

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Written
Responses from
the Ministry of
Fisheries



MINISTRY OF FISHERIES

HEADQUARTERS

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MEMORANDUM

From: Acting Permanent Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry

Date: 6th April, 2023

To : Secretary General to Parliament

File Ref: FI/G/9-21

Re : Clarification of Issues — Ministry of Fisheries 2018-2019 Annual Report

Attention: Secretariat to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources

Reference is made to the correspondence: ref: PARL/NRC/ 6/16 dated 22 March 2023 on the abovementioned subject is acknowledged.

The Ministry welcomes the scrutiny of the 2018-2019 Annual Report into the operations, achievements, and initiatives undertaken. The Ministry will ensure its continued assistance and cooperation with the Standing Committee on Natural Resources

Enclosed herewith are our responses to the queries sent by the Secretariat. The undersigned can be contacted for any further clarification.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Atelaite Rokosuka'.

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Atelaite Rokosuka (Mrs.)

Acting Permanent Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry

MINISTRY OF FISHERIES 2018 — 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

QUESTIONS

1. Page 4: Overview of the Fisheries Sector in Fiji

Offshore Fisheries

- a. Considering the long-term sustainability of the Fisheries sector in Fiji, can the Ministry please further clarify on the recommended number of fleet allowed to fish in our waters?**

Fiji has a licence CAP on the number of vessels that are licensed and can fish in Fiji waters i.e., the Archipelagic waters, Territorial Seas, and in the Economic Exclusive Zone. This is set at 60 vessels.

- b. Can the Ministry clarify whether the number of long liners is 90 or 95 as mentioned on page 4 of the annual report?**

The vessels flagged to Fiji at that time were 95 vessels, which was later reduced to 90 vessels as 5 had been scuttled.

- c. Is there any limitation of catch per vessel in a year? Please explain?**

There is no limit on catch by vessel but only an overall limit on the catch of Albacore, Yellowfin and Bigeye tuna. This Total Allowable Catch (TAC) is set at 12,000mt for catch in Fiji waters.

- d. What is the arrangement or agreement between Fiji and the neighbouring countries to address the issue of limiting the Tuna catch for the purpose of sustainability?**

Under the WCPFC, there are hard limits placed on the catches of tunas within the WCPO.

- e. What is the percentage of catch per division? Please clarify?**

There is no catch per division.

- f. Can the Ministry please explain whether any research has been done by the region or its partners on fish stock migration as a result of Global Warming and Climate Change?**

Yes, there has been a study conducted by SPC and in a nutshell predicts that the Skipjack, Yellowfin and Bigeye Tuna will be more abundant in the eastern waters of the WCPO as the “cold tongue” extends westwards.

Coastal Commercial Fisheries

- a. Can the Ministry please provide the number of fishing licenses issued to commercial fishing during the review period, 2018 — 2019?**

Ministry Target -1700 Actual - 1324 - Inshore Licenses

Central Target - 300 Actual – 179 (Qtr:1-18 Qtr:2-77 Qtr:3-63 Qtr:4-21)

Eastern Target- 300 Actual – 171 (Qtr:1-38 Qtr:2-22 Qtr:3-58 Qtr:4-53)

Western Target – 500 Actual – 479 (Qtr:1-19 Qtr:2-123 Qtr:3-69 Qtr:4-268)

Northern Target – 600 Actual – 495 (Qtr:1-75 Qtr:2-99 Qtr:3-144 Qtr:4-177)

- b. Can the Ministry clarify more on the distribution of fishing licenses and the restrictions on fishing venues?**

The current inshore fishing license which coastal commercial fishers are using does not have any limit. Any fisher who is willing to engage in commercial fishing can get this license provided he/she provides all requirements which include fishing permit(s), passport size photos, identification cards, and monthly catch return.

This license is limited only to the fishing ground(s) that the fisher is permitted to fish in through the fishing permit(s) obtained. Each licensed fisher can have more than one fishing permit which means that the license holder can fish in more than one fishing ground within the validity period of the license i.e. from the date of issue to the 31st of December in the same year.

- c. What does it take to increase the activities of coastal commercial fishing in the other divisions apart from the North to gain market access to Suva? Please clarify.**

To increase the activities of coastal commercial fishers, the Ministry had deployed the Fishing Aggregating Devices (FADs) and trained fishers on deep-sea fishing techniques to diversify fishers fishing activities, trained fishers on fish handling and post-harvest to improve their fish quality so that it meet the market's standard and facilitate fishers accessibility to financial institutions or government assistance to secure loan and government grant respectively to boost their fishing business.

The establishment of Fishers Cooperatives with its constitution. The support will be from the Ministry to provide, and in terms of capacity building programs through trainings on fishing gear technology, access to offshore or deep-water species, post-harvest and product handling, fisheries management, business management, financial literacy and investment programs. The Ministry through the Divisions will also establish market pathways with inline agencies and private sector on marketing, branding, diversification of products and enhance product value. The training and programs will also be targeting communities and in particular women/youth groups to enhance their engagement and empowerment in business environment and also access future programs such as climatic insurance policies that will safeguard fishers fishing activities in times of crisis.

Coastal Subsistence Fisheries

- a. Is there any indication of the quantity of valuable species i.e., lobsters sold to resorts in a defined time frame?**

The Ministry through the IFMD Division and also the Regions are now undertaking data

collection on non-fish products which includes lobsters. The work is also carried out with NGOs and Academic Institutions. The Ministry will also be revising the MoU with FIHTA to include the scope on data collection which will allow the collection of data sets and evaluate the true production of fisheries products that are entering into the tourism market.

b. Given the availability of a reliable market to subsistence coastal fisherman in certain localities, are there any plans or programs in the Ministry to upscale this to commercial level and if so what form of assistance is provided by the Ministry?

Most coastal communities rely on fishing for their source of livelihood so one of the mandates of the Ministry of Fisheries through its Extension and Advisory Services is to work with communities and develop plans to support or upscale fishers from subsistence to commercial level. Some of these plans include;

- Promote the formation of Fishing Co-operatives where fishers can work together as a legal entity;
- Training communities on fishing techniques, fish preservative techniques, fish handling, post-harvest training, fish processing, and value-adding;
- Building relationships or connecting domestic markets/exporters with fisher folks (men and women) in the community;

The effectiveness of the plans mentioned above could be realized if supported by infrastructure developments. The infrastructures include ice machines/solar freezers to maintain the quality of fish, a HACCP-certified fish processing facility, and a hygiene market facility. In addition, boats for transporting fish from the communities to the markets, grant to support the Fishing Co-operative business set up and subsidy for fuel and engine parts are some of the areas the government can assist in the upscaling of fishers from subsistence to commercial level. The infrastructures and government assistance mentioned here have to be channeled to the registered Fishing cooperatives only which means a pre-condition for accessing this assistance is that the fishers/communities need to establish and register their Fishing Cooperative first. The Ministry has supported communities in providing alternative livelihood options such as seaweed farming, pearl spats, mangrove farming, and land-based aquaculture programs.

Freshwater Fisheries

a. What is the Ministry's plan to improve the management of freshwater fisheries in the country?

The Ministry was part of the Reef to Ridge Project which was facilitated under Department of Environment and UNDP funding. The Ministry engages with partners and in line agencies into facilitating such concept of co-management of identified water-sheds i.e. major rivers and streams in the Northern region including Viti Levu. Inter-agencies cooperation between MoF, MITA (Ministry of Taukei Affairs), Forestry, Commissioner's Office, NGOs and Academic Institutions worked together in identified thematic areas and this included an inclusive approach of assessments, analysis, reporting and presenting the findings to communities where management plans were

then formulated. The main objectives were to preserve and manage the catchments and its resources. Rehabilitation and management controls were also recommended and included in the Plans. The implementation of these plans will then be made with in collaboration between communities and agencies including Ministry of Fisheries. The similar concept is made with other inland communities. Management plans and also conducting fish warden trainings is facilitated by the Ministry and with the objective of management of resources. This will also include placements of protected watershed areas which is designated from the consent of the resource owners. Other tools are on prohibition of certain gears including the prohibition of certain species. Monitoring, Control and surveillance are also targeted in rivers where the Ministry maintain its visibility to safeguard fisheries resources.

Ministry works with local universities in terms of research on the domestication of native freshwater species. Research division under the Ministry undertakes inventory survey of local rivers and development near rivers to determine the species diversity. Ministry works closely with Ministry of Forest to work on the Navua dam for the preservation of native species and monitor freshwater eel's juveniles swimming up the stream.

In terms of maintaining food security for Fijians living and relying on freshwater species of food security, Ministry works closely with Provisional office to release tilapia juveniles to rivers known to have tilapia being found.

Aquaculture

- a. What is the progress on the development of the 10-year strategic goal of growing aquaculture rapidly given Fiji's resilient climate and immense potential highlighted in the report?**

Ministry is working at zoning of aquaculture by area and species. This is where the ministry is working closely with department of lands to identify land suitable for aquaculture purpose. In discussion with Ministry of Lands, coastal area along the Nadi to Ba area was identified as potential sites for shrimp farming.

Ministry is also undertaking research on species resilient to change in climate conditions that can be farmed and have potentially better growth.

- b. How is Fiji placed in terms of aquaculture development in the region compared to our neighboring countries? Please provide an explanation.**

Fiji is better placed in terms of Aquaculture compared to other countries in the region for the following reasons.

Fiji is better equipped in terms of hatchery production of tilapia fry production, and fresh farmed tilapia from farms. It is estimated that Fijian farmers produced 120mt of tilapia being sold at \$6-10/kg depending on geographic distribution. This is based on the 663,000 tilapia fries fattened and distributed from national hatcheries.

In terms of research, Ministry was involved in domestication of milkfish and rabbit fish among a few for future breeding trails.

Ministry apart from producing tilapia, was also undertaking breeding of prawns, shrimp, giant clam and corals.

Fiji is also a leading producers of high quality of pearls.

c. What are some of the key challenges that the Ministry is facing in terms of developing aquaculture in Fiji? (CITES).

Mari-culture - With the listing of following species under the CITIES act being all types of corals, giant clam and some species of sea cucumber has prevented private hatcheries and exporters of live specimen from culturing and exporting of these to overseas market.

This has proven challenging for the Ministry and exporters in acquiring necessary approval for the culture and export

d. Can the Ministry of Fisheries please elaborate on the availability, quality and consistency of the supply of aquaculture feed?

Fiji currently has one commercial company that is producing aquaculture feed in Fiji, Pacific Feed (Fiji) Ltd. Pacific feed, produces tilapia and prawn feed for local and export to neighboring countries. Where the company has been consistent in the production and supply of tilapia feed, company produces prawn feed on demand basis.

Quality of feed falls short in terms of quality as company produces sinking pellet, where tests run show that not all feed given is eaten and falls to the bottom of pond and perishes.

Seapac (Fiji) Ltd is one of the companies importing floating feed in to Fiji, where the company offers high quality feed to local farmers, it falls short in supply due to shipping and low demand of imported feed. (More expensive). Feed for shrimp is imported due to demand for high crude protein diet for shrimp growth. Apart from Seapac importing and supplying shrimp feed, commercial shrimp farmers import their own feed.

Ministry continues to assist local tilapia farmers formulate their feed with local ingredients. Draw back for this is that, the in consistence supply and availability of raw materials and the feed machine in central division, giving disadvantage to northern and western division.

e. Can the Ministry provide an update on the status of the giant clam project in Taveuni?

Civa Fiji Pearls, started breeding giant clams in 2017 apart from the past operations. Civa pearls breeds and rises giant clam juveniles for reef restocking and export.

In 2020 Civa Pearls sold hatchery produced clam juveniles to Conservation international for restocking of reefs in the North division

f. What is the linkage between Fisheries Research and Extension Work in the development of aquaculture? Please clarify?

Fisheries research mainly works on the research and hatchery production of aquaculture species that will be later grown out in farms or re-seeded in reef ecosystem. Once the species are successfully breed in hatcheries, these are grown to juvenile stage before distribution.

Juveniles distributed for farming or re-seed in reef ecosystem are later monitored and relevant data collected and provided on growth and other relevant requirements for culture by the extension work carried out by the Ministry.

2. Page 6: The Kawakawa and Donu Seasonal Ban

- a. Can the Ministry please provide an explanation on the number of vendors and the number of fish, the weight, the size and the location that were confiscated during the review period.**

Due to the obligation in maintaining confidentiality, the Ministry is unable to disclose the name of the vendors from whom the prohibited species of K & D were seized. According to the Inshore Fisheries Management Division, the data on confiscated Kawakawa & Donu totaled to 950 kg at an estimated value of \$11,600 FJD during the 2019 seasonal ban. These were from fish outlet, etc. located within the four (4) geographical Divisions

- b. How efficient was the Ministry in addressing the issue on the ban of fish as stated in the annual report 2018 — 2019. Please provide an update to the Committee.**

The Ministry has had to beef up its surveillance and enforcement operations on the related provision i.e. LN 32 (2019), OFMR 2014, Part 2, Regulations 4, Seasonal and Species Restrictions.

Prior to and throughout the 2019 prohibition, the Ministry conducted consultations with all participants in the Kawakawa and Donu fishery through its 32 Fisheries stations. The community, stakeholders, fisher forums, and civil society were all involved in these broader dialogues. The Kawakawa and Donu ban was made more widely known through talk back programs, video recordings, and podcasts. This was done to make sure that no one was left out and that all parties involved were aware of the ban's implementation and justification.

The Inshore Fisheries Management is of the opinion that most people are prepared to abide by restrictions if they are made aware of them and the rationale behind them. This action encourages willing compliance. The Division implemented bagging and labeling of remaining inventories at the start of June 2019 after being lenient at the beginning of the ban in 2019. Beginning in July 2019, the 27 species of kawakawa and donu covered by Legal Notice 32, Ban, came under enforcement.

- c. Can the Ministry please provide the number of enforcement staff on the ground?**

The enforcement positions under the Inshore Fisheries Management Division was established in 2019 and recruitment of 8 officers were made. Under the regional structure, there are 6 MCS (Monitoring, Control and surveillance) positions however vary on bands and numbers in the Divisions (1- FO W; 1 FTO E, 1 FA E, 1 FO MCS N, 1 FO MCS C and 1 FA MCS C). These officers work in the inshore sector and are authorized by the OFMA 2012 which allows them to enforce the provisions of the K&D Ban.

These authorized staffs were appointed by way of gazette under section 45 of OFMA 2012. The staffing strength in facilitating enforcement is quite low and thus the support

of officers from other Divisions were made to assist in these activities. The operations were also assisted by Fiji Police and Fiji Navy.

d. Who does the monitoring of the Kawakawa ban and how effective is the monitoring program? Please explain.

The MCS officers in the Division including Compliance Unit under the IFMD Division were tasked with this activity. This work was supported by the Regional officers. The monitoring of the ban was quite effective since this was supported by extensive awareness campaigns and programs where community and national champions advocated on the protection of these species. Also included here were the 4FJ (Fiji) Campaigns where many stakeholders, private sectors and citizens supported the grouper ban including prohibition on sale and consumption of Kawakawa and Donu during its spawning seasons (i.e. 1st June-30th September). Through this support, the wider nation was aware of the ban and its formalization through the Legal Notice (LN 32). The strength of the enforcement on the ground was based on this awareness and penalizing alleged offenders who were found contravening the provisions of the Act. The penalty was quite substantial and severe i.e. \$10,000 per individual and \$20,000 per company or entity, thus was a deterrent and members of the public had to deviate to other commercial species during this seasonal ban. The enforcement work was done in collaboration with line agencies such as Fiji Police and Navy.

The OFMA Authorized Officers (AOs) play a key part in the monitoring of the K&D ban. However they are not able to carry out this activity on their own. They are assisted by the AOs within the regions as well the regional officers. The public and community members also play a vital role in providing information on offending that they witness. This information allows the Ministry officers to undertake concerted compliance operations that result in offenders being apprehended.

e. Does the Ministry have a report or statistics on those involved in breaking the law on the banning of fish? Please explain.

The Compliance Unit within IFMD has a database that records the information gathered during inspections that are carried out. Due to the sensitivity of the information collected only a portion of the data can be shared.

- Restaurants – 12
- Vendor- 8
- Individual – 9
- Commercial- 10 including 1 Exporter

f. What measures are there available for the Ministry of Fisheries to curb or reduce people from violating the ban on those fish shown page 6 of the 2018 — 2019 annual report.

1. Awareness of the importance of the ban in place and need to support the 4 months ban
2. Campaigns for pledging to volunteer support to the ban

3. Strengthened surveillance and compliance within the Ministry and with inline enforcement agencies.
4. Penalizing the alleged even after 1-3 is done.

Awareness and education material on the Kawakawa and Donu Ban is widely available from all fisheries service centers and they include posters, pamphlets, Fact sheets and Frequently asked Questions, billboards and radio talkback shows in all of Fijis national languages.

In terms of enforcement of the ban, compassionate compliance was undertaken for natural persons as a last option for them to be aware of the ban and comply thereafter. This approach allowed them to avoid penalties on their first offence.

3. Page 7: Contribution of Fisheries to Fiji's Economy

a. Can the Ministry of Fisheries please explain whether there has been an increase in the domestic sales of fish since 2018?

Yes, there has been an increase in domestic sales of fish captured by the Inshore Fisheries Management Divisions, sample market survey of municipal markets in Central, Western, and Northern Divisions.

b. Can the Ministry please explain why there was a decrease in the GDP as narrated in table 2 of the report?

The value added by the fishing industry had increased but the contribution to the total GDP declined due to other industries' value-added that increased at a faster rate. The fishing sector exports had increased from FJD234.2 million in 2018 to FJD241.2 million in 2019, based on the statistics released by the Bureau of statistics.

c. What would be the contributing factors? Can the Ministry please clarify?

Fiji National' longline fleet catch for the year 2017 was 17,933 metric tonnes. A significant drop was noticed in 2018 to 14,372 metric tonnes. A slight drop was reflected in 2018 albacore catches of 8,918 metric tonnes, compared to 2017 highest catch of 9,837 metric tonnes since 2014. A drop in Bigeye catch was also reported in 2018 of 830 metric tonnes compared to 2017 catches of 1,083mt.

The Ministry imposed a national ban on beche-de-mer and aquarium harvest and trade in 2017.

d. Employment

a. What measures or actions has the Ministry undertaken to improve the collection of employment data?

The Ministry has signed an MOU with the Fiji Bureau of Statistics that will enable quality fisheries sector statistics collection and reporting.

4. Page 9: Services of the Ministry of Fisheries

a. The Ministry has made reforms in some of its service delivery, what are some of the challenges faced and what impact has this brought about?

5. Page 13: Senior Executives and their Responsibilities

b. As the Director of Fisheries and the advisor to the Minister and the Permanent Secretary, can you please provide an explanation on the implementation of the national Policy and strategies concerning fisheries conservation, management, development and sustainable use?

- During the reporting period, the activation of the Kawakawa and Donu ban was a key initiative of the Ministry, the nationwide implementation of this, alongside partners, and communities, raised the profile of these important species and the need for their conservation and management.
- The sea cucumber ban was active during this reporting period, another key initiative driven by the Ministry and science to support the regeneration of these key species in the wild. The Sea Cucumber Management Plan, was also drafted with the aim to manage, develop and sustainably use Fiji's sea cucumber fishery resources. Drafted in 2015, the plan was progressively reviewed then, and has still yet to be endorsed.
- The draft National Fisheries Policy, in its draft form during the reporting period, was also progressively reviewed. The policy aimed at looking at the following areas;
 - Sustainable Management of Fisheries Resources: The policy aimed to ensure the sustainable use and management of Fiji's fisheries resources for the benefit of present and future generations. This includes managing fish stocks, protecting marine ecosystems, and promoting responsible fishing practices.
 - Supporting the Development of the Fisheries Sector: The policy seeks to support the development of the fisheries sector in Fiji, including improving infrastructure, promoting investment, and facilitating trade.
 - Ensuring Food Security and Nutrition: The policy aimed to ensure that Fiji's fisheries resources contribute to the country's food security and nutrition by promoting sustainable fishing practices and supporting the development of small-scale fisheries.
 - Promoting Social and Economic Development: The policy aimed to promote social and economic development in Fiji, including creating employment opportunities and supporting the development of coastal communities.
 - Strengthening Governance and Institutional Capacity: The policy seeks to strengthen governance and institutional capacity in the fisheries sector by improving coordination between government agencies, promoting transparency and accountability, and enhancing stakeholder participation in decision-making processes.

There were other publications that addressed the sustainable management and protection of Fiji's fisheries during the reporting period, these publications, supported by science, informed the Executive Management of the Ministry of sustainable minimum fish size limits for Fiji, spawning potential surveys for 29 stocks of Fijian reef fish. Reflecting on the development of Fiji's fisheries, a Fiji fishery resource profile, as well as a value chain analysis of Fiji's grouper fisheries.

c. Were the Ministry able to achieve its strategic objectives?

Yes, progressively, the Ministry was able to achieve its strategic objectives during the reporting year, given some objectives are realized over a longer period of time, whilst others in a shorter period.

d. Can the Ministry please explain the criteria for fisheries licensing?

Process to acquiring a fishing permit and license, during the period under review;
Section 13 (2) of the Fisheries Act provides clarity to the procedure to acquiring a fishing permit stating that the 'grant of a permit shall be in the discretion of such Commissioner who shall consult the Fisheries Officer (The Ministry of Fisheries) and the subdivision of the Fijian people whose fishing rights may be affected thereby, prior to granting the same'.

Process to acquiring a fishing license:

Regulation 4 (1) of the Fisheries Regulations 1965 requires an applicant to produce a fishing permit to the licensing officer at the time of application for a fishing license.

Regulation 3 of the Fisheries Regulations 1965 prescribes annual fees for a fishing license.

The Ministry of Fisheries is also guided with the Requirements for issuance of fishing license such as fishing permits, birth certificate, TIN letter, License to operate small crafts, Vessel registration, Monthly Catch returns, and License application forms

e. Can the Director of Fisheries enlighten the Committee on the courses available under the Training, Research and Education unit of the Ministry?

The Ministry, during the period under review facilitates the following training for coastal fisheries development - Fish FAD rigging, deployment and fishing methods, Post-harvest and Fish Handling training, Honorary Fish Warden Training, Deepwater Snapper Fishing methods.

The Ministry also conducts training for our aquaculture or fish farmers, these include Fish Farmer Training, and those that we undertake in collaboration with financial institutions, namely Financial Literacy training.

On research and science, we engage with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community for training on fish species identification, as well refreshers on stock assessment training. All dive training are undertaken by PADI, and Boast Master training by MSAF.

f. Can the Ministry please provide an update on the designation of the MPA's - Marine Protected Areas?

The official designation of an MPA, is done through a gazette notice under the Fisheries Act Cap 158 regulations of 2014. To date, the Fisheries Act subsequent regulations has regularized 4 marine protected areas, namely Shark Reef Marine Reserve in Serua in 2015, the Wakaya Marine Reserve 2015, the Kuiva Marine Reserve 2018 and the Naiqoro Passage Spawning Aggregation Marine Reserve 2018.

