PIC Developing states	all	400,000	1,000
EEZ 10 PIC Developing states	PIC	80,000	200

c. 3.3% of catch value to PIC flagged vessels

# Status of sanitary controls in the 10 countries

Country	Competent Authority	Official control status
Solomon Islands	Environmental Health Division (EHD) from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS)	Equivalent official controls in place; EU access
Papua New Guinea	National Fisheries Authority	Equivalent official controls in place; EU access
Republic of Fiji	Food Unit, Environmental Health Department , Ministry of Health	Equivalent official controls in place; EU access
Kiribati	Kiribati Seafood Verification Agency, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development,	Controls in place; no EU access
Vanuatu	Vanuatu Seafood Verification Agency, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity	Controls in place; no EU access
<u>Fed.States of Micronesia</u>	Environmental Health Department, Ministry of Health	Some controls in place; no EU access
Cook Islands	CA not formally nominated; Ministry of Marine Resources	Some controls in place
Tonga	CA not formally nominated; potentially Food safety Authority	Some controls in place
Tuvalu	CA not formally nominated; potentially Department of Fisheries	No official controls in place
Marshall Islands	CA not formally nominated; potentially Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority	No official controls in place

# Rationale for developing CA capacities for official controls of fishery products

## **Improved access to markets and premium prices:**

- Allow PIC flagged vessels to access EU supply chain (via other third countries processing establishments)
- Discharge and certification of product from EU approved vessels flagged to other third countries
- Allow existing PIC processing establishments to access EU supply chain

## **Establish incentives for expansion of PIC share of tuna fisheries:**

- Registration of foreign owned vessels to PIC flag
- Investment in onshore processing

## **Improved food safety for domestic and regional trade**

- Establish controls for ciguatera



# Challenges to establishing official controls equivalent to EU

## **Generic developing country issues:**

- Lack of/poorly defined legislation regarding:
  - institutional framework
  - technical regulations
- Limited technical capacity/human resources
- Lack of access to accredited laboratory testing
- Lack of political will/understanding
- Limited development and operating budgets

## **PIC specific issues:**

- Impact of limitations amplified in micro-states
- Need to deliver controls on vessels over vast distances
- Logistics of sampling and testing

# Rationale for a Regional CA Support Unit (RECAS)

- concentrates scarce technical skills, makes them available to several countries;
- increased efficiency of inspections of vessels;
- increased validity and reliability of inspections (regional standards and standard operating procedures)
- increased effectiveness and efficiency of sampling and testing (sampling, testing contracts with accredited laboratories and regional environmental monitoring programme)
- improved coordination and communication of data (sanitary history of re-flagged vessels)
- mechanism for delivering technical assistance for building of national capacities

# Responsibility of sovereign states' CAs:

- promulgation of the national legal framework for controls
- approval, listing and de-listing of vessels and establishments based on compliance with sanitary conditions
- issue of sanitary certificates attesting to the condition of fishery products, or to the conditions in which they were produced
- legal action in case of breach of the law
- communication with CAs of other countries (flag states, primary and secondary markets)

# Functions of the RECAS

- Development and management of a regional sanitary standard (EU equivalent) for fishing vessels
- Voluntary inspection and certification of vessels to the published standard
- Sampling and submission of samples for testing for:
  - Official controls
  - Environmental monitoring
- Technical assistance for the strengthening of participating CAs (e.g. for inspection of shore-based establishments)

# Development and management of a regional sanitary standard

- “*at least equivalent*” to 851/2004 and 852/2004
- adopted by participating states; coherent with existing national requirements in authorised 3<sup>rd</sup> countries (Solomon Islands, PNG and Fiji);
- address sanitary conditions on fishing vessel (freezer purse seine and fresh/freezer longline vessels)
- sets a minimum standard e.g. Class B - compliant with good hygienic practices) and Class A - EU compliant (e.g. to include requirements for recording thermometers, HACCP plans and product related conditions)

# Inspection and certification of vessels by RECAS

- full-time inspectors located in the region (initially 2 inspectors, located in Marshall Islands/FSM)
- voluntary inspection of fishing vessels (on request/payment of fee)
- issue certification of compliance with standard
- maintaining certification subject to periodic inspection (risk & compliance based)
- FFA would publish a list of certified vessels; adopted by flag states CA as approved for the EU market
- FFA also to offer periodic inspection service for vessels already inspected and listed by flag state CAs

# Other services on behalf of CAs

- Sampling and analysis for official controls (linked to certification)
  - Hygiene checks
  - Histamine
- Programme of sampling and analysis for monitoring of environmental contaminants (regional– not country specific); data to be shared by all participating countries
- Contract with testing laboratory (accredited to ISO17025 e.g. New Zealand, PNG, Fiji)
- Technical assistance and training for CAs e.g.
  - preparation for submission to DG SANTÉ
  - capacity building for inspection of shore based establishments (downstream activity)

# Governance of RECAS inspection function

- annual reports to CAs
- accredited to ISO17020 “Conformity assessment -- Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection”
- subject to audit by DG SANTÉ (as part of specific country audits)
- periodic external independent audit contracted by FFA on behalf of participating CAs



# Implementation MoU between FFA and CA of flag state

- FFA to guarantee:
  - inspection of vessels on request
  - provide inspection and test results
  - provide annual report
  - maintain accreditation status (ISO17020)
- Flag state CA to guarantee:
  - no listing for EU of vessels not subject to certification by RECAS
  - no issue of EU sanitary certificates for own flag vessels not certified by RECAS

NB As a port state CA may issue EU sanitary certificates for products from vessels listed as approved for EU supply by CA of other 3<sup>rd</sup> countries.

# Financial aspects

## **Investment:**

- World Bank Oceanscapes Project
  - Tuvalu, Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia
  - US\$1.8 million for CA (including contribution for FFA)
- EU Kiribati Fisheries Partners Agreement (€52,000/annum)
- Future: 11<sup>th</sup> EDF Regional COMPFISH project

## **Operating costs:**

- Fees charged to vessel operators
- Breakeven about 30 vessels

# European Commission Views

- In principle supportive, providing meets requirements set out in EU legislation
- Importance of compliance with conditions in Article 5 of Regulation 882/2004 (Delegation of specific tasks related to official controls)
  - concerns/sources of conflicts of interest
  - audit of RECAS by Competent Authorities
- Concurrent applications from participating third countries (e.g. avoid multiple FVO missions)
- Necessity & frequency of independent third part audit of RECAS

# Next steps

- Adoption of scheme by Forum Fisheries Agency
- Allocation of budgets and recruitment of inspection team
- Prepare and document control systems (standard, inspection forms, monitoring programme)
- Establish legal framework in participating states
- Launch inspection and vessel certification scheme
- Accreditation to ISO17020