6. Page 14: Performance Management

- a. The Ministry to please clarify on the data provided on page 14 on Performance Management of staff for the period under review.

Below is the table provided on page 14 reflecting the 202 staff performance that was assessed for the period May 2018 to April 2019 by the Ministry Moderation Committee.

Please note that this was a requirement of the Annual Report template for Ministry's and Departments to report on.

Work Unit	Step 1-2	Step 2-3	Step 3-4	Step 1-3	Step 1-4	Step 2-4	No Step Movement
Research Division	3	5	1	0	0	0	8
Aquaculture Division	2	5	10	0	0	0	8
Inshore Fisheries Management Division	1	0	0	0	0	4	5
Offshore Fisheries Management Division	13	24	1	0	0	0	0
Central Region	4	3	3	0	0	0	13
Eastern Region	3	4	2	0	0	0	2
Northern Region	1	4	4	0	0	0	23
Western Region	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
Planning, IT and Library	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Fleet and Technical Services	2	1	1	1	0	0	2
HR, Admin and Training	4	6	3	0	0	0	6
Finance	0	0	1	0	0	0	6
TOTAL	37	54	25	1	0	4	81

The work units are the Divisions within the Ministry. The step in the table indicate the movement of salary step from the previous to the new salary step as in the below descriptors. All the 202 officers have their performance assessment moderated by the Ministry Moderation Committees (MMC).

No	Column Name	Column Descriptors
1	Step 1-2	Officers that are on salary step 1 and the MMC endorsed their movement to salary step 2 within the same Salary Band.
2	Step 2-3	Officers that are on salary step 2 and the MMC endorsed their movement to salary step 3 within the same Salary Band.
3	Step 3-4	Officers that are on salary step 3 and the MMC endorsed their movement to salary step 4 within the same Salary Band.
4	Step 1-3	Officers that are on salary step 1 and the MMC endorsed their movement to salary step 3 within the same Salary Band.

5	Step 1-4	Officers that are on salary step 1 and the MMC endorsed their movement to salary step 4 within the same Salary Band.
6	Step 2-4	Officers that are on salary step 2 and the MMC endorsed their movement to salary step 4 within the same Salary Band.
7	No Step Movement	Officers after the MMC assessment did not qualify for any salary increment.

As in the Annual Report the payment of salary movements, etc. were not implemented due to funding constraint.

7. Page 15: Infrastructure

a. Can the Ministry please provide an update on the ice plants that were out of service for Rotuma and Vanuabalavu during the review period?

The Vanuabalavu ice machine was built in 2002 and it is a tailor-brand machine from Australia. It is prone to repair maintenance due to the brand and also the number of years (17) it has been providing ice to the Vanuabalavu fishers. The Ministry will phase out this machine next year to be replaced it with a Neitto Seimo brand from Japan.

For the Rotuma ice machine, during the year 2018-2019, it was due to the generator motor which needs to be changed and it make it worse when the schedule of the boat to the island was affected. Gounder shipping had withdrawn from servicing the island and only the government boats were servicing the island.

8. Page 17: Highlights in the Division

Northern Operations

- a. Can the Ministry please provide an update on the challenges stated and what measures were undertaken by the Ministry to overcome these challenges?
- b. There were two important issues for the **Central Division Operations**.
 - the establishment of fishers' associations

By 2019, the division had established 10 Fisher Associations, as follows:

Fisher Association of Central Division, Fiji											
Province	Location/ village	Name	Contact details	Year set- up	# of members	Registered		Assistance Provided	Boat & Engine		Expected Outcome
						Yes	No		Yes	No	
Tailevu	Nasilai Village, Nakelo	Duavata Fishers Association		2019	28		✓	25 Fiber Glass Boat & 60hp Engine	✓		Sources of livelihood/Provide employment opportunity/Suppl y to local and overseas markets
	Qoma Island, Namena	Qoma Fishers Association	9277217	2020	45		✓	Solar Freezer		✓	Sources of livelihood
	Naigani Island, Verata	Naigani Fishers Association	9588180	2019	18		✓	Solar Freezer/ 25footer F/G Vessel & 75hp engine	✓		Sources of livelihood
	Kiuva Village, Bau	Kiuva Aqua Agro Cooperative Ltd		2021		✓		2 x 6" Chest Freezer	✓		Sources of livelihood/Provide employment opportunity/Suppl y to local and overseas markets
	Viwa Island, Bau	Viwa Fishers Association					✓			✓	Sources of livelihood
	Silana Village, Dawasamu	Silana Fishers Association		2022			✓	7" Chest Freezer		✓	Sources of livelihood

	Natila village, Bau	Bau Fishers Association		2021	18		✓		✓	Sources of livelihood
	Naikawaga village, Namara	Naikawaga Fishers Association		2021	33		✓		✓	Sources of livelihood
	Bau Island	Bau Fishers Association		2018	42		✓		✓	Sources of livelihood
	Cautata Village, Bau	Cautata Fishers Association	2776281	2021	33		✓		✓	Sources of livelihood
	Vatoa Village, Bau	Vatoa Fishers Association		2020	28		✓		✓	Sources of livelihood
	Daku Village, Bureitu	Daku Fishers Association		2022			✓	Mangrove Oyster Project	✓	
Rewa	Nukui Village, Rewa	Nukui Fishers Association		2022	38		✓		✓	Sources of livelihood
	Muanaicake Village, Vutia	Muanaicake Womens Group		2019	27		✓	Mangrove Oyster materials	✓	Sources of livelihood/Provide employment opportunity/Supply to local and overseas markets
	Soliyaga Village, Beqa	Soliyaga Fishers Association		2019	28		✓		✓	Sources of livelihood
	Naceva Village, Beqa	Naceva Fishers Association		2019	36		✓	Offshore FAD deployed in 2021	✓	Sources of livelihood
	Dakuni Village, Beqa	Dakuni Youth Group		2021	25		✓		✓	Sources of livelihood
Serua	Yanuca Island, Serua	Yanuca Fishers Association	9726170	2019	32		✓	Solar Freezer	✓	Sources of livelihood
	Navulivatu Village, Serua	Navulivatu Fishers Association		2020	12		✓	Seaweed Project	✓	Sources of livelihood/Provide employment opportunity/Supply to local and overseas markets
	Serua Island, Serua	Serua Fishers Association		2019	15		✓		✓	Sources of livelihood
	Vunaniu Village, Serua	Vunaniu Fishers Association		2020	24		✓	Seaweed Project	✓	Sources of livelihood
Namosi	Mau Village	Mau Fishers Association		2018	22		✓	Mangrove Oyster Project	✓	Sources of livelihood
	Veivatuloa Village	Veivatuloa Fishers Association		2017	19		✓		✓	Sources of livelihood

- the number, location, and status of fish farmers in the Central Division
Summary of Fish Farmer Inventory for CD, as of 2018 inventory exercise.

Freshwater farmers Summary 2018					
Province	# of farmers	# of Pond	Total Area (m2)	Status	
				Active	Inactive
Tailevu	103	186	93,269.50	73	30
Naitasiri	134	227	105,730.06	116	18
Serua	18	34	97,124	10	8
Namosi	26	78	75,679.50	18	8
Rewa	10	15	14,189	8	2
TOTAL	291	540	385,992.44	225	66

- b. Can the Ministry please explain more on the two issues faced by the Central Division?
Challenges for forming associations:
- Start-up capital/contributions
 - There is a need to shift from associations to cooperatives, as such will need more assistance from the department of cooperatives for training and awareness
 - Cooperatives are legal entities and the formation of such will attract donors for further assistance

Our strategy is on reviving the inactive farmers/farms.

- We need to strengthen our extension duties to find out why the farms became inactive and provide relevant technical advice and assistance to re-activate those farms
- We also need to strengthen and increase our hatchery production so that farms are stocked in time
- We need to ramp up the Lead Farmer initiative/cluster groups so that farm clusters can have their own backyard hatchery to produce fish fry to stock their own ponds
- Awareness of our FSP program to go down to the farmers to benefit from grant assistance programs to revive their farms
- Conditioning centres at Dada (Namosi) and Vunidawa (Naitasiri) to ease the distribution of fish fry to our far-reaching farms

c. Can the Ministry please further clarify its relationship with its NGOs for the Western Division

The Ministry through the Western Division has maintained a close network with NGOs operating in the Division. The Network which includes NGOs such as WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature), WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society), CI (Conservation International), MES (Mamanuca Environment Society), Vinaka Fiji, CChange and others have collaborated with the Division in terms of marine assessments, community trainings, reef enhancement programs with the Hoteliers and that includes establishing and monitoring of MPAs, coral planting, giant clam reseeded and others. The work also involves co-policing of marine reserves or fishing grounds and fish wardens have been authorized through this network i.e. Tavarua Marine park rangers, Fiji Surf Co., Reef Explorer Fiji Ltd (who have funded the training of Korolevu-i-wai training). In addition partners, have also assisted on awareness tool kits particularly on fisheries resource management which are then facilitated to communities.

d. Can the Ministry please provide an update on the awareness programs on the fisheries regulations in relation to commercial sport fishing operations at resorts in the Western Division?

The Ministry through the OFD (Offshore Fisheries Management Division) Division had conducted initial consultations with Recreational and Game Fishing companies and resorts i.e. Fishing Charters. The objective of the consultations were to provide awareness on the sport fishing and recreational provisions under OFMD (Offshore Fisheries Management Decree) 2012 and OFMR (Offshore Fisheries Management Regulations) 2014 and its related fees. Discussions in the Ministry was on the demarcation of zones that will be allowed for sports fishing. To date the Division has had put up submission for reviewing this including levying fees and clearly demarcating the zones as sports fishers are accessing inshore reefs and areas which has been an issue for coastal communities.

The following enlists the provisions under the Act; Definition and Fees Schedule Summary:

OFMD 2012	
Part I, Section 2: Interpretation	
Recreational Fishing	Fishing done for leisure and without any regard to earnings, gain or profit;
Sport Fishing	Fishing other than for reward or profit for the purpose of sport
Fishing	a) Searching for, catching, taking or harvesting of fish; b) Engaging in any activity which can reasonably be expected to result in locating, catching, taking or harvesting of fish; c) Placing, searching for or recovering any fish aggregating device or associated equipment including radio beacons;

	<p>d) Any operation at sea in support of in preparation for any activity described in this paragraph except for operations defined as related activities in this section; or</p> <p>e) The use of an aircraft in relation to any activity described in this paragraph</p> <p>*Fisheries Act Cap 158 Section 2- Taking fish- includes any method of catching fish; License to take fish: Section 5- (3) No person shall take fish in Fiji fisheries waters by way of trade or business or as an employee of a person carrying on the trade or business of a fisherman unless such person is authorized by a license to take fish</p>
Fishing Vessel	<p>fishing vessel”</p> <p>means any vessel, ship or other craft which is used, equipped to be used or of a type that is normally used for fishing or related activities;</p>
PART 5—LICENCES AND AUTHORISATIONS	<p>Licence or authorisation required for Fiji fishing vessels</p> <p>26.—(1) A Fiji fishing vessel or fishing vessel used for sport or recreational fishing shall not be used in the internal waters, archipelagic waters, territorial sea or exclusive economic zone of Fiji for— (a) fishing; (b) related activities; or (c) any other activity, unless under the authority of a valid licence, authorisation or fishing right as may be required under this Decree, a Fisheries Management Plan or any access agreement or fisheries management agreement entered into pursuant to this Decree.</p> <p>(2) Where any sports or recreational fishing vessel is used in contravention of subsection (1), the operator and master of such vessel each commits an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not less than \$5,000 and not more than \$10,000.</p> <p>(3) Where any vessel is used in contravention of subsection (1), the operator and master of such vessel each commits an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not less than \$20,000 and not more than \$1,000,000. 2161</p> <p>(4) A crew member who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not less than \$2,000 and not more than \$10,000. (5) For the purposes of subsection (3), the onus is on the crew member to prove that at the relevant time he or she did not know that an offence was being committed.</p>
OFMR 2014; PART 4 (REGS 15-30) OFF 10,085	<p>Licence to undertake sport or recreational fishing</p> <p>17. (I) A Fiji fishing vessel shall not be used for sport fishing or recreational fishing within the archipelagic waters, territorial sea or exclusive economic zone unless licensed by the Permanent Secretary pursuant to section 32 of the Decree.</p> <p>(2) The owner or operator of a Fiji fishing vessel may apply for a sport or recreational fishing licence in the form set out in Schedule 6C and pay the relevant fees set out in Schedule 7.</p> <p>(3) Any person who- (a) uses a Fiji fishing vessel for sport or recreational fishing within the archipelagic waters, territorial sea or exclusive economic zone without a licence; (b) fails to comply with the terms and conditions of licence; (c) fails to provide true, complete or accurate information; or (d) otherwise contravenes or fails to comply with this regulation, commits an offence</p>

Fee Payment Summary; Schedule 7; Regulation 27			
A. Management and Monitoring Fees	Allocation	Fixed Cost 2015 (\$)	Fixed Cost Current (\$)
Sports Fishing	1-32301-91101-230327	690	633.05
A. Application fees	Allocation	Fixed Cost 2015 (\$)	Fixed Cost Current (\$)
Authorization to charter Fiji Fisheries vessels	1-32301-91103-230327	23	21.10
Sport fishing – per tournament		23	21.10
Recreational fishing		5.75	5.30
H. Authorisation to Charter		Fixed Cost 2015 (\$)	Fixed Cost Current (\$)
Fiji Fishing Vessels	1-32301-91103-230327	115	105.50
Foreign Fishing Vessels		230	211

The Division through the Offshore Unit will need to reconfirm on other operators which are using the “act of fishing” for the purpose of gaining profit. However the operators (at any level) may not be aware of the procedures/Acts in place.

The Division has also consulted MSAF on registration of vessels used for fishing charters and game fishing. According to MSAF, the registration is under “Recreational Fishing Vessels- operating as” (pers. comms on 26/10/22).

The rate used by these Fishing charters , private chartered vessels (sailing, yachts,) or resorts can range from UDS 200+ to USD\$5,650 depending on the area, no. of days or hours, number of people as packaged or per person and type of vessel. Research online shows that Game Fishing or Sports Fishing is one of the sought out package by tourists or local enthusiasts.

Game Fishing Competition i.e. Fiji Fishing Competition at Denarau, Nadi occurs within three (3) days at the end of the year. The winners compete in the World Championship in Costa Rica. Other competition may occur throughout the year. It is an exhilarating sport.

Eastern Division

- e. Were those challenges addressed by the Ministry? If yes, what measures were undertaken by the Ministry to tackle those challenges?**

The challenges of visiting the maritime islands due to their isolation, but these challenges were addressed when the former government implemented the franchise boat schedule which normally services these outer islands twice a month. Another measure taken was the service provided by the Government Shipping Services which assisted the Division in visiting the outer islands, especially those in upper southern Lau.

- f. Can the Ministry please provide an update on the provisions of safe traveling means to the outer islands for the staff?**

Most of the islands in the Eastern Division are only accessible by boat, so the Ministry has bought fiberglass boats to service the different islands and also procurement of 10m aluminum boats for the Division.

9. Page 26: Service Delivery Performance Compared with Targets

- a. Can the Ministry of Fisheries clarify more on the Service Delivery Performance compared with targets?**

Page 26-28 provides a snapshot of the Ministry’s performance and achievements against its Annual Operational plan targets.

10. Page 31: Financial Information

- a. Can the Ministry provide an update on the progress of establishing an Agency Tender Board for the Ministry?**

The Ministry has established its internal Agency Tender Board, comprising of our Economic Policy, Planning, and Statistics team rep, an Accounts rep, Deputy Secretary for Director Fisheries as Chair and an external rep from the respective agencies are invited to bring about transparency and accountability in the procurement process.

Independent Auditors Report

- 11. Page 35: Operating fund account**

- a. **What action has been taken by the Ministry to ensure that proper documentation of payment and journal and other supporting documents are well recorded for future reference and for audit purposes?**

The Ministry has strengthened its internal controls in monitoring the daily activities of the Cashier after the processing of Payment Vouchers, stamping, filing, labelling and storage of the records in the Cashier's Room and also at the Senior Accountant's Room under lock and keys. The same applies to the security of the Journal Vouchers which are under the care of the Accounts Officer, registered in the Journal Voucher Register and stored by monthly files. All movements of records during audit inspections are monitored and returned back to its storage room for safe keeping.

- b. **What corrective measures has the Ministry undertaken to avoid the reoccurrences of unreconciled variances of \$2,359,689 between the MIS General Ledger and the payroll report for both establish staff and government wage earners?**

The Ministry has since complied with the Ministry of Finance Salaries Section on the normal Salaries fortnightly reconciliation as well as the Wages weekly reconciliation. Apart from this, there are additional two [2] reconciliations adopted are:

[1] Pay Deduction Reconciliation for both fortnightly Salaries fortnightly payroll and Wages weekly Payroll reports

[2] Variance Payroll vs GL reconciliation for both Salaries and Wages Payroll. Any such variances detected in this exercise are highlighted and the normal accounting adjustments are made through Journal Vouchers to rectify the variances.

We have since balanced these variances and are up to par.

12. Page 35: Trust Fund Account

- a. **What has the Ministry done to ensure that the detail listing of beneficiaries of \$261,684 reflected in the statement of receipts and payments of the Trust Fund Account is maintained and is updated?**

The Ministry have managed to clear the Trust Account from the Westpac Bank Corporation through the Ministry of Economy and closing off of the True Trust Bank Account as per instructions from the Ministry of Economy as per memos dated 01/06/2022, in line with Act No. 13 of 2022 issued on 15/03/2022.

In addition, the Ministry wishes to highlight the comment by the Financial Reporting Monitoring & Evaluation Unit of the Ministry of Economy, in their June 2022 Reconciliation Review Report for the Ministry quoting, "Acknowledging the efforts by the Ministry in clearing the True Trust Bank Balance by transferring the money to the Consolidated Fund Account for future claims of payment. The General Ledger was cleared under Head 32 via JV number 321816 in period 11 i.e. June 2022"

Please refer to the Annex 3 for the General Ledger showing Nil Balance, the email from WBC dated 2/11/2021 stating that it cannot generate any Bank Statement as the account has been dormant since 06/04/2019 and the WBC email confirmation of the closure of the bank account

END



MINISTRY OF FISHERIES

HEADQUARTERS

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MEMORANDUM

From: Acting Permanent Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry **Date :** 20 April 2023
To : Secretary General to Parliament **File Ref:** FI/G/9-21
Re : Clarification of Issues on Ministry of Fisheries Annual Report 2019 - 2020

ATTENTION: Ms. Akanisi Rumasakea, Secretariat to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources

Reference is made to the correspondence dated 17 April 2023 on the above mentioned subject is acknowledged.

The Ministry welcomes the examination of our operations, accomplishments, and initiatives undertaken in the 2019–2020 Annual Reporting period. The Ministry will continue to offer the Standing Committee on Natural Resources its support and cooperation.

Enclosed herewith are our responses to the queries sent by the Secretariat. The undersigned can be contacted for any further clarification.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Atelaite Rokosuka'.

Atelaite Rokosuka (Mrs.)

Acting Permanent Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry

STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

MINISTRY OF FISHERIES ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

QUESTIONS

- 1) **Pillar 5 –“Achieving Higher Economic Growth While Ensuring Sustainability” is enshrined in the People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress 2008 as per the report.**

- a) **Explain how is the Ministry progressing in achieving Pillar 5?**

To better understand species abundance, regional distribution, occurrence, and resource interconnections; the Fisheries Resource & Conservation Project (FRCP) project conducts an assessment of marine resources (biological and socioeconomic fisheries assessment) throughout customary fishing rights regions. The initiative ensures maritime resources are managed effectively, that resource productivity continues, that food security is promoted, and that new chances for employment are found.

The assessment of the marine resources supports the creation of community-based marine protected areas (MPAs) and contributes to the achievement of the Nations MPA commitment. It also integrates resource development, such as zoning and spatial planning of CFRAs, to support community-based Mari culture programs on ranching cultured sand fish and giant clams to draw in domestic and international markets.

- b) **In terms of protecting the environment, are there strategies in place to ensure that the environment is safe?**

Strategy- Marine Protected Areas.

This program offers Ministry divisional offices, local communities, and stakeholders (such as the tourism industry) scientific and technical guidance on the management and sustainable exploitation of marine resources within CFRAs. In order to understand species abundance, spatial distribution, occurrence, and resource interconnections, this program conducts marine resources assessment (biological and socioeconomic fisheries assessment) within customary fishing right regions. The initiative guarantees that maritime resources are managed effectively, that resource production continues, and that food security is promoted.

- c) **How does the Ministry ensure that fishers in our local waters are safe for human consumption and sufficient to cater for the needs of the people?**

The Ministry, through research conducted on ciguatera fish poisoning (CFP), guarantees quality assurance and the safety of seafood. Environmental analysis to identify the hazardous algal bloom, data gathering on occurrence, and community training to support the creation of a legislative framework and management are all necessary. The risk associated with CFP is still seen as low priority since communities are still relying on traditional knowledge for management, hence the incidence of CFP (Ciguatera Fish Poisoning) in Fiji remains understudied. However, CFP poses a

serious health risk and hinders the economies of the small island states in the Pacific basin, who are heavily reliant on fish for domestic consumption, export, and tourism. With the support of key partners, the purchase of survey equipment, laboratory examination of sample material, training, and data gathering are undertaken through this activity.

Research Findings are shared and widely circulated through our various media platforms and through the execution of our community awareness and outreach programs.

d) Are there monitoring systems and laws in place by the Ministry in ensuring adherence to environmental regulations? Explain, action taken if found guilty?

For offences under Offshore Fisheries Management Act (OFMA) 2012, Offshore Fisheries Management Regulation (OFMR), 2014, particularly on prohibited or seasonal banned listed species (OFMR, 2014), Part 2, Regulation 4 & 5); a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) can be issued to an individual at an amount of \$10,000 or \$20,000 for an entity or corporation for breaching these provisions. This is particular for species such as Kawakawa, Donu, Sea cucumbers and CITES list species. This FPN can be contested in court.

For offences under Fisheries Act Cap 158

The offences are outlined under Section 10 of the Fisheries Act 1941 and formal charges can apply to its breaches. Fines up to \$500 and imprisonment for 3- 6 months or to both such penalties may be imposed on offenders by the court. The court decides this based on the seriousness of the offence and mitigating factors.

For heavy penalties such as fishing or handling etc. of fish using dynamite, gelignite or other explosive substance can have range of fines i.e. fine of \$1000 (1st offence); \$2,000 for 2nd offence or cancellation of license (if holds a fishing license) without renewal for 3 years from date of 2nd conviction; 3rd offence- imprisonment for 2 years and a fine of \$5,000; & cancellation of licenses for period of 6 years and subsequent offences.

Under this Act, it also has provisions for the state under court order to forfeiture any vessel, apparatus or catch which has been identified with evidence to be engaging in the act of illegal fishing.

Continuous breaches against the Marine Reserves regulations have hefty fines upon convictions of not less than 20,000 and not exceeding 100,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or both. The Department may also seize any organism, equipment, conveyance including vessels and vehicles which are used in relation to the breach.

When an offence is detected, case files are developed against the alleged person(s). The proceeding of cases to prosecution or issuance of formal warning of notice is dependent on the level, severity and number of offence committed by an individual. Case files are developed and registered with the Court, following internal processes.

It is noteworthy to mention * here, that a few of the convicted persons who have failed to comply with the court order are being imprisoned, serving their term.

2) Page 7 – Contribution of Fisheries Gross Domestic Product

The Committee noted an increase in Fishery Export (Table 1) in 2018. Enlighten us on the major contributing factor and plans in place by the Ministry to ensure this is continue and benefiting our national GDP.

The fishing industry faces a number of economic challenges, including competition from imported fish products, declining fish stocks, and the high cost of fuel and other inputs. These challenges have led to decreased profitability for fishing companies and reduced employment opportunities in the sector.

To address these challenges, the Government tried its level best to mitigate these problems faced by various economic strong points and drivers through the swift implementation of innovative approaches such as:

- The omission of bunkering and provisioning fees from Regulations to improve ease of doing business;
- Legislative reform to provide long term certainty to domestic fleets by providing opportunity for 20-year fishing licenses;
- Creating opportunities and providing incentives to modernize the aging national fleet to more energy efficient and environmentally friendly vessels; and
- Continued provision of tax incentives and subsidies where appropriate.

As a result, 2022 export volume looked favorable mainly due to the increase in the economic contribution of the offshore fisheries. Preliminary data suggests that 2022 tuna exports alone exceeded the 2020 total fisheries exports of \$187 million, having exceeded the annual target of \$139 million. Coupled with the expected high returns from the export of BDM, it is indeed exciting to see what the final export volume would be as this will only help with the economic, social and even political stability of our nation post COVID

3) Page 10 – Table 2 - Staffing of the Ministry of Fisheries

a) Explain why 57 vacant positions were not filled during the review period?

In 2018 the Ministry of Fisheries was still in the transition period of being a stand-alone Ministry. Most of the Corporate Services staff opted to stay with Ministry of Forestry when the split happened and the Ministry of Fisheries had to recruit most of its Corporate Service staff. There were 6 resignations and 8 retirements during this period hence the vacant positions shown.

b) How did the Ministry manage its operations?

To supplement service delivery functions and operations, the Ministry engaged 91 Industrial and Volunteer attachments during this period. This was an opportunity to ensure service delivery continues but also expose young graduates to the work of the Ministry.

c) Enlighten the Committee on the reasons for staff resignation?

Most of the staff that resigned joined Non-Governmental Organization such as SPC, Conservation International and etc. which offers higher salaries and benefits to their recruits.

4) Page 11 – Table 4: Training of the Ministry Staff During the Year

Elaborate more on the impact of the trainings undertaken and how it is benefiting the Ministry in its overall operations?

Local training consists of in-house training provided by Ministry of Civil Service, which focuses mostly on the process and procedures within the government machinery. Other local trainings include the compliance training provided by the University of the South Pacific which is mostly sponsored by SPC and JICA.

Overseas trainings include meetings and workshop which are attended by the staff and most of the training are practical/ on-the-job training which really help the staff to benchmark with other Pacific Island neighbors and overseas counterpart.

The Industrial Attachment programme assists students to gain work experience and meet the requirement to graduate. Mostly these attachees are recruited back into the Ministry when vacancies arise in the base grade positions. The knowledge gain from all the training programs contributed to the overall achievement of the Ministry.

5) Page 13 – Table 6: Central Division Profile

Given the table cannot be viewed properly, can the Ministry explain the illustrations shown?

The table illustration provides the Profile of the Central Division with regards to its areas of operation, area of fisheries coverage and against its total population

Divisional Profile					
	Tailevu	Rewa	naitasiri	Namosi	Serua
Land area	7600	27,200	145,766	59,840	80,700
Total Population	55692	100,787	160,700	6,989	18,249
Tikina	22	9	16	5	4
Villages	142	54	91	26	25
Village Pop	34,552	10,683	18,950	4,985	4,952
Fishing Ground	48	18	22	4	14
Area of Fishing Ground	1,672.763sq km	239,542	7.7	161.993	

6) Page 15 – Central Division Operations at a Glance

Does the Ministry have any Training Impact Analysis detailing the list of courses and programs conducted by the Ministry in the review period?

Despite the impact of the pandemic on our service delivery from April 2020, the division still managed to carry out trainings and awareness programs in the division prior to the pandemic.

- 3 Fish warden trainings were carried out in the division in 2019-20. These were at Dawasamu, Leleuvia and Naigani. A total of 71 wardens were trained and appointed as honorary fish wardens tasked to protect their fisheries resources from poaching and illegal fishing by working together with enforcement agencies from Fisheries, Police and Navy.
- This impact on this was the increase in the number of fishing permits issued from 492 in 2019 to 645 in 2020 showing the effect of awareness carried out by our fish wardens in the communities.
- Through our training and awareness outreach, we received numerous complaints from concerned citizens and wardens about sales of undersize crabs. We initiated Operation Vueti Sasalu, which was from 11th May 2019, continued well into late 2019 and into 2020. This operation was to counter the increasing harvest and sales of undersize crabs and fish. For this operation, teams were formed to carry out the monitoring, control and advisory duties at the Municipal and Non-municipal markets found in the locality of the Central Division for the purpose achieving compliance to fisheries laws. This operation led to a dramatic decrease in the sales of undersize crabs in the key areas and we continue to carry out this operation.
- Further awareness programs were carried out in the division, as stated in the Annual Report, the impact of which was felt in the division in terms of greater awareness on fishing laws and processes, better compliance to fisheries laws, which was felt in the increased number of licenses issued in the years after the Covid pandemic. Increased number of licenses issued shows that our fishers are complying with our fisheries laws.

7) Page 19 – Western Division - Opportunities for further collaboration and support with the Ministry to address Sector outcomes and National Government Objectives.

Provide briefing on the purpose of establishing the Emergency Bank rendered to fishermen during COVID-19 and TC Harold?

The establishment of more Fishermen Association (FAs) to allow fishermen to exploit a two way management support. During the period, the Ministry promoted FA setups. The “emergency bank” was a model that the Ministry had planned to introduce through a financial relief deposit accumulated from the FA fishing operations aided by government support for “rainy days” and to ensure financial sustainability.

8) Page 21 – Northern Division Operations at a Glance.

Provide us with the long form of IDA fishing licenses and its purpose?

IDA - Inside Demarcated Area. This is the Customary Fishing Right Areas or Qoliquoli that is often fished by licensed fishermen. When a fisherman is issued with IDA, it simply means that he has been issued with an inshore fishing license, which allows him to fish in that qoliquoli and sell his catches for his livelihood.

9) Page 22 and Page 12 (FADs) – We note that on page 12 there were 59 FADs deployed in total nationwide whilst on page 22 Eastern Division 12 FADs were deployed. Provide more clarification on the figures provided?

During the time of reporting (2019-2020) there were a total of 59 FADs recorded across the 4 Divisions in Fiji. These FADs were the initial recorded ones that were deployed since 2018. From the Map in Page 12, with a total of 26 FADs deployed in the Eastern Division,

23 were reported missing and 3 were active. Many of these FADs were lost due to a range of causes - mainly adverse weather conditions (cyclones), fish-bite and vandalism. This was the case not only for Eastern Division but across the other 3 Divisions as well as indicated in the Map on Page 12 (active FADs and missing ones).

In the following years, many more FADs were deployed. Deployment of new FADs (near shore and offshore) in the Eastern Division included the 12 stated in the Report; (4 – Lakeba, Lau; 1 – Nayau, Lau; 1- Kadavu; 1- Vanuavatu and 1- Tuvuca, Vanuabalavu and 4-Moturiki, Lomaiviti). These were to cater for the demand from the communities and to sustainably reduce the pressure within their Qoliqoli whilst still able to maintain the food source through the aggregation of pelagic species to assist not only communities but the industrial fishing fleet operating in Fijian waters as well.

10) Page 26 – Establishment and Development of MPAs

Briefly update the Committee on the consultation undertaken from 10th – 14th March 2020 on the socioeconomic fisheries.

The research division conducted a social impact assessment on Yanuca Island, which would lead to the gazetting of the proposed Marine Protected Area (MPA) on the shark feeding region.

The main objective of the social impact assessment survey was to assess perceptions of local communities on the shark feeding activity operated within their fishing ground. Also, to assess the economic, ecological and social benefits of this shark feeding operation to the people of Yanuca Island.

11) Page 26 – Update the Committee on all MPAs projects and locations?

MPA	Type	Locations	Gazette
Tavarua	Tourism based	Tavarua Is Vuda Western Division	The MPA is still in the Gazetting Process to be declared as Gazetted MPA
Yanuca	Tourism based Shark feeding	Yanuca Is Serua Central Division	
Kiuva Marine Reserve	Marine Reserve	Kiuva Village Kiuva Tailevu	Gazetted
Shark reef Marine Reserve	Shark reef Marine Reserve	Serua Central Division	Gazetted
Naiqoro Passage Spawning Aggregation	Spawning Aggregation	Naiqoro Passage Matanuku Kadavu	Gazetted
Wakaya Marine Reserve	Marine Reserve	Wakaya Is Lomaiviti	Gazetted

12) Page 29 Objective 3: Implementation of the GEF 5 Ridge to Reef Framework Marine Component. Can the Ministry clarify the figure given as 518.3 kg ha⁻¹?

The total mean fish biomass across the habitat surveyed was 518.3 kg ha⁻¹.

13) Page 37 – Table 13 Formal Actions undertaken

a) Briefly explain the penalties issued to those fishermen who do not comply with the inshore fisheries regulations?

For offences under Offshore Fisheries Management Act (OFMA) 2012, Offshore Fisheries Management Regulation (OFMR), 2014, particularly on prohibited or seasonal banned listed species (OFMR, 2014), Part 2, Reg 4 & 5); a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) can be issued to an individual at an amount of \$10,000 or \$20,000 for an entity or corporation for breaching these provisions. This is particular for species such as Kawakawa, Donu, Sea cucumbers and CITES list species. This FPN can be contested in court.

For offences under Fisheries Act Cap 158

- The offences are outlined under Section 10 of the Fisheries Act 1941 and formal charges can apply to its breaches. Fines up to \$500 and imprisonment for 3- 6 months or to both such penalties may be imposed on offenders by the court. The court decides this based on the seriousness of the offence and mitigating factors.

For heavy penalties such as fishing or handling etc. of fish using dynamite, gelignite or other explosive substance can have range of fines i.e. fine of \$1000 (1st offence); \$2,000 for 2nd offence or cancellation of license (if holds a fishing license) without renewal for 3 years from date of 2nd conviction; 3rd offence- imprisonment for 2 years and a fine of \$5,000; & cancellation of licenses for period of 6 years and subsequent offences.

- Under this Act, it also has provisions for the state under court order to forfeiture any vessel, apparatus or catch which has been identified with evidence to be engaging in the act of illegal fishing.

- Continuous breaches against the Marine Reserves regulations have hefty fines upon convictions of not less than 20,000 and not exceeding 100,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or both. The Department may also seize any organism, equipment, conveyance including vessels and vehicles which are used in relation to the breach.

- When an offence is detected, case files are developed against the alleged person(s). The proceeding of cases to prosecution or issuance of formal warning of notice is dependent on the level, severity and number of offence committed by an individual. Case files are developed and registered with the Court, following internal processes.

It is noteworthy to note here, that few of the convicted persons who have failed to comply with the court order are being imprisoned, serving their term.

b) Inform us on the action taken by the Ministry for infringements?

Actions undertaken are made on a case-by-case basis.

When offences are detected, the Ministry's compliance officers proceed in documenting, conducting one or repeated interviews, investigations and then briefs or further case files are developed depending on the severity and or level and number of offence (s) committed by an individual, group or entity. These case files are vetted within internal processes and then registered with the court registry for cases requiring prosecution (under the Fisheries Act 1941).

For cases under OFMA, 2012 and OFMR, 2014, Fixed Penalty Notices can be issued within a period of 30 days from date of offence and this will follow internal processes. The registration with court registry will be made once the FPN has been issued.

The minor cases will involve awareness for first time offenders and issuance of formal warning of notice.

13) Page 38 -Data Analysis and Management Unit –Table 14 on Market Survey undertaken as major markets.

The Committee noted errors in the presentation of data shown in the table. The Eastern Division is mistakenly labeled as “Kadavu”.

a) Can the Ministry please explain the reasons for the errors?

This is a human error where data was manually filtered, sorted, analyzed, and projected.

b) Does the Ministry have a standard reporting system in place?

The Ministry has the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the market data collection system. There is a standardized e-reporting system in place. This involves the use of data apps and database which are used by officers (data collectors). The systems also includes cleaning, validation and generation of data for reporting through weekly, monthly, biannual and annual reports.

c) Explain why the Bua fish market in the Northern Division was not surveyed?

When the Ministry re-strategized and strengthened its system on market survey data collection in November, 2018, it focused on profiling of designated markets for roll-out of the data collection program. Creation of positions for data collection were also established this year.

According to the profile, which required the consistency and maximum number of samples (number & volume) for producing the market data report for Fiji; Bua Fish market was not classified as a major fish market.

With few number of staff to cover the whole of the Northern Division, the initial data collected also started in Bua. However, it was found that data was significantly lower, compared to the other major markets such as Savusavu and Labasa. Thus, data collection focused at markets where most of the fish were traded using standardized SOPs throughout Fiji.

Furthermore, part of the catch that are traded across Bua, Nabouwalu and surrounding areas to mainland Viti Levu are captured at markets in the Central Division i.e. Bailey Bridge or Suva Fish markets.

15) Page 39 Table 17 - Aquaculture Farmer Training by Region.

a) The distribution of 1,300,030 million tilapia fry's. What does this number mean?

There was a total distribution of 1,300,030 tilapia fry's which is 1.303 Million Tilapia Fry's. There is a typographic error in the report.

The 1.3 Million tilapia fry is estimated to produce at least 182 MT of tilapia harvest, which has directly provided support for food security and also income generation.

b) Has the number of trainings on Aquaculture increased or decreased and why?

The Aquaculture division had a target of undertaking 4 farmer trainings (1 per division), but a total of 6 trainings were undertaken, which is an increase of 2 trainings. The 2 additional trainings had been facilitated in-collaboration with 'Traseable Solution' for an Aquaculture App awareness.

2 additional trainings were to be facilitated by SPC on 'Aquaculture farm development work' in the 3rd and 4th Quarter, but had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

c) Explain what were the achievements of the 300 farmers who were distributed with shrimp post larvae and freshwater prawns?

220,000 freshwater prawn post-larvae was distributed to 62 farmers that had produced a minimum of at least 3 MT of freshwater prawn harvest which was sold in the local markets.

1.2 shrimp post-larvae was distributed to 5 semi-commercial farmers. The production from these farms was approximately 11 MT of shrimp harvest which was sold in the local markets.

16) Page 41 Offshore Fisheries Management - Licensing and Permitting Process

We note that a cap of 60 licenses allowed for issuance, provide clarification as to why there were only 58 licenses issued?

During the said period, the licensing committee had processed the two available spaces however, these were for new vessels that were replacing old uneconomical vessels. During this period, the two spaces were left vacant as the vessel were just newly constructed and were still in transit. However, due to COVID restrictions in 2020 it could not be brought to Fiji in time due to travel restrictions. Eg; prior to importing the vessel, representatives from Marine Safety Authority (MSAF) would have to travel to where the ships were being constructed to inspect the vessel before it is cleared.

17) Page 42 - What were the challenges faced by the Observer placement on the Fiji National Fleet fishing within the EEZ?

One is the mandatory annual training and refresher that observers will have to undertake for safety and reporting standards. This training run for up to 3 weeks which will need observers to all be on land at one given time.

Second is the need to schedule observers to meet the operational needs of vessels, given that vessels will have to come in for dry docking and general maintenance.

Additionally, is our obligation to place observers on regional US Treaty Trips which affects the availability of observers to be placed on national vessel to cover the EEZ.

18) Page 47 – Sea & Aerial Surveillance

a) We note a discrepancy between the number of sea surveillances in Table 31 and the summary above?

b) Can the Ministry explain why there were only three (3) aerial surveillance conducted from August 2019 to July 2020?

Fiji does not have operational budget nor surveillance aircrafts to undertake its national aerial surveillance program. We therefore rely on external support from our asset providers (Australia, New Zealand and France). Under Forum Fisheries Agency, aerial support is provided to members including Fiji during regional surveillance operations programs. These surveillance operations run between the periods identified above and in this case, Fiji has access to 3 surveillance exercise given that there are 14 other members that will be accessing the aerial surveillance assets during this time.

c) Provide total costing of conducting sea and aerial surveillance?

The Ministry of Fisheries has no committed budget towards aerial and surface patrols. However, in country all surface and aerial patrol is coordinated by the Fiji Navy under the Ministry of Defense. This is done through coordinated efforts. Generally, to undertake surface (sea) patrol, Fiji Navy has two types of Patrol boats, the Guardian (big vessel) would need around \$90,000 FJD to cover for fuel and operation cost. This is for the standard 14 days.

For a small vessel they will need around \$40,000 FJD to operate for the standard 14 days of patrol. *Note that due to the high cost of operation, most of these activities are undertaken through cost sharing arrangement and coordination through bilateral and multilateral arrangements.

Aerial Surveillance: Since Fiji does not own an aerial asset, coordination is done through our traditional partners. However, noting the aircrafts made available to Fiji, the shared budget for the Regional Forum Fisheries members is at 12 million AUD a year. This amount is shared across members during the 5 regional operations that occur annually. This budget supports provision for fuel, aircraft use, surveillance equipment, maintenance etc.

19) Page 48 Table 32: Number of Port Monitoring by Flag

a) The Committee noted that there were no monitoring conducted in June and July?

June and July are the end of the fiscal year. This means that financial support towards operations has been exhausted and it limits the ability of officers to work overtime and monitor the catch being landed. Also there may not likely have been any in-port transshipment conducted during that period nor any vessels of interest (high compliance index) arriving in port.

b) How often does the Ministry conduct its port monitoring?

Based on vessel compliance index and needs vessels are selected according to priority. This is usually conducted on a daily basis given the compliance index of vessels using our ports. Ie; the lower the compliance level the higher the supervision. Most foreign fleets are monitored during port visits.

- c) **Does the Ministry have standard schedule to conduct pre-fishing inspection?**
Yes, under the Regional Standards that have been incorporated in national laws and procedures there are mandatory steps and measures in place to ensure vessels comply with mandatory conditions prior to being issued with a Fiji fishing license. This includes the inspection of equipment, gears, fish hold, and documents before the vessel is cleared. This report is forwarded to the licensing committee secretary for compilation before tabling to the licensing committee for deliberation and decision.

20) Page 49 Table 36 – Number and Status of Investigation cases 2019- 2020

The Committee noted the table from number 1 to 4 should appear in the 2018-2019 annual report. Explain reasons why this was captured in the period under review?

The reason behind this is that, investigation proceedings began during the 2018-2019 period but it was concluded within the 2019-2020 fiscal year. With reference to the later fields of the table, one will note that some cases remain open and it will also appear in the 2020-2021 where there would be a status report of the same.

21) Investigation Reports

There were ongoing cases of breaching the Offshore Fisheries Management Act 2012 during the year under review. Update us on the progress of the investigation.

With reference to the later fields of the table, one will note that some cases remain open and it will also appear in 2020-2021 where there would be a status report of the same.

22) Page 57 – Figure 4: Can the Ministry please explain why there was a decrease in the number of trips and catch in 2019 – July 2020?

It is important to note that tuna migratory patterns follow changes to surface water temperature which would see fluctuations to catch as per table provided. It is also important to note the changes were expected given Fiji's Total Allowable Catch of Tuna species which is at 10,000 mt per year. 9,367.45 mt of tuna was reported within this period which is not a decrease but a projected figure based on scientific information

23) Page 58 – Fleet and Services Division

- a) **Provide an update on the replacement of old ice plants in the Western Division (Lautoka and Ba)?**

The Lautoka project just started the arrival of the Ice plants and the removal of the old Ice plant was completed. The new Ice plant is fully operational. At the moment the delivery of our services will be at 95%

- b) **Has the Ministry dealt with the problem faced by the Maritime Islands on the timely servicing of the ice plants and generators? Please provide an update.**

Complaints were mainly received from Taveuni and Kavala, this has defective machines which is why the breakdown rate is higher than other ice plants. However, we have seen a major reduction in the breakdown which results in every month complaints to 1 or 2 per year.

24) Page 60 – Contribution to the National Development Plan

Enlighten the Committee on how it progressed to achieve its fisheries programs, annual targets, and expected outcomes during the review period from 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020?

25) Page 65 – Contribution to the National Development Plan

Can the Ministry please provide an update on the remaining 28% that was supposed to be achieved in 2021 as per the report?

Ministry of Fisheries Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2020

26) Note 5: Page 82 Trust Fund Account

There was a restatement of \$262,209 of the Trust Fund Account to the Ministry of Fisheries from the Ministry of Economy.

a) What was the purpose of the funds and have funds been used only for that purpose?

The purpose of the Trust Fund was for the Fisheries 1/3 and 2/3 subsidy assistance that was in operation from 2007 – 2012. The interested fisher-folks from the 4 Divisions applied for the assistance through the respective Divisional Offices. The respective Divisional Subsidy Vetting Committees scrutinized all the applications based on the set criteria and they were assisted through the subsidy scheme. The funds were disbursed specifically for its intended purpose.

b) Has the figures been reconciled? If yes, can the Ministry elaborate further on the strategy in place to prevent this from recurring

Further to the responses to Question 26 (a) above, at the conclusion of the Subsidy Scheme, the remaining funds in the WBC Trust Account were reconciled and transferred back into the Consolidated Fund Account in July 2022. This was after the audit conducted by the Internal Audit & Good Governance [IAGG] Unit in 2022.

The Ministry managed to clear the Trust Account from the Westpac Bank Corporation through the Ministry of Finance and closing off of the True Trust Bank Account as per instructions from the Ministry of Economy as per memos dated 01/06/2022, in line with Act No. 13 of 2022 issued on 15/03/2022.

In addition, the Ministry wishes to highlight the comment by the Financial Reporting Monitoring & Evaluation Unit of the Ministry of Finance, in their June 2022 Reconciliation Review Report for the Ministry quoting, ***“Acknowledging the efforts by the Ministry in clearing the True Trust Bank Balance by transferring the money to the Consolidated Fund Account for future claims of payment. The General Ledger was cleared under Head 32 via JV number 321816 in period 11i.e. June 2022”***



MINISTRY OF FISHERIES

HEADQUARTERS

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MEMORANDUM

From: Acting Permanent Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry **Date :** 24 April 2023
To : Secretary General to Parliament **File Ref:** FI/G/9-21
Re : Clarification of Issues on Ministry of Fisheries Annual Report 2020 - 2021

Attention: Ms. Akanisi Rumasakea, Secretariat to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources

Reference is made to the email correspondence dated 19 April 2023 on the above mentioned subject is acknowledged.

The Ministry welcomes the examination of our operations, accomplishments, and initiatives undertaken in the 2020 - 2021 Annual Reporting period. The Ministry will continue to offer the Standing Committee on Natural Resources its support and cooperation.

Enclosed herewith are our responses to the queries sent by the Secretariat. The undersigned can be contacted for any further clarification.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Atelaite Rokosuka'.

Atelaite Rokosuka (Mrs.)

Acting Permanent Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry

STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES **MINISTRY OF FISHERIES 2020 – 2021 ANNUAL REPORT SCRUTINY**

Q1. Page 2 – Permanent Secretary’s Foreword

Please brief the Committee on what economic recovery plan does the Ministry have in place to mitigate unforeseen circumstances in the years ahead?

The Ministry in 2020-2021 had developed a three year Economic Recovery Plan to cushion the impact of the pandemic on the Fisheries Sector. The following strategies were factored as part of its economic recovery plan:

- by 2029, to mitigate unforeseen circumstances by creating an enabling environment that will ensure positive ecological, economic, and well-being outcomes are assured for the long-term benefit of our stakeholders as well as ensure that we achieve self-sufficiency in the sustainable management of our fisheries.

Vision:	Assuring Long-term Benefits for Fijians and Self-Sufficiency in Fisheries	
Mission:	Protect and manage Fiji’s fisheries to ensure the sustainability of food security and economic advancement at the community and national level	
Objective:	Best Fisheries in the Pacific Region.	
Values:	Excellence – Integrity – Innovation – Inclusiveness – Professionalism - Accountability	
2029 Aims	Strategic Priorities	
Offshore - Create Value		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Expanded overseas markets● Diversified mix of commercial species● Regional hub for processing	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Reduce the cost of doing business2. Establish partnerships to develop hydrographic mapping capability and analysis of non-tuna species3. Increase our service efficiency through technology4. Implement Offshore Development Fund5. Work with the Ministry of Labour to ensure international labour standards are met6. Develop a hook-to-fork traceability system	
Coastal - Sustain and diversify		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Every coastal community derives an income while stocks are maintained at a sustainable level● Stimulate the development of pearls, seaweed, and fin fish industries	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Coastal ecological management plans in place, robustly monitored and surveilled2. Implement species management plans3. 30% of Fijian waters declared a marine-managed area4. Host Westpac IOC meeting and open regional research center in Suva5. Robust licensing scheme in place6. Engage and work with communities and Fishery Associations to ensure cooperation and buy-in7. Forge all 32 stations into a strong network, sharing data and best practice8. Establish community-based pearl spat farms9. Establish a scientific, regulatory, and commercial framework for the fin fish industry10. Strengthen MCS and enforcement11. Improve internal processes and reporting	
Aquaculture - Grow Rapidly		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A thriving aquaculture industry-led sector across	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Establish a fit-for-purpose legislative and regulatory framework2. Implement an effective biosecurity framework3. Establish a National Aquaculture Development Plan	

Fiji with a diversity of commercial species	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Identify two new species for long-term development e.g., barramundi 5. Use technology to identify potential sites 6. Develop JVs with other agencies and investors 7. Implement a communications programme to inform Fijians about the opportunities and good practices of aquaculture development 8. Incentivise the private sector for sustainability
Ministry Capability - Leadership and Impact	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be well-regarded by Fijians and other stakeholders for the way we work and the impact we make. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement a values-driven leadership culture, with a clear purpose, 'mission mindset' and emphasis on urgency, accuracy, collaboration, and accountability across our operation 2. Build the brand – ensure Fijians understand and respect our role 3. Execute Project Phoenix and evaluate impact Increase the local presence of Fisheries Officers 4. Strengthen management and leadership skills, equipping managers to lead the Ministry's strategy 5. Implement a clear applied science strategy, based on Westpac IOC 6. Implement a comprehensive engagement strategy to raise awareness of and response to sustainable fishery among Fijians and align NGOs and other stakeholders and investors to our priorities.

Q2. Page 3 paragraph 7

a) What sort of measures could be taken to combat the loss of valuable species from subsistence fisheries during this review period?

- Precautionary approach centered on setting spawning seasons, size limitations, and strengthened monitoring of restricted areas and is based on stock assessment, current catch, and market survey data.
- Providing accurate advice and support the monitoring of the permit conditions by resource custodians, which are set therein the license conditions
- Establish a quota management system for highly exploited species, based on the best available science
- Users and decision-makers involved in the particular fishery are to be consulted and informed on the rationale behind these measures. Wider effort on education and outreach and greater accountability by resource users.
- Strengthened enforcement of fisheries laws and its updated legislations including review and amendment of certain provisions that address complex activities within subsistence fisheries.
- Gazettal of changes to ensure the provisions are enforced and tangible.

b) Page 4 Paragraph 2 - How does the Ministry monitor the culture and the harvesting of beche- de-mer?

- Currently, sea cucumber culture is relatively limited, with the Ministry's Galoa Hatchery exclusively operating and managing the culture program for Brown Sandfish (*Holothuria scabra*) hatchery activity.
- The OFMR Regulation 4 and Legal Notice 32 continued to forbid the collection of sea cucumbers throughout this time of reporting.

Q3. Pages 5- 6 Contribution of the Fisheries Sector to Fiji's Economy

a) Please provide clarifications why there was a decline in employment in Marine fishing on commercial as shown in Table 1 of 2019, page 6.

The exact reason for the decline cannot be ascertained as this data is captured by the Bureau of Statistics and is consolidated and published with Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery as one industry. Upon request, a breakdown is provided to the Ministry without any explanation of the reasoning for increases or declines. The detailed report can be accessed via the link below: <https://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/statistics/social-statistics/employment-statistics44.html>.

Possible reasons could be that commercial fishing provides an inherently challenging and sometimes hazardous work environment.

- Workers carry out their duties on a moving, wet, slippery platform surrounded by heavy machinery and the ocean.
- They are frequently far from home, required to undertake physical work over long hours, low on resources, and without adequate legal and medical protections that many of us would take for granted, this is particularly for those who are employed on commercial longline fishing vessels.
- This could also be attributed to fishing related businesses that may have closed down during the period and those whose employees may have been made redundant.

The Ministry is working with the Ministry of Employment to address this as employment issues fall under their core deliverable.

b) Page 6 - There was a change in consumer preference towards prepared and preserved fish and crustaceans according to the report. Can the Ministry explain this?

A massive increase of FJD 22.2 million (23%) was seen due to a change in consumer preference toward prepared and preserved fish and crustaceans during the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted mainly due to consumers finding it easier and safer to purchase these due to the reduced risk of spreading COVID-19 (as the speculation was that COVID can spread through fresh seafood contamination by touching) and also due to the lockdown restrictions consumers preferred to purchase and store food at home in large quantities.

Q4 Page 8 – Organization Chart

Can the Ministry please brief the Committee on the hierarchy of channels of communication as illustrated in the organization chart?

The Deputy Secretary for Fisheries is responsible for operational support services for the Ministry and provides high level policy advice to the Hon Minister and the PSFF for the effective administration of the following Divisions: Human Resources and Administration; Finance; Economic Planning & Policy; IT and Library Services; and Fleet and Technical Services. All the Managers of these Divisions reports directly to the DSF.

The Functional Managers for Research, Offshore Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Inshore Fisheries and the Regional Managers for Eastern, Northern, Western, and Central report directly to the Director of Fisheries. (technical support)

Both the Deputy Secretary for Fisheries and the Director of Fisheries report to the Permanent Secretary for Fisheries and the Minister for Fisheries. The reporting line was one encouraged by the Permanent Secretary of this reporting period.

Q5 Page 8 - Human Resources

What has the Ministry done to address the problem of officers resigning from the Ministry?

Staff resignation is beyond the Ministry's control, as this is driven by attractive packages staff received from their new offers. The Ministry noted that staff resignations are mainly because of better remuneration packages which is something Government cannot compete with. On the contrary, we ensure that the workforce is developed simultaneously through capacity building and training and upgrading of qualification and that they are in a readiness stage to take over responsibilities when one tenders their resignation.

Q6 Page 10- 2020 – 2021 Key Highlights

Can the Ministry please brief the Committee on the Operational Plans Implementation?

The Ministry developed its own monitoring and evaluation mechanism to ensure we are able to track output performance against resources provided to us. The Ministry had achieved 74% of all the 194 key performance indicators listed in the 23 outputs and 20 strategic priorities in the operational plan for 2020-2021. Summarized below is the achievement for each table in the operational plan.

Table	Percentage of KPIs achieved
Portfolio Leadership, Policy Advice, and Secretarial Support	72%
Growing the Economy - Offshore Fisheries Strategy	74%
Management and Fisheries Conservation - Coastal Strategy	68%
Food Security - Aquaculture Strategy	72%
Quality Strategy - Deliver Impact	79%
HR & Administration Deliverables	73%
Finance Deliverables	85%

Q7 Page 11- Summary of 2020- 2021 Operational Plan Achievement

Can the Ministry please explain the illustrations shown on Figure 7?

The illustration shows the Ministry's operational plan implementation from quarter one to quarter four of the financial year.

Ministry	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
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KPIs achieved	26%	40%	61%	74%
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Percentage of KPIs achieved for each Table	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Portfolio Leadership, Policy Advice, and Secretarial Support	19%	31%	60%	72%
Growing the Economy - Offshore Fisheries Strategy	27%	37%	59%	74%
Management and Fisheries Conservation - Coastal Strategy	35%	43%	59%	68%
Food Security - Aquaculture Strategy	29%	35%	57%	72%
Quality Strategy - Deliver Impact	15%	41%	68%	79%
HR & Administration Deliverables	26%	50%	64%	73%
Finance Deliverables	25%	50%	65%	85%

Q8 Page 12 – Can the Ministry brief the Committee on Table 4 2020 – 2021 on Capital Projects Summary (row 1, the project had a high labour cost (50%), column 3, overachievement of the target, column 5 also has a high labour cost (44%)) and achievement was just over 55%

This program is where the bulk of the research activities are being sourced from. There are a total of 10 project officers (3 Fisheries Assistants, 1 Driver, and 6 fieldmen) that are being paid from the program as well. The two main activities carried out during the financial year was the Marine Resource Inventory survey for 4 Marine Protected Area and Fisheries Stock Assessment for Targeted Species in 4 locations. A large portion of the expenses was to cater for the logistical arrangement, wages, and allowances for the staff involved in the Research activities.

Q9 Page 12 - Summary of 2020 – 2021 Capital Projects Achievement.

- a) The Ministry was allocated a capital budget of \$4.09 million. As of 31st July 2021, the capital budget utilized was \$3.48 million with a utilization rate of 85.25%. Can the Ministry please explain why they did not fully utilize the budget?**

COVID-19 was the main contributing factor to why the Ministry did not fully utilize its Capital budgetary provision for the financial year mainly due to travel and movement restrictions. Most of the Capital Programs require site visits and fieldwork and the travel/movement restriction really hinders the progress of these programs. All this contributes to the low utilization of certain programs.

b) Was there any support granted to small-scale farmers and community-based Aquaculture production for food and nutrition security livelihood?

Yes, there was. The support from the Ministry is in the form of grants that is under the “Food Security Project – Aquaculture”. The achievements are listed under Table: 4 2020-2021 Capital Projects Summary, row No.9. A total of \$460,000.00 worth of assistance was provided to 75 recipients. Assistance ranges from pond construction materials through to the first cycle for their fish feed.

Q10 Page 13 – Summary of 2020 – 2021 Capital Projects

a) The Ministry to please brief the Committee on their achievement on Row 7 on Fresh Water Aquaculture Program.

For the \$400,000 that was allocated for this program, the Ministry utilized 96%. COVID-19 was also a contributing factor in the Ministry’s ability to fully utilize these funds due to travel/movement restrictions. Even though there was a standstill for almost six months, the Ministry still managed to produce 1.365m fingerlings and distributed 960,920 fries to 202 farmers. There was a total of 107 dormant ponds that the Ministry managed to revive and 58 new ponds that were excavated. Even though there was very less farm visit, there was an increase in phone consultation keeping track of progress on the ground in relation to Aquaculture activities.

b) Is the Ministry considering increasing the budget for Freshwater Aquaculture?

The Ministry is putting together a budget submission, as well as project proposals for donor funding to increase the FreshWater Aquaculture for the next financial year. An increase in the budgetary provision means an increase in production and this will lead to an increase in economic returns and food security. For the 2022-2023 financial year the budget for Freshwater Aquaculture increased by \$100,000.00.

The achievements are based on the percentage of the target achieved.

- Farm Revival target – 20 farms, achievement – 107 farms
- New farms target – 40, achievement – 58 farms
- Farm visits target – 400/month, achievement 87/month – (due to covid restrictions)
- Consultations target – 300, achievement 370

Q11 Page 15 – Achievements from Functional Divisions - Legislature Review

a) What was the outcome of this Legislative Review and the impact on the overall performance of the Ministry?

Offshore Fisheries:

The Legislative review did not happen due to instructions received to hold off any activities pertaining to this. Nevertheless, and in anticipation of a review, the Ministry continued connecting with industry stakeholders especially for the Offshore Fisheries subsector. The OFMD Division undertook its own legislative gap analysis sessions internally and collated the industry’s suggestions for revisions to the Offshore Fisheries Management Act and the Management Regulations 2014.

This similar exercise was also undertaken for the Aquaculture and Inshore Fisheries Divisions/subsectors.

Inshore Fisheries:

- i. The outcome of the Ministry's staff capacity building program saw an improvement in the application of the law and updated regulations in its enforcement procedures. Staff was trained on the different and coordinated protocols pertaining to people approach, caution interviews, investigations, reporting, and case filing. This boosted the confidence among authorized officials to enforce the laws governing fisheries and to penalize offenders when necessary. In addition, the positive impact also correlated with the robust case filing and the number of cases being registered for prosecution and recognition of fisheries laws in the management of fisheries resources.
- ii. The Legislative Need Analysis is a strategy for the review of the current legislation. The emerging issues and use of sophisticated and advanced technology including organized networks in relation to illegal activities is a concern. The legislative gaps, particularly provisions that were established in a context that are now outdated, are rather known and used by individuals or groups to their advantage and somehow support continuous illegal and unreported activities. These are factors that threaten the nation's sovereignty and security on resource sustainability and loss of economic value within Fiji's Fisheries waters. The Ministry's plan is to make certain amendments, after the formal review of the Legislative Gap Analysis.

Q12 Page 17 – Electronic Monitoring Systems

The Ministry of Fisheries had been provided with the budgetary allocation of \$600,000.00 FJD for the continuation of the Electronic Monitoring Systems under the Offshore Fisheries Management. Can the Ministry please clarify whether the budget allocation was fully utilized?

The \$600,000 comprised of the salaries of the 6 project officers and the systems hardware maintenance, satellite, and replacements costs to the service provider Satlink International, a Spanish company.

The salaries component was fully utilized however the component for the service provider could only be used once a tender waiver had been granted by the ITC Steering Committee. This tender waiver took a while to attain and was eventually granted on 27 July 2021.

Q13 Page 18 – Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8

During COVID-19, there was a drop in the volume of fish caught and the number of consumers. Has this changed post-COVID-19?

There has been an increase in production and prices after 2020. The slight increase from 2021-2022 is due to the number of samples collected from a limited number of data collectors (vacant positions) including lockdown. As for this year 2023 it is envisaged to increase, as the figures show the production and value from Aug 2022-April, 2023. The production figures from Lautoka,

show an increase in price and also production. The BDM fishery has also contributed to an increase in reef fish prices in addition to the rise in fuel prices.

Q14 Page 19 – Can the Ministry explain why there were no data collection Officers in the Eastern Division?

Data collectors were initially placed in the Eastern Division (1 in Vunisea Kadavu and 1 in Levuka) after the establishment of the new Data Unit. The focus of the data collection is to primarily target areas where the majority of the fish are traded.

The only formal markets in the Eastern Division are Vunisea and Levuka. Data collected from these markets were relatively very low and the majority of the fisheries products from these maritime islands were being brought to Suva onboard motorized vessels. These are then sold to middlemen or landed at the Suva and Nausori Fish markets. The Central Division has quite a huge demand.

Towards, the end of 2019, the two data collectors were stationed in Suva. The capturing of the large volume of fisheries products that are traded around the various and busy markets in the Suva-Nausori corridor (this includes the newly opened Laqere Market) requires manpower. Data collection and field entries using the standardized method is a demanding task, particularly during the busy times of the week. The effort of the two data collectors has greatly assisted in the capture of extensive data within these markets.

Q15 -Page 20 – Sea Cucumber Ban Lifting

Was the Sea Cucumber Regulation gazetted, and were both the regulations and the plan implemented by the Ministry?

- The management and enforcement of the harvest and trade of sea cucumber were referenced to the Public Notice (01.07.22): “Lifting of the Ban to Harvest and Trade Holothurian (Beche-de-mer) or Sea Cucumbers”. The conditions included the following:
 1. Approved harvesting period
 2. Licensing
 3. Approved Harvest Method and Collection Method
 4. Designated landing sites for monitoring
 5. Designated processing and export period.
 6. Regulation 25A of Fisheries Regulations 1965 was applied to sandfish.
- The listed CITES species i.e., black and white teat fish were regulated and enforced under the Offshore Fisheries Management Regulations, 2014, Schedule 2B of Regulation 5 – Endangered and Protected Species.
- The Sea Cucumber Management Plan has been reviewed.

Q16 Page 21- Aquaculture Division

What is the progress on the four model commercial aquaculture farms that were set up? Are these farms still in operation?

The four farms were assisted through the Commercial Aquaculture Development Project (CAD). These farms were already operating as small commercial businesses, and under the CAD Project, the Ministry provided support in the form of grants to further assist and develop Commercial Aquaculture in Fiji.

The four farms (Growa Fish, Kaybees, Crystal Prawn and Fish Farm, and Sheng Wong Shrimp Farm) that were assisted have now further developed their operations. The farms have diversified and are now producing tilapia, shrimp, and prawn and supplying to local and overseas markets, operating hatcheries, and supplying seedlings to other farmers and employed staff.

Q17 Page 21 – Has the National Plan of Action for Sharks been implemented during the review period?

The Ministry conducted an NPOA pocket meeting with NGOs, Industries, and Government Ministries from the 20th of July to the 13th of August, 2020. The Plan is yet to be endorsed by government for implementation. This is one of the policy priority area for the current fiscal year.

Q18 Page 22 - The coconut crab management strategy was supposed to be established.

What is the update? Has there been any awareness carried out by the Ministry?

The Ministry of Fisheries in partnership with the University of South Pacific and PEUMP (Pacific European Union Marine Partnership) conducted a coconut crab stock assessment from 22 June to 14th July 2020. And the Ministry is in the process of using this information to draft the management plan for Fiji's coconut crab population. The Strategy is still in its development stage.

Q19 Page 22 – Fiji Ridge to Reef funded by GEF/UNDP

What is the status of those technical reports? Have those reports been disseminated to the stakeholders?

The Ministry of Fisheries conducted the Marine assessment for *i-qoiliqoli* Tunoloa under Ridge to Reef project and the report was submitted to UNDP for dissemination to the stakeholders.

Q20 Page 24 – Technical Services

a) Have all the ice plants reported to have been repaired in 2020-21 still fully functional?

Yes, all ice plants are fully operational.

b) Can the Ministry please provide an update on whether the outstanding defects for ice plants in Rotuma, Cicia, and Levuka have been addressed?

Yes, all outstanding defects have been addressed.

Q21 Page 25 – Achievements from Regional Divisions – Central Division

Can the Ministry please brief the Committee if the Muanaira Women's Group benefitted financially from the Muanaira Mangrove Oyster Project?

- Muanaira mangrove oyster women's farm
 - ✓ Established in November 2018
 - ✓ 50 women part of Women's Group (ages 30 to 70 years old)

- ✓ The Ministry of Fisheries provides basic materials for collecting spat and for grow out farm as well as technical support and training. The communities offer commitment and implementation of the project.
- ✓ Sustainable and ongoing project
- From 2020-22
 - ✓ 150 dozen sold at \$20.00 = \$3,000
 - ✓ 70 dozen sold at \$15.00 = \$1,050
 - ✓ 2,640 oysters
 - ✓ Total = \$4,050
 - ✓ Markets: Eden Restaurant (raw)
 - ✓ Local markets (cooked/raw)



Q22 Page 26 – Achievements from the Western Division

What actions or measures were undertaken by the Ministry to solve the 20 cases pending from the last financial year as stated in bullet 4 of the page?

Actions and measures that are undertaken by the Ministry:

1. Reviewing the processes of development of case files to identify gaps within the processes that compromise the success of our cases. These gaps were identified and strengthened through consolidated SOPs as checklists for the processes.
2. The quality check of case files through FTO, FOs Compliance and MCS, and our prosecutors. This process ensures that case files are strong for prosecution and that the necessary proofs is substantial

3. Compliance and Enforcement staff are being appointed as Prosecutors through training; this has allowed the Ministry to solve pending cases and attend to new cases effectively in a short span of time.
4. Building and strengthening the communication bridge between the IFMD Enforcement and Compliance unit to the Regions has allowed rigorous screening of case files and reports going to and from. This has allowed Regions to consistently produce strong case files for prosecution in court.

Q23 Page 27 Achievements from the Eastern Division

- a) Can the Ministry provide clarification on the 1st bullet point in relation to the estimated catch of 9 ×6ft solar freezers of \$194,400K?**

The estimated catch of \$194,400 was calculated based on the capacity of each 6ft freezer which

normally has a capacity of 300kg of fish when it is full on a monthly basis:

$300\text{kg} \times \$6.00 \text{ per kg} = \$1,800 \times 9 \text{ solar freezers} = \$16,200 \times 12 \text{ months} = \$194,400$

- b) Can the Ministry please provide a list of all other FADs and Solar Freezers deployed post-July 2021-- and a list of those planned for deployment?**

After July 2021, we managed to install an extra 7 solar freezers for the Province of Kadavu in 2022. Out of this 7, 3 were funded by FAO and 4 were funded by the Government of Taiwan:

FAO Assistance - Buliya, Ono, Kadavu

- Vabea, Ono, Kadavu

- Talaulia, Nabukelevu, Kadavu

Assistant from Taiwan - Dravuni, Ono, Kadavu

- Matasawalevu, Nakasaleka, Kadavu

- Lagalevu, Nakasaleka, Kadavu

- Matanuku, Ravitaki, kadavu

We also managed to deploy 8 FADs, 2 in Kadavu, 2 in Vanuablavu, 2 in Koro and 2 in Moturiki in the year 2021-2022.

- END -

APPENDIX II

Verbatim Report on the Ministry of Fisheries Submission

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

ANNUAL REPORT

**Ministry of Fisheries 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and
2020-2021 Annual Reports**

SUBMITTEE: Ministry of Fisheries

VENUE: Big Committee Room, Parliament

DATE: Wednesday, 26th April, 2023

VERBATIM REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES HELD IN THE BIG COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ON WEDNESDAY, 26TH APRIL, 2023 AT 11.00 A.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: Ministry of Fisheries

In Attendance:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Mrs. Atelaite Rokosuka | - | Acting Permanent Secretary |
| 2. Ms. Neomai Ravitu | - | Director Fisheries |
| 3. Ms. Saras Gounder | - | Manager Research |
| 4. Mr. Taniela Naulu | - | Manager Finance |
| 5. Mr. Jone Amoe | - | Manager Offshore Fisheries |
| 6. Ms. Pranishma Kumar | - | Principal Economic Planning Officer |

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, members of the media and public, secretariat, viewers, ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to all of you and it is a pleasure to welcome everyone, especially the public viewers who are watching this session. I also welcome the two gentlemen who are with us here today, they came all the way from Bua.

The Fijian Parliament has commenced and endeavoured to introduce video with audio live broadcasting system in the Committees of Parliament.

As the Chair of this Standing Committee on Natural Resource, I am fortunate and glad to be given this opportunity to be here for this Committee's first public hearing session to be aired live since the launch of this system last year. For your information, pursuant to the Standing Orders of Parliament, specifically Standing Order 111, the Committee meetings are to be open to the public except for a few circumstances which include:

- national security matters;
- third party confidential information;
- personnel or human resources; and
- deliberations discussions conducted in the development and finalisation of committee recommendations and reports.

This public hearing will be open to the public, media and also aired live on television in the Parliament Channel, on the *Walesi* platform and Parliament social media platforms and website. For any sensitive information concerning this inquiry that cannot be disclosed in public, this can be provided to the Committee either in private or writing.

At the outset, I wish to remind, honourable Members and our witnesses that all questions asked are to be addressed through the Chairman. This is a parliamentary inquiry so

all things said and information gathered is protected under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act.

In terms of the protocol of this Committee hearing, please, be advised that movement within the meeting room will be restricted, no usage of mobile phones and to be on silent mode while the meeting is in progress.

Firstly, I would like to introduce the members of my Committee and the role of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

(Introduction of Committee Members)

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Our mandate is to establish in Section 70 of our Constitution and clearly outlined in Standing Order 109 of the Fijian Parliament which states that a Committee can examine matters related to forestry, agriculture, mining, environment, fisheries and the marine services.

It is also vital for the stakeholders to note that as per the Constitution, the Standing Committee of Parliament has the same powers as that of the High Court in terms of summoning and any person who appears needs to give evidence or provide information and compel the production and documents or other materials or information required for each proceeding and deliberation.

With those few words I now move on to the Reports in front of us which will be deliberating this morning - Ministry of Fisheries 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Annual Reports were referred to the Committee to scrutinise. The Committee is currently deliberating on four of the Ministry of Fisheries' Annual Reports concurrently and will be submitting the final Consolidated Committee Report in the next sitting of Parliament.

At this juncture we would like to inform the Acting Permanent Secretary and the team from Ministry of Fisheries that this Committee will be conducting a site visit to the Central, Western and Northern Divisions. For your information, we visited Vutia and Naduruloulou yesterday to physically witness a few ice plants and gather evidence from some of the programmes and initiatives of the Ministry as highlighted in the four Annual Reports. We seek your support in terms of the necessary protocol for communicating these visits to the Divisions and Fisheries Stations that has been earmarked by the Committee to visit. At the end of the presentation, the Secretariat will give you a copy of our itinerary for your information.

Before us, we have the representatives of the Ministry who will be present to us this morning to submit the 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Annual Reports. May I take this time to invite the witnesses to introduce themselves before we proceed with the presentation.

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Thank you very much, Deputy Chairperson and the honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. We are delighted to be

here this morning and we thank you for the opportunity to provide responses to the three Annual Reports that you are currently scrutinising for the Ministry of Fisheries.

(Introduction of representatives from the Ministry of Fisheries)

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Once again, thank you for availing yourselves to be part of this inquiry. You may start and please note that if there are any questions by the honourable Members of the Committee, they may interject, or we will await until the end of your presentation then we will ask you questions.

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Deputy Chairperson, we would like to take you through a short presentation which is there before you on the screen. As I have already said, we are delighted and thankful for this opportunity and we are also thankful for the livestream for members of the public who are listening in this morning.

The objective of the presentation this morning is just to provide an overview of what the fisheries sector or the fisheries ministry as is as we speak in terms of the current status and just to set the scene in terms of the three Reports that we are to provide response on.

(Referring to the PowerPoint slides)

That is our vision, Deputy Chairperson and honourable Members. We classify ourselves to have the best fisheries in the Pacific region with that mission of Sustaining, Managing and Protecting Fiji's Resources.

Those are our organisational values and one thing the Ministry of Fisheries wishes to aspire towards is to have quality in our processes, quality in our people, quality in our service delivery to our diverse customers and that is where our organisational values come in.

Honourable Members, in terms of our business, I believe you are very well versed with what the Ministry of Fisheries is mandated to do. I will just summarise three key words, our mandate or our ministerial portfolio is on the manage, sustain and to protect Fiji's fisheries resources.

Moving on to our maritime limits, which is the next slide please. In terms of our maritime limits, the Fiji fisheries is looking after a total area of 1.3 million square kilometers which encompasses of over 130,000 square kilometers archipelagic waters, 45,000 territorials, our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is around 1.145,000 square kilometers and inclusive of that is our 411 customary fishing grounds or our *qoliqoli* areas. A point to note honourable Members, is that the fisheries sector supports the livelihood of around 29,000 households in the country (indirectly and directly) which is picked out from under the Agriculture Census of 2020.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Just one question, Deputy Chairperson. As in that data in the number of households that are supported by, is this number of households being going up or down or has it been constant over the past decade or so?

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Deputy Chairperson, with regards to the trend, yes the trend has increased and you will note that it constitutes of around 41/5 as per the latest census of 2020, in light with the total of 79/100 cultural households.

Moving on to the next slide, please. The next slide provides us with a spread in terms of better understanding the magnitude of our service delivery. We have 32 service centres nationwide and included in those 32 service centers are six hatcheries and that includes two in the Central Division, two in the Western Division, one in the Northern Division and one in the Eastern Division. Those are the hatcheries that the Ministry operates under our Public Sector Investment Programme. That is inclusive of the 32 service centres across the nation. Also on the maps, honourable Members, you will note that there are colour codings. The colour codings give you a snapshot of the various facilities under the responsibility of the Ministry ranging from hatcheries to fish aggregation devices to ice plants and the list goes on. We hope to continue to update these maps as we move on in terms of implementing our projects.

In terms of our three broader areas of focus, honourable Members as you have noted, in light of post-pandemic and supporting the nation with economic recovery, the Ministry had re-strategised our focuses and we are now focusing on three broader areas:

- i) In terms of supporting national economic recovery, the Ministry is looking at all opportunities, commodities that would actually drive us towards economic growth;
- ii) We are also mindful of the need to provide food security and the livelihood in all the initiatives and all the programmes that we administer; and last but not the least
- iii) Our resource sustainability. The Ministry is always of the firm belief that if the resources are not managed properly, they are not sustainable, food security and food sources will not be sustained, and definitely economic activity will not increase and that is why we have one of the three focused areas as resource sustainability.

Moving on to the 10-year strategic plan, honourable Members, you may be aware that the Ministry has a 10-year plan that was endorsed around 2019 and would expire in 2029. This plan covers three sub-sectors of fisheries.

The first one is on offshore; we have our coastal and also our eco-culture strategy. When we looked at our plan, we saw that for offshore, there is a need for the Ministry to create value and to focus on the key strategic priorities that are mentioned there. We need to ensure that we have a sustainable and profitable tuna industry. We are also looking into having Fiji as the regional hub for processing and the last one was to ensure that we have a sustainable market access for our offshore tuna species.

Having said that, the Ministry is also looking at developing other non-tuna like species in terms of diversifying in the offshore fishery space.

For coastal fisheries, our aim is to sustain and diversify and the aim is centered around to ensure that our coastal communities can drive sustainable income from marine eco-culture initiatives. In this substrata, we identify key commodities that our people can be part of and

generate economic activity and I believe yesterday you must have witnessed or seen one of those and that is the edible oyster project in Vutia.

The last one honourable Members is on eco-culture strategy. Eco-culture is a new fishery, it is one that we feel that can grow rapidly if we have the right mechanisms and the right resources injected into it and those listed there are our targets till 2029.

For the next slide honourable Members, it just gives us a snapshot of our legislative and policy framework. You will note that we have several legislations that we administer and also policies that have been developed to support and provide that enabling environment for growth, sustainability and food security to thrive. I do understand that we have a very archaic legislation which is the Fisheries Act, but we are fortunate enough that Cabinet had endorsed the review of the legislation in its meeting of yesterday.

Looking into the economics of the fisheries sector, you will note in the next slide, honourable Members, that the fisheries contra-sector contribution between 2020 and 2021 has a declining trend. It has been sitting around 0.7 percent and 0.6 percent, that is in terms of the overall fisheries sector contribution to GDP.

When we look at the exports which is the bottom left graph, you will note that there is a drastic increase in our exports between 2021 and 2022 from \$149.8 million, it has gone up to \$207 million as of December last year. Looking at the other slides, you will note that there is a declining trend in our imports from 3 percent to 1 percent and it has been sitting on 1 percent since 2021 and 2022.

Moving onto the snapshot on the revenue targets that I have mentioned already, honourable Members. When COVID-19 had hit....

HON. J. USAMATE.- Can I get a clarification? So this for your fish imports is a percentage of what? The 3 percent, 1 percent is a percentage of what?

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Through you Deputy Chairperson, that is 1 percent of total imports.

On the next slide, honourable Members, the Ministry had to review its plans in 2020 when COVID-19 hit, so we had set ourselves revenue targets in our three-year economic recovery plan and in setting our targets, we had said that within five years, we were going to achieve FJD\$500 million as per our revenue target. If you look at the numbers that are there, honourable Members, right now we are sitting on \$187.4 million of that target of \$500 million target for five years.

Moving on to our organisational structure, honourable Members, that is the structure for the Ministry since 2018. We have the Director Fisheries and the Deputy Secretary Fisheries that reports directly to the Permanent Secretary. We have our Corporate Services Division together with our other support services that reports directly to the Deputy Secretary. We have eight functional divisions that reports directly to the Director Fisheries. These includes our functional divisions of offshore, inshore, eco-culture and our four Geographical Regional Managers.

In terms of our staffing, honourable Members we have around 356 as our staff establishment for the Ministry. You will note that in terms of staffing strength, we only have around 309 staffing strength means that we have around 45 vacancies that are yet to be filled for the Ministry.

Honourable Members, the last slide is just a snapshot of our budget breakdown since 2016 and 2017. As you are aware, in 2016 and 2017 was the year when the Ministry became a standalone Ministry and that is the trend in terms of our budget that was given through the budgetary of the Government budget process and the utilization rate is sitting around 75 percent to 90 percent over the years.

That, Mr. Chairman and honourable Members is a snapshot of where we are currently at and in terms of our focus, I will be glad to take any more questions if you have anything further or otherwise, I will now handover to the Director Fisheries who will take us through the 2018-2019 Responses.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- *Vinaka*, Madam Acting Permanent Secretary. Honourable Members, do you have any questions regarding the presentation?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Just one on the third last slide – the snapshot of revenue targets 2022-2023, overall target of \$187.4 million, offshore target of \$160 million. So these are targets? Would you be presenting later on the actual performance against these targets?

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Sir, if you look at the figure that is just above the graphs, 2022-2023 that is the actual target that we have achieved thus far out of the \$500 million revenue target.

HON. J. USAMATE.- So you have a \$500 million target for what - five years or one year?

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Sir, for five years.

HON. J. USAMATE.- So you have done \$187.4 million in the first year for a five-year target.

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Yes, Sir.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Not bad, very good. Is the target too low?

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Sir, probably from the outset, I would say that there has been a lot of talks in terms of the contribution of the fishery sector in terms of it being undervalued. The Ministry is currently working together with Bureau of Statistics in terms of having the Fisheries Satellite Account which would actually give the actual measurement and contribution of our fisheries sector. There are other areas that may be not accounted as we speak but we are working towards rectifying that that in our Fisheries Satellite Account project.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Why I was asking that question because in my earlier question, you had identified that the number of households depending on fisheries had increased. It seems like from that answer that more people are involved in fisheries. So with that in mind,

is that target too low? Is there are a lot more untapped potential that we are still not getting into, perhaps in areas like eco-culture, this is a general question.

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- You are right, honourable Member. There are a lot of potentials, eco-culture is one as you rightly stated, and the Ministry is working towards looking at those high value niche markets that we can explore to get the targets over and beyond that.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Deputy Chairperson, through you, Sir. Can we refer to the organisational structure? In that organisational structure, we have the Minister and Permanent Secretary - one Senior Secretary reports to the Minister directly and one Senior Secretary reports to the Permanent Secretary, how different are their roles?

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Deputy Chairperson, through you, thank you very much honourable Member for the question. Their roles are very much similar in terms of facilitating, however, they are just facilitating two different officers. You will understand honourable Members the magnitude of service delivery from those two officers: looking after operations for the PS and looking at the policy level for the Ministers. But to answer your question in short, their roles are pretty much similar, however, they service two different officers – the Office of the Minister and the Office of the PS.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, are there any other questions?

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Deputy Chairperson, through you, again on the organisation structure. Some discussions were centered around how structures are normally done in a way that it will address the need for channel of communications, reporting channel and also in terms of career development for officers. When I look at how the Deputy Permanent Secretary and the Director sitting at the same level and I was comparing to the other ministries where they will have a Permanent Secretary, Deputy Permanent Secretary and Directors will come under two different Permanent Secretaries. Do you have some explanation as to how you wanted to have a structure that has two different levels of pay but having to come under the Permanent Secretary?

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Deputy Chairperson, through you, thank you very much honourable Member for your question. Ideally when the Ministry had moved into a standalone Ministry in 2016-2017, the structure was that we have the honourable Minister, the Permanent Secretary and we have the Deputy Secretary falling under each other meaning that the Deputy Secretary was the only one that was reporting directly to the Permanent Secretary. This structure, the way we have presented it this morning, this was a structure that was there during the reporting period. This was changed I think around 2020-2021 when we had both the Director and the Deputy Secretary Fisheries reporting directly.

In terms of remuneration, the Deputy Secretary is still remunerated at a higher level than the Director Fisheries. But in terms of efficiency of operation because the Director Fisheries was the Senior or the Chief Scientific Advisor, the Permanent Secretary then had thought that it would be ideal to have both reporting directly to the Permanent Secretary. As we speak, Sir, currently, we are reverting to the older structure of having the Permanent Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, and the Director Fisheries as part of the reporting line in one single line.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Which one is better, it works for the Ministry?

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Sir, with regards to the two structures, for the Ministry, I would say that in terms of looking at operational matters, it would be ideal to have a Deputy Secretary to support the Permanent Secretary whilst the Director Fisheries looks after all the technical matters. In terms of ensuring that everything is aligned towards the plan then towards the direction of the Ministry, it is ideal to have a Deputy Secretary who is there to actually oversee all the operations of the Ministry.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Deputy Chairperson, through you, just a supplementary question following on from honourable Usamate, Acting PS are you thinking of reviewing this structure or is it all good?

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Through you Deputy Chairperson, for any Ministry, there is always a need for us to review. So in terms of reorganisation, yes, that is part of the Ministry's plan to look at the structure in its totality, not only at the top level, but to look at it in totality. Our aim is to ensure that we have the service centres which are out there in the stations serving the people to be equipped with the right resources, that includes the capacity to deliver in terms of numbers.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Deputy Chairperson, on the same subject matter, in terms of staffing. I believe there is a slight weakness in that area. You have about 45 staff that needs to be taken on board so that you have full staffing. In terms of restructure, is there still a need for these 45?

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Deputy Chairperson, when the Ministry is planning to do its re-organisation, those are the areas we are going to look at. What we are advising our regional managers and functional managers, when they are looking at their vacancies which is sitting there at 45, that they not rush into filling those positions, they need to look at it in its totality. If there is a real need to have that, if not, then they can come up with options that Human Resource Unit can consider in terms of trading-off and looking at better remuneration, upgrading, et cetera. So in terms of the question, there may be a need for the 45 or there may not be, but depending on how we are going to access the needs of the Ministry in terms of the scope of delivery and outreach of our services.

HON. I. S. VANAWALU.- On that note, I remember in 2018, in your media unit there was only one officer and he was overworked, yet you still have vacancies not filled. So they are aligned in terms of their deliverables. We note that if someone is not at work, the repercussion is always there. I believe from the PS and the Executive team who are here, it is always good to utilise the resources that you are applying for in terms of your budget. Think about it, what about if he is sick and he needed to an urgent media coverage with your team, that is why I am asking that question.

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Deputy Chairperson, that is fully noted. Probably just from the outset too in terms of these vacancies, the Ministry was holding on to these vacancies

because of the current policy. Had the policy been lifted, we would have filled the ones that we think should be filled and is in need to the Ministry but we take on board your point.

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Deputy Chairperson, if I can also very briefly ask them on a concern that was raised through your staff yesterday. This is with regards to the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) where the consultant is hired to do an EIA for any project inland and where there is concern that degradation or depletion of marine resources could be affected. This was the involvement of specialists from the Ministry of Fisheries to do an EIA or continuous assessment of the fisheries areas when the work is carried out inland, because I believe they will do their continuous assessment. When we asked the Fisheries Officers yesterday, the involvement of the Ministry of Fisheries, I think that area of assessing the damages we have to our ecosystem out in the reef, because some of the people who normally go and buy fish are now feeling the increase in the price of fish in the market which could have been from the depletion of resource in our marine areas which have led to the increase in price.

MS. N. RAVITU.- Deputy Chairperson, the issue is well noted. There is a dire need to continuously assess the impacts, particularly when development occurs. The Unit under the Ministry is called the Fisheries Impact Assessment Unit. We basically undertake assessments to quantify the losses with respect to the marine environment that has been brought upon by development within a foreshore area. This is the role that we play as a technical advisor to the Department of Lands when a foreshore development occurs and a waiver of fishing rights is given, the Ministry undertakes as technical advisor to the Director of Lands undertakes a Fisheries Impact Assessment, particularly for that development. As for ongoing assessments of damages to the marine environment from ongoing development, that is sort of a grey area for us because we simply do not do it, unless there is an urgent need to do it, but we have the capacity to do it. It is noted that it is important that we continue to do that.

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Deputy Chairperson, these have been some of the concerns raised when there are complaints being forwarded because people are not really aware. The marine resource owners are not aware of the systems and procedures to be followed. If there could be areas of discussion when it comes to addressing some of the things that have not been covered well in previous works. I say this because there is quite a lot of developments upstream, not only mining but also unsustainable farming practices. It may be desilting erosion but it has long effects on how marine resources are depleted.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Deputy Chairperson, just a general question on our visitation to Naduruloulou yesterday afternoon. Maybe it is new to some of us. I am taking about the infrastructure at the station as it looks like age is catching up very fast - fencing and some of the ponds were empty. I am not sure whether they were 30 percent or 40 percent actively enough, because here we are talking about aquaculture. The Acting PS had emphasised that this is one of the areas they are looking at into moving forward for the sustainability of Fiji in terms of serving our farmers. Generally, what is before us is that they had already submitted their budget of about half a million. Is that quantifying when you look

at the whole standard? If I am right, from 1975 is the age of some of those buildings. When we went inside, here is a need because that will determine the budget.

MS. N. RAVITU.- Deputy Chairperson, thank you for raising that concern to us. It is something that we had to deal with in the past years also, the notable aging infrastructure of Naduruloulou. We have put together a budget to progressively improve certain areas of that need immediate improvements, but I guess in the past, we have not been able to secure enough budget to accommodate that renovation, but we continue to place our emphasise on that and of course we have had in the past assistance of donors that assist with infrastructural improvement particularly when we are looking at ponds.

Honourable Member, you have noted a very vital point in terms of the Ministry looking at aquaculture production in future to strengthen, to improve, to meet the food security needs of our population. You were seeing empty ponds in Naduruloulou, that is the reality on the ground given the aging infrastructure not only in the buildings but also out in the ponds. With flooding events, Naduruloulou ponds are consistently underwater. There is also a need to upgrade the ponds and of course look at our strengthening and stocking them to improve production. There is a lot of work that needs to be done and again we are asking for a substantial sum of budget for this year to see how much we can pick up on for the coming financial year.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Any final questions, honourable Members?

HON. J. USAMATE.- I have lots of questions.

(Laughter)

I have a number of questions on the snapshot of revenue targets. Thank you, Acting Permanent Secretary and the team. This 5-year target, is it from which year and what year- five years from what year? This revenue targets of \$500 million is from which year?

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Deputy Chairperson, Sir, this is from 2019-2020.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Second question, I noticed that for instance in your offshore, you are basically at 50 percent of your target, you have already achieved 50 percent. For the inshore you are at 5 percent and then for your aquaculture you are at 14 percent. I assume then therefore that your offshore target, you have obviously achieved it and gone overboard. So, I then assume that you will then focus a lot more on your inshore because you are only at 5 percent and you are already three years into your programme.

The first question, do you feel that what you have done so far you will be able to achieve it because you have got 95 percent of target to achieve? The other one for the aquaculture is currently at 14 percent and you have two more years. My second question is, do you feel confident that you will hit that target because I know there is a lot of potential.

When you talked about clams, obviously CITES is a problem. Hopefully you are doing something with environment for them to allow you to get all that done. I know for instance I mean caged type things that can be done, all those sorts of things. The last thing why is it that

you just focus on revenue targets and not cost benefit because you can hit the revenue but if your cost is too high, it does not make sense. Are you also converting this in terms of cost benefit targets rather than just revenue targets? I hope you can answer all those questions, I have forgotten again what I was asking.

(Laughter)

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Deputy Chairperson, I will try my very best to respond to all your questions. Honourable Member, I believe your assumptions are very correct in terms of offshore. Looking at the target of \$187.4 million, that is riding on the offshore fisheries in terms of tuna which is currently sitting at around \$111 million meaning that the surplus figures from \$111 million to \$187 million is touching the coastal and the aquaculture subsectors.

With regards to how confident are we in terms of achieving our targets, we are very much confident that with all the potentials out there in the sector and the plans that we have in the Ministry in terms of moving into mass production as per our budget submission submitted to the Ministry of Finance and also in terms of greater collaboration with our partners in developing effective public private partnership with specific commodities. One that has just been approved by Cabinet is seaweed. We do understand there were some failures in seaweed in the past, but we are picking it up again through our PPP model. Looking right across the sectors, yes, we are very confident that we will hit the \$500 million target in five years. I hope I have done justice, honourable Member with your questions.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I certainly hope you achieve your targets because as I said this one here is only 5 percent and I think the answer is what you have said, it has to be a PPP. You must get partners; you have to get incentives of people come in and do this so government does not do it. I believe that there is a lot of opportunity for aquaculture, lots, and lots but we need to have to get others to do it, that is the way that I am thinking about it. I wish you all the best getting to the 100 percent.

The last one, in your vision, I hope that you are doing some analysis in your vision. Great vision to have the best fisheries in the Pacific region. Where are we? Are we in the top 10 percent, middle because I think we need to be able to benchmark. Where do we see ourselves right now because the Pacific region is, does that cover Japan, America or is it just the small island states? Where are we right now three years into this plan? We are now three years into your strategic plan. I know vision is something you do over 40 years but right now where are we in terms of this vision? Are we in the top 10 percent, in the middle or at the bottom. Where are we roughly?

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Deputy Chairperson, with regards to where we are, right now we are on the top five in the regional space, that includes the Pacific islands countries as well as Australia and New Zealand. So, we are sitting on top five.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you honourable Members, if you have any more questions or need any clarifications, we can write to the Acting Permanent Secretary and the team.

MS. N. RAVITU.- Deputy Chairperson, I would like to draw your attention in responding to your questions that were raised under the Ministry's 2018-2019 Annual Report.

We had received 12 questions from the Committee, and I sit before you to answer or clarify the issues throughout the 12 questions that we had covered across the 2018-2019 Annual Report. If I may draw your attention on the questions on page 4 particularly on the overview of the fisheries sector in Fiji, there were questions raised, clarifications sought on our offshore fisheries sector, coastal commercial fisheries sector, our coastal subsistence sector and the aquaculture sector looking from page 4 to page 6 of the Annual Report.

In looking at the overview of the fisheries sector in Fiji with respect to offshore fisheries, the Ministry currently has a license cap of 60 vessels that are licensed to fish in Fiji waters and these being archipelagic waters, territorial seas and our EEZ. The cap is set to ensure long term sustainability of the sector in Fiji. It is a number that is set as a result of bio-economic analysis and scientific studies on the stock that we have that migrate through our waters.

Currently during the period of the reporting 2018-2019, we flagged 95 vessels to Fiji and again that was later reduced to 90 as five vessels had been scuttled during that period. In terms of limitation of catch per vessel, there is no limitation of catch per vessel. Here honourable Members, I am responding to part (c) of Question No. 1 on Offshore Fisheries. We have a total allowable catch that is set at 12 metric tonnes for the three target species of albacore, yellowfin and tuna under the arrangements between Fiji and neighbouring countries to address issues with regards to

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Deputy Chairman, so that total allowable catch is for all boats of 12 metric tonnes?

MS. N. RAVITU.- Yes, Sir.

HON. J. USAMATE.- For all boats?

MS. N. RAVITU.- Yes.

Deputy Chairperson, for the three target species. There is no catch limitation per vessel, so it is across the entire fishery.

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Deputy Chairperson, can I just interrupt here? These 12,000, the licenses are on an annual basis or yearly-based licences?

MS. N. RAVITU.- Deputy Chairperson, during that period of licencing, it was an annual licencing.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Now it is 15?

MS. N. RAVITU.- Now it has gone to 20 years.

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Deputy Chairperson, with similar arrangement of restrictions to

MS. N. RAVITU.- Correct, Sir.

Deputy Chairperson, the arrangements or agreements that are standing between Fiji and neighbouring countries, we work under the members through the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and within this Commission we place hard limits placed on the catches of tuna within the WCPO which is the Western Central Pacific Ocean. There are no catches per division particularly because offshore catches within EEZ, archipelagic and territorial waters, and there have been studies and research that are done by our partners on migration of our stocks as a result of global warming during that period.

We work with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, that in a nutshell predicts the migratory patterns of target species across the region and of course during that period, assessments that were done and the stocks that ranged across the WCPO looked at the quota extending westwards so the migratory route were extending westwards, whereas in the current year, with the onset of climate change, there are differing migratory routes that are seen under the current assessments for 2022 and 2023.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Through you, Deputy Chairperson, on the same subject matter. When you look at question (d) and the migration of certain species of fish. In terms of trending, through climate change, is there any data to indicate to us this trend has been happening for the last three years? Moving forward, how best can we look at means and how? I am talking about the relevant stakeholders outside Fiji. We talk about SPC, that is fine, as they are doing the research. But for us, it will affect our supplies, our targets because once they migrate, there is no possibility to cart them back here. The possibility of them in these climate change impacts on the water and how best you can achieve your target in terms of the volume or metric tonnes, these are means of how we do things when it happens on the ground. Focus, when moving forward. Where does the Ministry have its strategic plan in terms of the same happening another two or three years when moving forward?

MS. N. RAVITU.- Deputy Chairperson, I can confirm that we have trending analysis that can go back as far as 20 years to 30 years. This is analysed through the data that we collect from our fishing vessels from our domestic industry. So that is available nationally and also regionally and because we are talking about a regional stock and the impacts of climate change on the migration or redistribution patterns of this regional stock, we foresee some nations banking on better prospects with respect to the stocks going that way and we have those that we may lose out, particularly with the stocks coming out of their areas.

When we look forward for the Ministry, we cannot do the work alone, we again work with partners to establish systems that can help us determine where the stocks are going so that we can prepare us to help put in place strategies, seeing that even in the next 50 years we are benefitting from it, that we work now with the industry to place ourselves in a position to allow us to get the maximum benefits out of that redistribution.

There is current work with partners around and advanced warning system, given the redistribution patterns in the next 50 years. This work, with funding from the Global Climate Facility will help Fiji prepare itself or position itself to gain the maximum economic benefits

out of future projections and nationally, should that not come our way, should we be one of the countries that will miss out in that stock ranging our way, we also have additional alternative options such as aquaculture. Again, we will continue to fall back on aquaculture and consider other high-valued species that we can derive over established industry, Sir, from.

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Can I ask or make a recommendation along that line? The migratory pattern is a very interesting phenomenon that most people who may be watching television today are not familiar with. I wish people can be made aware of the pattern that is being talked about here because of the future harvests from our oceans. We have a facility that is sitting in Levuka that is dependent on, I may say here, this migratory pattern. For us to better plan, what we are going to hold for, not only Levuka but the whole fishing sector, these kinds of reports be at least made known to policy makers in the form of annual reports that we have here in front of us or even some other awareness programmes.

Again, I commend the work that you are doing with the other organisations that can foresee what we may benefit or lose out in the next 50 years or so because some of the investments are not only long-term investments in terms of infrastructure, et cetera. Some of those kinds of important information should be recorded, not only the figures of the harvest because some decrease in catch may be from the changing migratory patterns.

MS. N. RAVITU.- Deputy Chairperson, that is a very important point and we have these reports available as Fiji presents such scientific reports to a regional forum which can also be made available at the national level. We have just started along this path a few years back to begin to inform Parliament of the outcomes of some of these regional meetings that discuss issues on stock and stock projections in future. So that can be made available.

If I may, Deputy Chairperson, move onto the next set of answers. With respect to the same Annual Report, moving on to coastal commercial fisheries with respect to inshore, we are going into inshore fisheries, the number of fishing licence have been verified in the review period of 2018-2019. We issued a total of 1,324 inshore fishing licences and these are as provided in the response on that particular question.

On question (b) under coastal commercial fisheries, on the distribution of licences, we do not have any limitation on the issuance of inshore fishing licence within inshore waters. Any fisher who is willing to fish within traditional or customary fishing rights areas apply for permission to do so and permission is given by the customary fishing rights holders and that permission is approved by the Commissioner and of course the licence is issued by the Ministry.

There is work to have available the relevant sciences to allow us to put quotas on the number of effort control or the number of licences that we issue within each *qoliqoli*. As we see it, we have small *qoliqoli* having bigger number of licences and large *qoliqoli* just being issued a small number of licences. But this is work in progress, that given the sciences, to allow us to dictate that is completed and that can work towards establishing a quota quote system or controlling the effort of fishing vessels in a *qoliqoli*.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Do you have a target date by which you can do that? I assume what you are talking about, you have some sort of estimate about the volume of fish that is available and then on that basis determining the number of licences, is there a target date for that?

MS. N. RAVITU.- We have not yet ascertained a target date, honourable Member. Given that the science is in place, we should be able to then start mapping out.

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Deputy Chairperson, if I can ask here on those who do not have licences and still fish and sell, is there any monitoring done on that because they all add to the depletion of fisheries resources?

MS. N. RAVITU.- Deputy Chairperson, yes, we have enforcement officers that are in the markets every weekend, Compliance Officers. Not enough now but we try our best to undertake consistent operations. Each Division has operational plans for enforcement within the Divisions across every quarter. So, we try our best with the limited enforcement officers on the ground to target those illegal fishers, and at the same time advise them on the need to apply for licences should they start to sell their catch.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Any other questions, honourable Members? Director, you may continue with your submission.

MS. N. RAVITU.- Moving on to Coastal Subsistence Fisheries, indication of the quantity of valuable species, lobsters were given as an example. Again the Ministry through our Inshore Fisheries Management Division data collection on non-fish products which includes invertebrates, lobsters is ongoing. We also have work carried out with our partner organisations with respect to the science again that is needed to determine size limitations with respect to lobsters on the market and also for export.

Part (b) under Coastal Subsistence Fisheries, the availability of reliable markets for subsistence coastal fishermen in localities and whether there are any plans in the Ministry to upscale this.

Most coastal community fishers rely on the mandates of the Ministry to source their livelihood. Our Extension Officers work with our communities to develop plans to support them from measuring subsistence level to upgrading to commercial level. This is an initiative that we began during this reporting period and we continue to strengthen across the years. This is the establishment of fishing co-operatives where fishers are brought together to work together as a legal entity and empower them with their products on the market. We have even gone as far as recently to work with the Department of Co-operatives to establish and draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with them with respect to specific co-operatives for fishermen, and not a general co-operative as we know of now given the specificities around the commodity that is traded.

Again the effectiveness of these plans, establishing co-operatives, training fishing communities on fishing techniques, building relationships, connecting fishers to markets will only be realised if we have the necessary infrastructure to support it. Of course, again the Ministry through programmes of replacing of aging ice machines, distribution of solar freezers is some of the work that we currently undertake to support fishing co-operatives along the way.

Moving along to Freshwater Fisheries, the Ministry's plans to improve the management of Freshwater Fisheries. Again, some work that has been done, facilitated under the GEF Project through the Department of Environment and UNDP, the Ministry engages with partners and line agencies in producing concepts for co-management of identified water sheds under the Ridge to Reef Project.

Work that is undertaken and currently in place with management plans to improve the management of freshwater fisheries. Freshwater Fisheries Management has also never been placed much emphasis on for the Ministry, given that there was not enough capacity with the scientific of Freshwater Fisheries. However, with our work with partner agencies, we were able to build the capacities of our fisheries officers in looking at management of Freshwater Fisheries.

Moving onto Aquaculture, the progress was asked on the development of our 10-year strategic goal of growing aquaculture rapidly, again we are working at zoning of aquaculture areas by species. We started work around this particular reporting period and still work ongoing with the Department of Lands to identify suitable land, maybe land not under sugarcane farming programmes any longer and to use this available land and see their suitability to aquaculture, and of course, continue to promote the aquaculture in these areas. Majority of these areas lie along the coastal area of Nadi to Ba was identified as potential sites for shrimp farming and we also undertake other research on species resilience to climate change.

How we place ourselves in terms of aquaculture development in the region?

HON. J.N. NAND.- Deputy Chairperson, through you, you mentioned about species resilient to climate change. Research is going on in every division. How far have we progressed in that regard? Generally, if there is good research and the outcome is good then it can benefit our people on the ground.

MS. N. RAVITU.- Research species on those species that are resilient to climate change are species, for example, reef build species, coral species, some of the areas though not cultured in the wild but we undertake research with our partners particularly in identifying. We have identified certain areas or species of corals that are endemic to Fiji that are resilient to climate change. This is done again with our partner agencies such as reef explorer on resistant corals.

With respect to resistant fish, we have not really closed our research on this particular area. Again because the capacity we lack in the sciences that we have around endemic freshwater species, but we have noticed that with aquaculture, the gift tilapia species are very

resilient hard species over the years and still to-date we continue to use brooders and we are finding that they are resilient to climate change though they are aging in terms of spawning potential has gotten to them but that is more a biological issue with respect to changes in climate change. That is continuing in the region also, identifying areas that are resistant to climate change and again work that we do with our technical scientific science provide us.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, we are running short of time. If we can give time to the Ministry to continue with their presentation. If you have any other supplementary questions, we can write to them.

MS. N. RAVITU.- Deputy Chairperson, that being said, species of special interest will move right on to page six - *Kawakawa* and *Donu* Seasonal Ban. How efficient were we in addressing this issue on the ban w *kawakawa* and *donu* within this Annual Report? We had to beef up our surveillance and enforcement particularly in relation to the Legal Notice 32 that was issued in 2019. Prior to that, we continued to conduct consultations throughout Fiji again through the Fiji 4FJ promotion and that really churned out some of the cases that had come about with respect to illegal cases with the harvest of *kawakawa* and *donu*.

We continue to strengthen the monitoring programme but as you are aware in the past, the ban had been suspended as we found ourselves needing to recover the economy and we are looking into the current financial year in reactivating this ban on *kawakawa* and *donu*.

Deputy Chairperson, I may have to skip some sections as we have two other annual reports, but please honourable Members, we still have an opportunity to talk offline should you require more additional information, we are happy to provide some clarity around the key questions that are asked in 2018 and 2019. We note questions on page 13 of the Annual Report, responsibilities of Senior Executives. We spoke a little bit about this earlier through looking at the Ministry's structures, but again the question around the Director Fisheries being the advisor to the Minister and the Permanent Secretary to provide an explanation on some of the implementation of national policies within the reporting period and that as is outlined as per the response to that question.

In terms of page 14 on Performance Management, we were asked to clarify some data on page 14 with respect to Performance Management of staff. Again we have outlined on the tables in the Annual Report; 202 staff performance assessments were undertaken for 2018 to April 2019 by the then Ministry's Moderation Committee. That was a requirement out of the Annual Report for the ministry to report on and that is as tabulated.

In terms of infrastructure, we picked up some discussions on ice plants earlier. During our introductory session, we were asked to provide an update on the ice plants that were out of service for Rotuma during the review period and that is as reported; the Vanuabalavu ice plant built in 2002, continuous repair and maintenance due to the brand, ageing facility and that has been replaced since then. The Rotuma Ice Plant, again generator needs that were fixed during the reporting period. We noted the questions going through the highlights of the different divisions.

In the Western Division on page 15 of the questions, the Ministry was asked to clarify our relationship with NGOs for the Western Division. We continue to strengthen and work

with NGOs because of the alignment of the work that we do. NGOs basically align the work that they do on marine conservation, freshwater conservation to the mandates of the Ministry. We maintain a close network with these NGOs such as World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Mamanuca Environment Society, a dominant NGO in the West, Vinaka Fiji and SEE Change. All support the Ministry's work through our operational plans and areas such as monitoring of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), coral planting, giant clam receding and also they have come on board to assist with co-policing of marine reserves.

On the Ministry's requirement to provide an update on awareness programmes, that is as reported for the reporting period. Recreation of fishing is an issue particularly for the Western Division. Consultations have been conducted initially particularly with Fishing Charterers with the aim to provide awareness to them on the requirements under the Offshore Fisheries Management Act (OFMA) for On Spot Fishing and Recreational provisions. There are still work that needs to be strengthened around this area, and we will continue to undertake this as requirements under the Offshore Fisheries Management Act (OFMA).

The Eastern Division challenges due to their isolation, we were asked what those challenges and what measures were undertaken to tackle those challenges. The challenges again, due to isolation but addressed when the former government implemented a franchise. Both schedules still currently run in servicing these outer islands once a month. So we bank on these franchise services provided by Government Shipping Services to allow our officers to visit the stations and we also have provided infrastructure for our officers to undertake these extension areas around the Eastern Division.

Last but not the least, on page 35 on the Trust Fund Account, the Ministry was asked what had it done to ensure that the detailed listing of beneficiaries of the \$261,684 reflected in the Statement of Receipts of the Trust Fund Account is maintained and updated and the Ministry had managed to clear that Trust Account from Westpac and of course the relevant annexes showing the nil balance as reflected. Thank you Deputy Chairperson and honourable Members and again we will provide an opportunity for offline for a more one on one clarification, should honourable Members require.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, we have got only ten minutes and another two reports left, that is, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. If we can dedicate five minutes each and I will allow only two or three questions for one year.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Deputy Chairperson, I suggest that they finish their presentation and then we proceed as we are running out of time.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you honourable Usamate, you may continue Madam Acting Permanent Secretary.

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Thank you very much honourable Deputy Chairperson and honourable Members. We will now move on right to the 2019-2020 Report. We noted that there were 26 questions altogether but in the interest of time, we will answer six questions from the 26. I will be directing you in terms of the questions that we will answer as most of them are pretty much self-explanatory in the responses.

For Question No. 1, that is the first question that we will answer in terms of what is the Ministry doing in terms of ensuring that there is economic growth at the same time sustainability? Honourable Members, balancing production versus protection is always a challenge for the Ministry considering that it is an economic services sector, we are often faced with that notion or that challenge of balancing production and protection. With emerging issues such as climate change, we foresee that this is still going to be a challenge for us. However, the issue of economic growth and sustainability is at the central gravity for our planning and implementation. As I have noted in the earlier slides of the presentation, our areas of focus being national economic recovery in generating growth and also on results sustainability.

Secondly honourable Members, in terms of our programmes and projects, all are geared towards a balance of both economic growth, generating economic activity and alternative livelihood as well as ensuring that there are sustainability components addressed and one of which is the strategy that is mentioned there in terms of our Fisheries Resource Conservation Project as well as our Marine Protected Area Strategy.

Moving onto Question No. 2 honourable Members, with regards to the major contributing factors and the plans of the Ministry to increase economic growth, we have slightly touched it in the earlier presentation, however, we will just go quickly in terms of answering those.

In the light of COVID-19 pandemic, the Fisheries Sector was one of the sectors that was heavily struck due to competition from imported fish products, due to declining fish stock and also due to high operational costs. The Government had stepped in during the reporting period to assist in terms of the omission of bunkering and provisioning fees for regulations to improve ease of doing business. There were also legislative reforms of an annual license moving up to a 20-year license. There were also opportunities for modernizing aging fleets, that was not implemented in the reporting period, but we are still having that as a priority for our plans in terms of modernizing the age fleet in our fishing industry to allow them to access fish in the high seas where real money is.

In terms of plans that are there in the Ministry as I have said already, we are going big into PPP models and joint ventures, roping in communities, private sector as well as Government. Dialogues are already underway in terms of establishing Fiji as the regional hub for processing. Dialogues are already underway in terms of a feasibility study for that initiative.

Honourable Members, there are a lot of opportunities out there in term of the plans but we will be able to provide further information if required.

Moving into Question No. 4 on Page No. 11 in terms of the training. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, even though local trainings was restricted because of restriction in movements, we were still able to undertake some of the trainings and our training are based merely on trainings that are offered by Ministry of Civil Service and the ones that are offered by our donor and development partners.

Deputy Chairperson, with regards to Question No. 5 which is on the table and I believe there was a map, there was a table that you are not able to sight and the response provide the table which is just an illustration of the profile for the Central Division giving you an appreciation of their area for operation, the fisheries area coverage against its total population.

Deputy Chairperson, with regards to Question No. 10 on Page No. 26, honourable Members, establishment and development of MPAs. The Ministry is asked to briefly update the Committee on the consultation undertaken from 10th to 14th March, 2020 on the socio-economic fisheries. Our Research Division is tasked, that is one of their core roles to ensure that result assessments are done and also includes a socio-economic survey to understand the responses and the feedback from the communities where those MPAs are established. As we speak, honourable Members, there are more than 150 communal based MPAs that are established nation-wide and that accounts for around 1.8 percent of our achievement to our 2030 MPA target voluntary commitment under the UN Oceans commitment. The table provides us with the gazetted MPAs. From the 150 communal, that is non-gazetted, we have four that is gazetted and it is specifically a no-take zone.

We will not touch the Offshore Fisheries Management, honourable Members because I believe the responses that are provided is very self-explanatory. We will move right into the very last one probably just to move into the Trust Fund Account. The Ministry of Fisheries is one of the ministries that have received unqualified audit opinion for the past three years and that to us is a great achievement. We understand that there is a need to tighten up our internal controls and our Accounts Team under the supervision of the Manger of Finance who is looking into imposing all those controls to ensure that the momentum of our unqualified opinion EFS is going to be there as we move on. Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of our response to the 2019 – 2020 Annual Report.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Acting Permanent Secretary. If you will continue with 2020-2021 Report, please.

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Thank you very much, Deputy Chairperson and honourable Members. Moving into the 2020-2021 Annual Report. For the first question, the Ministry was asked to brief the Committee on what the economic recovery plan does the Ministry have in place to mitigate unforeseen circumstance? Honourable Members as I have alluded to earlier in the presentation, that was the economic recovery plan. We refocused our strategies to targeting the three broader focuses of economic growth, resource sustainability and food security and then we set ourselves with targets of about \$500 million to achieve in the next five years of which we are already at \$187.4 million. You will note that under those subsectors, as I have already explained, those are our key areas – offshore we are looking at creating value under those strategic priorities, coastal is to sustain and diversify. We are not only looking at one product or one commodity, but we are also looking at moving into other alternative commodities and engaging with a private sector and the community in a very big way.

Moving onto Question No. 2, what sort of measures could be taken to combat the loss of valuable species from subsistence fisheries during this review period? For the Ministry, we always implement a precautionary approach that is centered on that and also in terms of providing accurate advice and support, the monitoring of the permit conditions by resource custodians, establish a quota management system for highly exploit species and then we also look at strengthening the enforcement of fisheries laws and its outdated legislation.

Moving on to the question on Page No. 6, there was a change in consumer preference towards prepared and preserved fish and crustaceans according for the report. Can the Ministry explain this? Honourable Members, we are on Question No. 3(b). There was a massive increase

of FJ\$22.2 million seen due to a change in consumer preference as you rightly pointed out. This resulted mainly due to consumers finding it easy and safer to purchase this due to reduced risk of spreading COVID-19 and also due to the lockdown restrictions consumers prefer to purchase and store food at home in large quantities.

Honourable Members, I will not touch the organisation chart, I believe we have covered that already. Question No. 5 on Page No. 8, there was question for us to explain how we are addressing resignations in the Ministry? Honourable Members and through you Deputy Chairperson, staff resignation is something that is beyond our control. The reason as is to why I say that, I believe it applies to all other ministries and organisations because it is actually driven by attracting remuneration packages that are out there with other service providers and other employers. So what we have done in the Ministry to address this, we continue to empower our people in terms of training, capacitating and empowering them such that when officers leave for other greener pastures, there are officers that could fill in directly and the span of time for transition is reduced to a minimum.

Honourable Members, moving right onto Page No. 12, can the Ministry brief the Committee on Table 4 which is on Capital Project Summary. I believe this is targeting the research activities for this activity and budget item, this is where bulk of our research activities are being sourced from. There is a total of 10 Project Officers who are being paid from this allocation and then the two main activities carried out during the financial year was the Marine Resource Inventory Survey where four Marine Protected Areas were gazetted and also the other assessments that needed to be undertaken.

Honourable Members moving onto Question No. 9, the Ministry was allocated a capital budget of \$4.09 million. Can the Ministry please explain why they did not fully utilise the budget? The biggest answer to this is the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of implementing projects, we need to go out into the site, however, the restrictions that were there in movement at the reporting period disallowed us from doing those, but we were able to connect virtually in terms of moving some projects.

Question No. 10, I believe, is self-explanatory and we will be ready to provide further responses if you read the responses and need further clarification.

Question No.11 of Page 15, what was the outcome of this legislative review and the impact on the overall performance of the Ministry? The legislative review process for this did not happen due to the instructions given to the Ministry to hold of all consultations pertaining to the legislative review. Nevertheless, we continued to liaise with our partners with our industry in terms of reaching out to them and understanding their issues and areas that they would require to be reviewed in the legislation. As I have said already, we are glad that the approval has been provided for the review of the Fisheries Act and all other legislations, laws and policies for the Ministry. The consultation will be beginning in May, which is just a month away from today.

Question No. 12 in terms of the Electronic Monitoring System. Can the Ministry please clarify whether the budget allocation was fully utilised? Our response to that is that the budget allocation of \$600,000 comprised of salaries of six project officers and the systems hardware

maintenance, satellite and replacement cost to the service provider which is abroad, a foreign offshore company – Satlink International (a Spanish company). The sounds component was fully utilised, however, the component for the service provider could only be used once the tender waiver had been granted by the ITC Steering Committee and this was only waived on 27th July, 2021. So you would see, honourable Members 27th July and the closing of accounts or the end of the fiscal year was only probably four days away, so we were unable to utilise the funds that was given to us.

Question No. 14 in terms of Data Collection. Data collection continues to be an area that the Ministry requires to be strengthened. You will note the explanation that is given there, we have data collectors throughout the country. However, we had to redeploy some back to the Central Division because of the high demand of fishing activities in the Central Division. We had to move the ones from the Eastern Division because the landing sites were here on mainland.

In terms of the Sea Cucumber Ban Lifting, that is, Question No. 15 of Page 20, you will note that there was a public notice and a legal notice to lift the sea cucumber ban which was there since 2017 that was lifted solely for the reason to support national economic recovery and provide food security and livelihood for our people.

Question No. 17 is asking us to provide updates on the National Plan of Action for Sharks. The Ministry had conducted NPOA pocket meetings with NGOs, industries and government in 2020, but as we speak, the plan is yet to be endorsed by the Government for implementation, and this is one of the policy priority area for the current fiscal year.

Moving onto Question No. 18 on the Coconut Crab Management Strategy, the Ministry of Fisheries in partnership with university under the Pacific European Union Marine Partnership Programme (PEUMP) project conducted a coconut crab stock assessment in 2020 and the Ministry is in the process of using this information to draft the management plan for Fiji's coconut crab population.

Moving on to the other questions that are there, honourable Members. What is the status of those technical reports, which is on Page 22 of Question No. 19? Have those reports been disseminated to the stakeholders? The Ministry of Fisheries conducted the marine assessment for *i qoliqoli*, Tunuloa under the Ridge to Reef Project and the report was submitted to UNDP for dissemination to the stakeholders.

Question No. 21 of Page 25, that was the project that you visited, honourable Members yesterday and we hope that you were able to have an understanding and appreciation of the magnitude, the scope and the challenges that the project faces.

Moving onto Achievements from the Western Division, what actions or measures were undertaken by the Ministry to solve the 20 cases pending from the last financial year? Highlighted on our responses are the actions and measures that were undertaken. We had to review the process of development of case files, quality checks is very important, compliance

and enforcement, staff are being appointed as prosecutors, and last but not the least, building and strengthening the communication bridge between our enforcement officers and the regions.

Question No. 23, can the Ministry provide clarifications on the first bullet point in relation to the estimated catch of 9 feet x 6 feet solar freezers? The estimated catch of 194,000 was calculated based on the capacity of each six feet freezers which normally has a capacity of the given calculation that is there. The total cash was 194,400.

Moving onto the very last question, honourable Members. Can the Ministry please provide the list of all the Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs) and the solar freezers deployed post July 2021 and a list of those planned for development? Deputy Chairperson, FADs and solar freezers was a project in 2020 and 2021, and it continues to have a prominent place in our coastal fisheries development for the current year and the years to come because of the benefits and the trickle-down benefits it has. So those are the list of FADs and solar freezers that were deployed between those years. We also managed to deploy FADs - two in Kadavu, two in Vanuabalavu, two in Koro and two in Moturiki in the years 2021 and 2022.

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Deputy Chairperson, that concludes the presentation on the 2020-2021 Annual Report for the Ministry of Fisheries. We thank you very much for the opportunity.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, I will give four questions. Before you ask your question, please note that all the answers to our questions are in the book. I urge you to go through the documents again and if you have any supplementary questions or clarifications, you can forward it to the Secretariat and they will send it back to the Ministry.

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Deputy Chairperson, if I may ask, this is with regards to skills drainage from the Ministry. The young graduates who are currently working are now resigning for greener pastures as you have mentioned. I am looking at those who had retired, who ones were Fisheries Officers. Could they still be used as resource personnel with the experience they have? Are there avenues in which you can reconsider how can they contribute back to the Ministry?

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Deputy Chairperson, yes, you rightly pointed it out that retired officers who have a wealth of experience can always be engaged back into the Ministry through whatever forms. Yes, the Ministry is already venturing into that. The Ministry is already venturing into that. In the areas of eco-culture, we have engaged retired officers to assist us in terms of the breeding cycle and that continues to be part of the plan for the Ministry in engaging those retired officers who have a wealth of experience and knowledge technically.

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Again, this is on issuing of licenses for sea cucumber last year 2020. I do not know whether there has been a change in how we provide licenses. My previous experience was that the owner of the *qoliqoli* is normally part of the process of issuing licenses, whereas for 2022, the issuing of licenses was just between the Fisheries Officer and the Commissioner. If I am wrong, but this was what was seen in the Northern Division and there was little consultation or no consultation at all was done for the owners of the *qoliqoli*. I may be corrected if I am wrong.

MRS. A. ROKOSUKA.- Deputy Chairperson, in terms of the process for licensing, this is in terms of in-shore fishing licenses, the inside demarcated area license. You have pointed it out correctly in terms of the changes in processes. In August 2020, we were following the process that was there then in terms of aligning ourselves to section 13 of the Fisheries Act whereby the Divisional Commissioners are the custodians of customary fishing rights areas.

The process was such, you have stated it correctly, honourable Member, the permits issued by the Divisional Commissioners in consultation with the Sub-Divisional of the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the Ministry of Fisheries. Once the permit is issued by the Divisional Commissioners, we then issue the license, so the permit is a pre-requisite to the license that is issued.

In terms of moving into that, the Cabinet had just approved our submission in terms of looking into the process and also establishing all the relevant mechanisms if we are to revert to the old process of seeking consent directly from the customary fishing rights owners. So for the Ministry, that is a way forward and we are working with line agencies like Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development to establish all those mechanisms, one of which is the regularisation or goodwill.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, two more questions.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I just have some comments. Acting PS, I would like to thank you and your team for the work that you have done. I have always been impressed with your Ministry, the work which is done over the past few years. I noticed that the former Permanent Secretary was very instrumental in the handling of COVID-19, so I am very familiar with the work that you have done but I would like to highlight one thing for you.

Your Annual Reports, the English in this Annual Report is not good; figures are wrong and I think that becomes a poor reflection of your Ministry and if you have SOPs that address this, you need to make sure because you can do wonderful work. This Report goes to Parliament, people read it, and they get an impression of the Ministry because of this. So, that is one thing that I would like to point out. It is very important that you do this well and you do it in such a manner that you can have a long-term trend data that you can trace from one period to the next, maybe we can compare it for purposes of analysis and study.

The other thing is, for me personally, aquaculture. I think because tuna and all of these things is dependent on other things. Aquaculture is in our control. All those things that we talked about, feed, et cetera. I am hoping that the Ministry will find ways to achieve these targets. I am also hoping and think in my mind that your targets might be a bit conservative, that it can go beyond that in terms of food security, nutrition, et cetera. I think aquaculture is something we can control and hopefully the Ministry will take this further. Thank you for the work that you have done. There is still a lot of things to be done to be improved but those are my two cents speech for the purpose of the Ministry.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, last question.

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Deputy Chairperson, I would like to also comment on the work done by the Ministry of Fisheries. I say this because of the nature of the work they do.

Do you have enough staff in the Ministry for better coverage? I think working in the rural area normally requires quite a number of people to be serving the difficult areas that you cover. I think some stations like Makogai needs a lot of support in terms of infrastructure to look at how they can really benefit, not only the markets that we have but also the tourist industry.

Look at the indigenous species that we have including rivers access, *na ika droka*, what other things that you have whether there are enough studies done on them or how we can still maintain them because of preference to those who normally prefer to have the indigenous species. There was also some discussion on the feeds that we have. From the report that was presented to us, I know that there is a lot more work done and has not been reported in the report. It is good that they are reported so that policies and assistance can be given to these areas, like for the other ministries, a lot of work has been done but is not reported.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you honourable Members. Madam Acting Permanent Secretary, at this juncture I wish to sincerely thank all of you for availing yourselves for this inquiry. We thank you for your time and hope that you will avail yourselves for further queries that the Committee may have.

The Committee adjourned at 12.50 p.m.

APPENDIX III

Written
Responses from
the Fiji Fishing
Industry
Association

FIJI FISHING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Issues for Discussion with the Parliamentary Standing Committee on
Natural Resources on the Ministry of Fisheries Annual Reports 2018 - 2021
Solander Pacific Boardroom, Thursday 18 May 2023 at 1045hrs

Background

Fiji is one of the countries of the region that has a national tuna long line fleet. This means that the vessels are registered in Fiji, they are either licensed or authorised by the Ministry of Fisheries to fish in Fiji's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) or the high seas respectively and they are all based out of Suva and land all their catch here.

Pre-COVID-19, there were 93 longline fishing vessels under the national fleet. Today there are only 60 since most aged fishing vessels have either been scuttled or remains at anchor in Suva Harbour. The reason for their inactivity is that after 2 consecutive years of idleness in the harsh marine environment due to restrictions in place to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus, high costs of air freight when flights resumed and the difficulties of obtaining foreign crew replacements, it is very expensive to have the vessels get sea safety certification in compliance to the Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji's (MSAF) requirements. In this regard, the most economic and relevant option would be to have the aged vessels replaced with new modern vessels that have fuel-efficient technology and have refrigerants that do not contribute to ozone depletion.

To better understand the industry, below are explanations to the fishing fleets that uses our ports and the structure of the national longline fleet.

Fishing fleets using Suva Port

- i. ***foreign registered, foreign licensed and foreign based*** – these vessels berth at Princess Wharf and comes into port at least once to 3 times a year to land or transship their catch, bunkering, provisioning, crew change and uses the shore-based facilities and other services before returning to the fishing ground;
- ii. ***foreign registered, foreign licensed and Fiji based*** – these vessels berth at Muaiwalu 1 Jetty, and makes at least 4 trips a year and conducts similar shore activities like the foreign based vessels explained above; and
- iii. ***Fiji registered, Fiji licensed and Fiji based*** – this is the national tuna fishing fleet that are all based out of Suva

It is to be noted that, even without the fish caught by the national fleet, the revenue generated from the basing of the three categories of vessels explained above is quite enormous and it would be beneficial to the sector for an external economic study to be conducted to determine the real value of this activity, noting that fuel are purchased in tonnes, food rations for weeks and months are bought locally and Fiji Airways flies in and out crews from Asian countries through Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia.

Structure of the Fiji national longline fleet

There are three vessel categories under the national longline fleet, which are as follows:

- i. **Category 1 - fresh sashimi fish vessels**
 - specifically targets tuna for the fresh sashimi market
 - stays out at sea for up to 14 days
 - catch is preserved in ice or brine
 - catch is transported to the market by air – USA, Japan, Australia, New Zealand
 - officers are a mixture of locals and foreigners whilst the crews are mainly locals
- ii. **Category 2 - Dual – fresh/frozen fish vessels**
 - the trip is 30 – 45 days targeting for the frozen and fresh fish market
 - targeting for the fresh market in the last 14 days whilst steaming back

- catch is preserved in freezers (frozen) at either -60°C or -25°C and brine (fresh)
- frozen fish are exported in reefers by cargo vessels and fresh fish by air
- frozen ALB sold to PAFCO and Viti Foods or exported to American Samoa, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand for canning
- frozen ALB, YFT and BET exported to the EU, Japan and USA in whole (sashimi grade), loins or other value-added forms
- officers and crews are of a mixture of foreign and locals

iii. **Category 3 - frozen fish vessels**

- these vessels freeze all their catch for the frozen fish markets
- catch is stored in freezers with temperature ranges of -60°C and -25°C depending on the market with the former for the frozen sashimi market;
- vessels can stay up to 3 months or more out at sea
- fish are either exported whole for the canneries or as sashimi grade GG or as loins or steaks or other value-added forms
- sold to FCF for PAFCO to process for Bumble Bee (ALB) or exported to American Samoa, Vietnam, Thailand for canning or the EU, Japan and the USA (ALB, YFT, BET)
- all catch from this category are exported in reefer containers by cargo vessels
- officers are mainly foreigners since locals do not have the certification to operate vessels outside Fiji's jurisdiction whilst crews are a mixture of foreign and locals

Industry Issues

Tabulated below are the issues of the fishing industry.

	The fishing industry's areas of concern that will impact our contribution to the nation's economic growth	Solutions identified
1.	<p>Proposed "no take" Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Marine Protected Area (MPA)</p> <p>The Fiji Fishing Industry Association is not against the protection of the ocean space environment that ensures the sustainable usage of fish resources within our waters.</p> <p>What the members didn't like is when we were imposed on by something that we were never consulted on from when the concept on the "no take" EEZ MPA was initially discussed by the NGO led National MPA Working Committee tasked to by the then government to address its international commitment on MPAs at national level. We are raising this since we are the current sole beneficiary of the regional fishery resource when they enter our national jurisdiction – the EEZ.</p> <p>In November 2020, whilst the national consultation was being conducted, the industry had a closed one here in Suva with the Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Environment and a few NGOs and were told to come up with our response to their PowerPoint presentation within 4 days since they would like to present a Cabinet Paper before the end of the year.</p> <p>We did manage to come up with our response within the timeframe emphasising that we target a highly migratory fish stock meaning that they don't live within Fiji waters, like reef fish species, but traverse the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) feeding and spawning, when the ocean conditions are favourable, as they follow the ocean currents.</p>	<p>Further to the issues raised in the left column, our fishery is certified under the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) of the United Kingdom, meaning that we practice sustainable fishing practices. What else is there that we are not compliant with to deserve our very own government to close off 30% of our area of operation that will eventually increase to 50% since we will need to at least create a buffer of 20% to avoid our lines drifting into the 15 patches of MPAs within our EEZ.</p> <p>We are pasting here the links of two recent studies on MPAs that contradicts the proposal by the then Fiji government and its advisors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Study by SPC on the MPA (13 February 2023) that was established in the Phoenix Islands of the Republic of Kiribati Frontiers in Marine Science. Also pasted below is the concluding remarks of the preamble of the report – "We conclude that large oceanic MPAs are not likely to be effective frontline management tools for tropical tunas and other species having similar life history characteristics". A study by Medoff et al. published in 2022 Science and claimed that the Papahānaumokuākea marine national monument, the largest MPA in the United States, caused a spillover effect in tuna. <p><i>The first time we read it (University of Washington), we knew something was off—a</i></p>

	The fishing industry's areas of concern that will impact our contribution to the nation's economic growth	Solutions identified
	<p>Our fishing activities are being monitored and managed by the Ministry of Fisheries' Offshore Division 24/7, both electronically and manually, which then reports to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) annually through standard reporting formats on scientific and compliance issues.</p> <p>As of December 2022, all commercial tuna species (albacore, bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin tunas) within the WCPO are healthy and this can be confirmed with reports by the Pacific Community (SPC), the science provider for the WCPFC.</p> <p>We also had asked what they were trying to protect and what benefits will Fiji gain from the "no take" EEZ MPA.</p> <p>At the same time, we had queried as to why the SPC and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) were not part of the Committee since they are the regional experts in the fisheries management of this ocean space.</p> <p>As usual, there hasn't been any response.</p> <p>The national fishing fleet uses longline to catch tuna and the lines are set at around 400m – 500m depth and are well away from the sea surface and the seabed.</p> <p>Apart from the "no take" EEZ MPA, the Lau Seascape initiative is being promoted by one of the Suva based international NGO. Initially, the proposal only covered the traditional fishing right areas of the Lau Group. All of a sudden it extended eastwards encompassing all water space up to the outer limits of our EEZ. Even though the Government, which is the custodian of all waters from the high-water mark to the outer limits of our EEZ, have yet to make a stand on the proposal, this NGO paid a one-page advertisement on yesterday's Fiji Times boasting about a 5 year multi-million-dollar fund from a BHP for the work.</p>	<p><i>60% increase in yellowfin CPUE due to the MPA in just 3.5 years is just too good to be true. But it took a while to figure out exactly how they had reached their outlandish conclusions. Our eureka moment was when we realized they had calculated the change in CPUE using absolute values instead of relative or proportional ones. This is a highly misleading way to do it.</i></p> <p><i>We were able to connect with people who had access to the confidential data and had them rerun Medoff et al. 2022's analysis using proportional values—we found no evidence of spillover.</i></p> <p>Pasted here is the link to the outcome of the study nullifying the earlier finding (28 March 2023). Read our explainer on Medoff et al. 2022 here.</p> <p>In view of what has been shared here, we request for the government to reconsider the proposal of "no take" and also take into account the latest report from SPC and the University of Washington as per in the links above and to conduct another consultation process with those to be affected like the industry, SPC, FFA and for the government to take genuine lead and for others, to follow.</p> <p>At the same time, data tampering by some research institutes and supported by officials without proper checks to force through certain greed for gain, needs to be taken very carefully by vulnerable States, especially when there are a lot of funding opportunities out there in the name of "climate change".</p>
2.	<p>Tuna Stabilisation Fund (TSF)</p> <p>Through the initiative of the industry, this fund was established by the then Ministry of Economy in 2014, to assist the industry address its financial difficulties.</p> <p>For every litre of fuel purchased by foreign fishing vessels in Fiji, an extra 6 cents were deducted whereby 4 cents go to the TSF and 2 cents to the government.</p> <p>Thus far, only one distribution to the industry players was held in 2017, for the year ending 2016 and from our understanding the funds are continued to be collected by FRCS.</p>	<p>It is proposed that a committee, comprising of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Fisheries and the Fiji Fishing Industry Association, to be established and review the utilisation of the fund with two of which are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the whole industry is to benefit from this fund instead of only a few, like in the last distribution; and a Social & Corporate Responsibility be shared to the unfortunate and neglected elders in our community for the operations cost of running of recognized and approved homes accommodating these elders.
3.	<p>European Union (EU) Seafood Health Competent Authority (CA)</p> <p>Currently, the CA for the EU market, sits under the Ministry of Health. Whenever there is a health crisis all Health personals are shifted to combat the crisis leaving the unit with limited staffs. At the same time, there is a</p>	<p>For this unit, that includes the trained personnel and budget, to be transferred and fully administered by the Ministry of Fisheries.</p> <p>The same arrangement happens in the Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and Samoa.</p>

	The fishing industry's areas of concern that will impact our contribution to the nation's economic growth	Solutions identified
	high staff turnover in the section, leaving the fishing industry vulnerable by having difficulties to meet the export requirements.	Only Fiji and the Solomon Islands have similar arrangements.
4.	<p>Laboratory Testing facilities for the export market:</p> <p>Every now and then, fishing companies are required to send their fish samples to a local internationally accredited laboratory to conduct tests on our exports ensuring that they pass all requirements for the importing country.</p> <p>The unfortunate part, is that USP is the only place that has such facility in Suva and it takes donkey years for the tests to be completed and to compound this, the costs, are ridiculous.</p>	<p>We know that there are high standard laboratories available in and around Suva that can be upgraded to meet the requirements and we therefore humbly request the government to look into this area. Suggestions include the Koronivia Research Station and the Fiji National University.</p>
5.	<p>Mordenisation of the national fishing fleet:</p> <p>We continue to repeat this request to modernise the aged national fishing fleet with new and modern vessels that will be built to comply with environmental requirements to mitigate climate change. We've been referred to an NGO but somehow not much movement is happening there. Only recently we've met with the FDB CEO, which we saw as very encouraging and shared this meeting with our line Ministry.</p> <p>We hope to see something on this in the new budget.</p>	<p>Financing of new fishing vessels with low interest rate, preferably, below 3.5% for less than 10 years term. Twenty percent contribution from the company and 80% will be sourced through whatever arrangement the government will come up with like that of the global climate funding through FDB.</p> <p>As a start, we can use the existing Tuna TSF, currently held by the government.</p>
6.	<p>Making annual payments to regional organisations and national Fisheries Authorities for annual good standing and fishing license</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fiji is one of the few countries in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) that have a truly national fishing fleet that fly's the Fiji flag and fish's both within our national jurisdiction and beyond and lands their catch in Suva and Levuka. Unlike other island countries in the WCPO, most vessels they license only pay access fees and determine where they land their catch. At the same time Fiji waters are not as fertile in fish like our northern neighbours (members of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement-PNA). In this regards it is important that we send our vessels to these fertile waters and for the catches to be processed at our factories for the export market. In order for Fiji national fishing fleet to comply with regional and international fisheries management requirements, they need to be certified by such organisations confirming their status. In doing this they need to pay annual fees to remain on the certified listing, which markets refer to in order to accept their catch. At the same time, when accessing other EEZs in the region, license fees are paid through the local banks. In view of the highlighted areas that require Fiji fishing vessels fork out fees and charges to overseas entities as mandatory requirements in order to get more raw materials for processing locally and to market their catch abroad, they are charged with withholding tax and VAT by FRCS. 	<p>In this regards it is requested for both withholding tax and VAT be waived when making such payments abroad.</p>

	The fishing industry's areas of concern that will impact our contribution to the nation's economic growth	Solutions identified
7.	<p>Customs and Immigration clearance</p> <p>Fishing for tuna is still very much a hunting activity whereby we do not know where the tuna school will be until we reach the vast ocean space within our exclusive economic zone. Even though there are electronic gadgets in place to predict the location of the school, but since we are targeting a highly migratory fish stock, they would have moved elsewhere by the time we reach the predicted location. They either have moved outside our waters into the high seas or neighbouring into neighbouring EEZs.</p> <p>Since we were not destined to go outside our EEZ, we did not obtain FRCS and Immigration clearance and therefore will not be able to pursue the school outside our waters. To do so, we will need to go back to port and obtain clearance from FRCS and Immigration, which takes at least 2 days in and 2 days back and by then the school would have caught by other vessels in the high seas or other EEZs.</p>	<p>To take full advantage, when the school is within our waters, we are suggesting the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. for the Ministry of Fisheries, Immigration Department and FRCS to develop a system that should allow the Fiji vessels to continue pursuing the school of tuna into the neighbouring high seas without the necessity to clear FRCS and Immigration; ii. since all Fiji vessels are required by law to make mandatory electronic reporting to the Ministry of Fisheries on their activities whilst at sea, the same platform can be used, whereby the Ministry of Fisheries will then have the information, to pursue the fish, relayed to the two agencies; and iii. any fees for the clearance of vessels by FRCS and Immigration are to be billed to vessels benefiting from this.
8.	<p>Crewing</p> <p>This is a crucial area whereby we do not have qualified and experienced locals to man the national fleet, thus our heavy reliance on foreigners.</p> <p>Hiring foreigners also have their own challenges and our preference are to have locals, which may take more years to be achieved.</p> <p>To make the matter worse, our young locals have attitudes, especially when it involves long trips of more than 30 days and becomes a nuisance to all on the vessels that results in early return to port and loss in revenue.</p>	<p>Fiji needs to have a pool of local trained and experienced crews that are readily available for any vessel at any time and administered by a qualified entity.</p> <p>At the same time the operations of foreign and local crewing agents need to be regularised to avoid fishing companies being unnecessarily penalised by international regulators as currently being experienced. This needs to be taken up by the Ministry of Labour or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.</p>
9.	<p>Processing of work permits</p> <p>The processing of work permits by the Immigration Department needs to be improved or else the secured personnel identified from abroad may easily move to another country due to the delay in the processing of the permit.</p>	<p>We need a better inter-agency collaboration to address this crucial matter.</p>
10.	<p>Industry consultation</p> <p>This is one area that badly lacked in the past years whereby the industry was rarely consulted on most issues affecting us.</p> <p>There were attempts by the Ministry to have meetings every two months. We managed to have one virtual one on 27 April 2022 and that was also the last one until the new government came in when we met the incoming Hon Minister Ravu in January 2023.</p>	<p>The Government and private sector consultancy process needs to be improved since it has been proven that working in silos will only bring havoc.</p>
11.	<p>Mitigation to address the predicted movement of tuna schools</p> <p>Scientists have predicted that due to the impacts of climate change on the migratory pattern of the tuna stock within the Western and Central Pacific Ocean</p>	<p>To mitigate this and if Fiji is to continue to benefit from this regional highly migratory fish stock for its economic growth, Fiji should start seriously thinking about becoming party to the Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), which is to the east of us and shares the same border with the Western and</p>

	The fishing industry's areas of concern that will impact our contribution to the nation's economic growth	Solutions identified
	<p>(WCPO), the tuna stock will move eastwards and southwards.</p> <p>When will this happen? It is yet to be determined.</p> <p>This information was obtained during the recent National Economic Summit here in Suva`.</p>	<p>Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) of which we are a member, and the Commission for the Convention of the Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), which is to the south of us.</p> <p>Fiji cannot allow its flagged vessels to fish in a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation's (RFMO) Convention Area unless it is a party.</p> <p>Actually, the Association had asked Government to be party to the two Commissions a few years back and we were told that they don't have the funds for the annual subscriptions to the two RFMOs.</p>

**RESPONSE BY THE FIJI FISHING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION TO THE
PRESENTATION MADE BY THE MINISTRY OF FISHERIES AND THE
MINISTRY OF WATERWAYS AND ENVIRONMENT ON THE PROPOSED
FIFTEEN (15) "NO TAKE" MARINE PROTECTED AREAS
WITHIN FIJI'S EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE**

Fiji Fishing Industry Association
Suva, Fiji
03 November 2020

IF THE FIJI GOVERNMENT WANTS TO SEE THE COMPLETE DEMISE OF THE FIJI NATIONAL TUNA LONG LINE FLEET, THEN IT GO AHEAD AND IMPLEMENT THE NOT SO WELL RESEARCHED CONCEPT OF "NO TAKE" MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPA).

THIS NGO LED ATTACK ON AN ECONOMIC SECTOR OF FIJI AND SUPPORTED BY PRESSURED GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, NEITHER OF WHOM KNOWS MUCH OR ARE IGNORANT OF THE CONTRIBUTION THE FISHING SECTOR HAS BEEN OFFERING TO THE FIJIAN COMMUNITY IN THE PAST 40 YEARS.

WE WERE ALSO SADDENED TO KNOW THE ABSENCE OF THE PACIFIC ISLAND FORUM FISHERIES AGENCY (FFA) AND THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY (SPC) IN THE WHOLE EXERCISE AND WHO ARE BOTH GLOBALLY REKNOWNED TO BE EXPERTS IN SCIENTIFIC, MONITORING, COMPLIANCE AND SOCIO-ECONOMICS ON PELAGIC FISHERIES WITHIN THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC OCEAN.

OTHERWISE, IF THE FIJI GOVERNMENT DO HAVE CONCERNS ON THE SURVIVAL OF THE FISHING INDUSTRY DURING THE DIFFICULT TIMES THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY IS IN RIGHT NOW, AND NO ONE HAS ANY CLUE WHEN IT WILL LEAVE US, THEN THE FISHING INDUSTRY IS PREPARED TO TALK. IN SAYING THIS WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THAT INSTEAD OF THE FIJI GOVERNMENT DECLARING "MARINE PROTECTED AREAS" WITHIN FIJI'S EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE, IT, INSTEAD IS TO CREATE "MARINE MANAGEMENT AREAS" (MMA).

1. Background

Prior to the coming into force of the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1994, the oceans were more or less free for all for fishing activities 3 nautical miles from countries' coastlines. However, in 1982, the Convention was opened for signature and Fiji and most of the Pacific Island countries signed in then and ratified the Convention.

The Convention also saw the leaders of the Pacific island countries establish the Pacific Island Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) in 1979 to prepare them in the discussions of the concept at the UN and to also prepare them build national capacities in the lead up to the sustainably management of this new vast and massive ocean for their economic development aspiration, especially in targeting the highly migratory fish stock when in their jurisdiction.

As for Fiji, whilst the discussions on the formulation of the UNCLOS was continuing, Fiji enacted its Marine Spaces Act Cap 158A in 1978 and its regulations in 1979 that enabled us to establish our maritime spaces (internal waters, archipelagic waters, territorial seas, the baselines and the exclusive economic zone and the regulation of of foreign vessels fishing in our exclusive economic zone).

It is to be noted that Part III, Management and Conservation of Fisheries of the Marine Spaces Act Cap 158A has been repealed and replaced by the Offshore Fisheries Management Decree of 2012 and its Regulation of 2014.

2. Introduction

In the earlier years, Fiji's involvement in the targeting of highly migratory fish stock, was when locals were picked up from Suva by foreign long line fishing vessels from Taiwan, Japan and Korea that freely fished the open Pacific Ocean. At that time Suva was also used as transit port for these vessels and for provisioning, bunkering and other shore-based services.

In 1964, the Levuka based Japanese owned tuna cannery was opened that saw further involvement of Fiji in this economic sector.

In order to capitalize on the cannery, more Fijians moved into investing into the sector that was led by the then Government owned Ika Corporation pole and line fishing fleet to support the Levuka cannery that also started to build the locals capacity in this new skill of commercial fishers.

Medium-scale tuna longliners using monofilament longline gear were introduced to the Pacific in the mid to late 1980s. This provided a real opportunity for domestic tuna longlining operations to be developed in Pacific Island countries and territories and Fiji was one of the first Pacific counties to seize this opportunity. The economic climate was good with the devaluation of the Fiji dollar by 35% in 1987, a direct flight from Fiji to Japan established in early 1988 by Fiji's then national airline, Air Pacific, and the strong government support for businesses, especially export industries.

Today, Fiji has the largest national tuna long line fishing fleet in the region with 84 (78 Fijian flagged and owned and 7 foreign flagged and chartered by Fijians) actively fishing within our waters and some in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ). We may be the largest in the region, but when compared to distant water fishing nations (DWFN) that compete with us within the WCPO, we are just a fraction.

Fishing Vessels Authorised by Flag States to Fish Within the WCPO Convention Area

Flag States	Number of authorised fishing vessels operating within the WCPO
China	587
Japan	744
South Korea	214
United States of America	204

SOURCE: WCPFC record of fishing vessels

3. Fiji's international obligations to fishing within our exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and the high seas

Fiji is a party to the following international and regional fisheries legal instruments that governs fishing and other activities within our EEZ and for our fishing vessels operating in the high seas:

- i. *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*
 Fiji Fishing Industry Association Response to Fiji Government's Proposed
 "NO TAKE" MPAs in its EEZ - 03 November 2020

- ii. *United Nations Fish Stock Agreement (UNFSA)*
- iii. *Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention (WCPFC)*

At the same time we remind Government with the provisions within the international legal instruments (Article 24 (2)(c) of the UNFSA and Article 30(2)(c) of the WCPF Convention) that recognises the aspirations of small island developing States that whatever management measures are to be adopted, not to cause disproportionate burden on ourselves.

4. Fiji's fisheries laws

The Fiji fisheries laws is multijurisdictional in nature whereby it follows its flagged fishing vessels wherever it travels on the oceans of the world.

It encompasses the provisions of UNCLOS, UNFSA and WCPFC ensuring that we are on par with the commitments we have agreed to at international level and applied here at home. In saying this, our vessels may only fish within the WCPFC Convention Area since this is the only Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO) that we are a party to.

We can claim here that the fisheries laws and supporting policies that are currently applied on the industry is most modern and indeed very robust as it deters fishers from contravening any of their provisions.

This is good for the Fiji fishing industry since it does assist in the marketing of our catch in the global markets, which are now very mindful of consuming fish and fishery products associated with illegitimate activities like Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, forced labour, child labour etc.

As is, there is a well-resourced (both HR and finance) Division within the Ministry of Fisheries that specifically monitor our fishing activities through human presence (observers), electronically (vessel monitoring system (VMS) and currently on trial CCTV (electronic monitoring (EM) and electronic reporting (ER)) and manual reporting.

Some areas that needs to be highlighted here that their prohibitions and restrictions that exist in our fisheries laws and applicable to long line fishing activities and any other fishing practices:

i. Prohibitions:

- all areas within 3 nautical miles radius of reef systems within Fiji fisheries waters
- all internal waters within Fiji fisheries waters
- any driftnet fishing gear
- use of explosives to take fish
- use of chemical compounds to take fish
- use of shark lines on long line gears to target sharks
- demersal trawling
- longline gears targeting bottom dwelling fish species

ii. Restrictions:

- archipelagic waters and territorial seas are reserved to Fiji longline fishing vessels with fish hold capacity of less than 40cubic meter targeting tuna and tuna like species using no more than 2,500 hooks

5. Fiji's fisheries policies

The following fisheries policies are in place ensuring the national fishing fleet continue to behave at all times:

- i. Tuna Management and Development Plan - currently being reviewed
- ii. National Plan of Action on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing
- iii. Strategies for Fiji Flagged Fishing Vessels Operating in the ABNJ
- iv. National Plan of Action on Sharks - currently being reviewed

6. The Fiji Fishing Industry Association

The Fiji Fishing Industry Association (FFIA) was established in 2016. Prior to that there were two Associations representing the interests of the tuna fishing industry to Government. They were the Fiji Tuna Boat Owners Association (FTBOA) and the Fiji Offshore Fisheries Association (FOFA).

Upon merging in 2016, we have been involved in trying to address the many daily challenges the members go through with Government Ministries and agencies. What we have found is the lack of understanding by Government officials on the various

private sectors and therefore treat us all alike by implementing the policy of “one fits all” that as always miserably fails and costly to all.

Currently our membership is to the vessels licensed and authorised by the Ministry of Fisheries and currently we have a total of 63 members or 79% of the total vessels under the Fiji national tuna long line fishing fleet.

7. Investments in the domestic tuna fishing industry

To invest in the fishing industry targeting tuna needs huge capital and unfortunately, local commercial banks are not willing to step in since they see us as a high risk. Likewise, the Fiji Development Bank sees us the same way as our commercial banks.

In this regards we look outside of Fiji for finance, which of course is very expensive.

All companies invest a lot to acquire fully equipped fishing vessels from abroad that are certified by the USFDA HACCP requirements or the much higher sanitation standards that of the EU, if exporting there and to have refrigerants that don't contribute to ozone depletion. In addition, when opting for catch certification like eco-labelling under the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) or any other, again the companies invest in the initiative in order to compete with others in the global fish markets.

Some companies have furthered their investments in state-of-the-art fish processing factories and the building of capacity for their officers in order to produce and pack high valued fishery products for the United States, Japan and the EU.

All such investments are into tens of millions of dollars and in order to recover all such investments, they will need the continuous supply of raw materials from within and outside our waters.

8. Proposal by Fiji Government - Marine Protected Areas

8.1 Background on the Proposal - FFIA's Perspective

It is acknowledged that Fiji announced its goal to meet a 30% MPA requirement at the SID's conference held in Mauritius on September 2005. At that time and subsequently this intention has been repeated by Fiji. However prior to the release of

the document at no time has it ever been stated that the 30% would be no-take (non-extractive) . In Mauritius the Fiji Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon Kaliopate Tavola stated that by 2020 at least 30% of Fiji's inshore and offshore marine areas will have come under a:

"comprehensive, ecologically, representative networks of MPA's, which are effectively managed and financed".

The first and only reference to "no-take" was the PowerPoint presentation to the industry on 26 October 2020. Prior to the presentation the Association was never consulted on this significant change in emphasis and direction.

It would appear that some outside influence has been involved in the preparing the document which changed Fiji's direction and is NOT in the nation's best interest, now, or in the future.

The most recent policy statement of the Fiji Government in not supporting a total non-extraction (no-take) of MPA's was at the World Conservation Congress held in Hawaii'i September 2016. At this congress the IUCN Motion 53 proposed that nations adopt a 30% "non-extractive" policy for MPA's. The motion was opposed by almost all national Governments and the Fiji Government abstained - thus not supporting the proposal. It should be noted that support was given to the motion by eNGO's only. The National Trust of Fiji - which receives funds from IUCN - supported the motion. Fortunately the motion failed on social and food security grounds.

8.1.1 *Fiji's International obligation under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)*

The current marine area conservation requirements of Fiji as a consequence of being a signatory to the CBD are provided for under what is known as Aichi Biodiversity Target 11. This states that:

By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider

landscape and seascape.

Our obligation is only to "preserve" 10% of the sea area with **NO** requirement for a "no-take" component.

8.1.2 *Fiji's present position and status of Marine Protection Areas*

Fiji's EEZ is already a Benthic Protection Area (BPA). This is an equivalent IUCN category VI MPA. The total sea area of Fiji is 1,293,035sq km. Of this area 1,247,676sq km is contained within the BPA or a MPA of 96.49%. (Note; there are some slight differences in totals depending upon source). Unfortunately Fiji has not applied for a IUCN category for this MPA. The current IUCN data base only shows Fiji as having 0.92% marine MPA coverage.

8.2 Drafting of the Government Proposal - FFIA'S Perspective

8.2.1 *Absence of consultation with the private sector stakeholders*

We understand that the PowerPoint made to us Monday 26 October 2020 was prepared by the Marine Working Group (MWG) of Fiji's Protected Area Committee (PAC).

The groups have been in existence since 2014 and has sought assistance of "technical experts from NGO's". At no time was the national fishing industry or FFIA was ever invited to comment or partake in any of the meetings or workshops relating to the proposed MPAs noting that we are currently the biggest user of natural resources within our EEZ and contributes to the nation's economic growth through exports and employment. As a consequence the document in its present form will be commercially unworkable.

In preparing our response to the Government's PowerPoint presentation, and given the short time made available to us, we are forced to make assumptions which would have been better sourced if we had been allowed to partake in the workings of the MWG and that of the PAC.

8.2.2 *The proposed "no take" Marine Protected Areas*

Upon seeing for the first time the shapes of many types on the Fiji EEZ, we almost all fell off our seats since the very positions that Government is proposing to prohibit us

from taking fish, are the most productive localities is as far as our fishing is concerned.

At first, we were shocked and at the same time confused as to why Government is penalising its very own people by telling us that we are no longer important in society and are most welcome to go elsewhere to do our business.

We are sure that such thinking will also happen to sugarcane farmers when Government decides to prohibit any farming activities in 30% of all the coastal arable land and shift them to swamps and mountainous terrain.

8.2.3 Practicality of imposing "no take" from the declared Marine Protected Areas

We strongly believed that not much research was made by those that came up with such concepts or that they don't have the slightest idea when making such decisions.

It is to be noted that when long lines are set out at sea, their horizontal movement and shifting in the water column where they are dropped (300m - 400m depth), will be determined by ocean currents of the area and the vessel will have no control whatsoever to it since they will be detached from the vessel and attached to beacons that moves with the surface currents or wind directions, until the time of hauling, which is after 3 - 4 hours of soaking.

To avoid contravening the proposed "no take" MPA, the lines will have to be set at least 15 - 25 miles as buffer from the outer limits of the MPA that will have at least 50% of the whole EEZ will be "no take".

This is a great loss to the fishing industry and no right-thinking investor will ever agree to such licensing conditions if the Fiji Government so decides to follow the thinking of the people that prepared the elements of the PowerPoint presentation for the consultation and delivered by Government officials.

At the same time the prohibiting of long line fishing activities will have a negligible impact on a highly migratory fish if the efforts simply shift into neighbouring waters.

8.2.4 *Highly migratory fish stock - WCPO*

What needs to be understood is that Fiji do not have a national tuna stock. The reason being is that tuna is highly migratory in nature and continues to swim from one EEZ to another EEZ feeding and doing its thing. So, if we don't catch them whilst they are in our EEZ, vessels in the neighbouring EEZ may catch them and the cycle continues day and night 24/7. So the creation of a "no take" MPA in our EEZ in order to preserve "our tuna", does not make sense since they will swim right through the "no take" area and out into the next EEZ.

It is a well-known fact that Fiji and its cousins east of us are well outside the major tuna migratory paths of the WCPO and are in the sub-tropical waters. It is also a common knowledge, that as we move eastwards from the mainland South-East Asian countries with the Insular Regions of Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Pacific Island countries of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, the biodiversity thins out as we reach Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Cook Islands. Likewise, it also applies to tuna and that's why we in the East do not have as much tuna as those West and North of us. In this regards, whatever tuna that passes through our EEZ are strays from the main stock.

In view of this, tuna caught by the national fleet within Fiji's EEZ are mostly non-residents within Fiji waters. However, there is thought, to be limited spawning whilst passing through our EEZ. As they are highly migratory and as they traverse through many national jurisdictions in the WCPO they are jointly managed by the Fiji Government and the WCPFC.

The Fiji national tuna long line fishing fleet targets South Pacific Albacore and also catches Yellowfin, Bigeye and Skipjack tunas apart from the other tuna like species like Swordfish, Marlin, Sailfish, Sunfish, Mahimahi etc.

According to the latest report from the WCPFC (December 2019 Regular Session), all tuna species within the jurisdiction of the WCPFC and are caught by the Fijian fleet, are in the safe status whereby neither overfishing is occurring nor any of them is overfished.

Pasted below are some papers from the WCPFC, that were discussed during the meeting of the Scientific Committee held virtually in August this year:

- i. the “trends in the South Pacific Albacore long line and troll fisheries”.
 - I refer you to paragraph 5 on page 4 and Figure 9 of page 17 of the report
<https://www.wcpfc.int/node/46625>
- ii. 2020 report on the stock assessment of yellowfin tuna in the WCPO
 - referring you Figure 61 on page 139 of the report as per link below, showing the Kobe Plot that indicates that the stock is in the safe status meaning that neither overfishing is occurring nor the stock is overfished
<https://www.wcpfc.int/node/46611>
- iii. 2020 report on the stock assessment of bigeye tuna in the WCPO
 - referring you to Figure 50 on page 126 of the report as per link below that shows the Kobe Plot that indicates that the stock is in the safe status meaning that neither overfishing is occurring nor the stock is overfished
<https://www.wcpfc.int/node/46610>

The foregoing reports indicates that the species that are caught by the Fiji national tuna long line fleet are in a safe status and are continued to be monitored noting that Fiji is the current Chair of the South Pacific Albacore Working Group.

8.2.5 *Food security*

The presentation by Government on Monday 26 October failed to address this important issue of national food security for the Fiji population when proposing to remove 30% (that will end up to 50% when we voluntarily impose on ourselves another 20% in trying to comply with the 30%) of our current fishing effort.

To permanently close off a very substantial and productive portion of the protein supply from the EEZ is both ill considered and irresponsible.

It is a well reported fact that the Fijian coastal fisheries are under intense pressure and cannot be sustained at the present level. With increases in the coastal population and reclamation for development purposes, the situation will become even worse. The highly migratory fish species from the EEZ is increasingly making up the shortage in supply of traditional reef fishes.

In recent years the total annual catch from locally-based offshore fishing was about 17,000 mt¹. About 12.5% of the production from Fiji's locally-based offshore fisheries is not exported, but rather marketed domestically in the greater Suva area (G.Southwick, personal comm., August 2015). The population of the greater Suva area is about 180,000. This suggests an annual supply of fish to Suva residents from the local offshore fleet of 11.8 kg per capita.

Palau which established, in January this year, a marine sanctuary comprising 80% of its EEZ is now rethinking its position. The lack of tuna due to the withdrawal of long line vessels has increased consumption of reef fish. The marine sanctuary was "promised to protect" reef fish but the reverse has happened. Such will be the situation in Fiji and we need to learn from experiences of our neighbour's. Below is the link to the Palau failed experience:

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjPocXijdvsAhVDjuYKHVvpCX0QFjAIegQIBRAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theguardian.com%2Fworld%2F2020%2Ffeb%2F27%2Fpalau-marine-sanctuary-backfires-leading-to-increased-consumption-of-reef-fish&usq=AOvVaw2GXGR44az2s1uU1zytcYwT>

7.2.6 *Consultation and timeline*

It is indeed regrettable and of considerable concern that the fishing industry has been given such a short time frame in which to prepare their submissions. This has truncated the response on an issue that has a long term impact on Fiji - particularly

¹ Gillett, R. (2016). **Fisheries in the Economies of Pacific Island Countries and Territories**. Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Forum Fisheries Agency, and Australian Aid, ISBN 978-982-00-1009-3, 688 pages
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in regard to food security and national allocation of HMFS.

We have been given 4 working days to prepare this submission (due 3rd November). We understand that final recommendations are to be placed before Cabinet on the 17th November.

The sudden haste is apparently intended to comply with "Fiji's commitment to 30% Marine Protected and Managed Areas by 2020". In fact the commitment has been more than met - and well exceeded. What has failed has been the neglect to obtain an IUCN category assignment and governance type allocated. This would have classified Fiji's EEZ as a MPA Category VI. The MPA would then be reported to the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) . This would list the MPA on the World Database. It would show as one of the World's largest but more importantly as having the greatest proportion of the total EEZ of any such MPA in the World.

It should be noted that official reporting as described has to be approved by Government only. It cannot be sourced to an eNGO as apparently is the current reporting position Fiji/IUCN?

9. The impacts on Fiji on the imposition of 30% "no take" MPA of its EEZ

The Fiji national tuna long line fleet is also used by participating in scientific research in areas of biological sampling, electronic tagging of certain shark species, scientific research on gear type to protect caught fish from being eaten by sea mammals, trial of electronic monitoring devices to record activities on fishing vessels, trial of electronic devices to record catch and the usual filling out of mandatory catch logs and landing forms. All samples and data received from these activities are then used to assist scientists carry out stock assessment and know better the biology of tuna and related species of the region's stock.

Due to the size of the Fiji national tuna long line fishing fleet and that all vessels return to Suva at the end of its fishing trips, the fleet is used by research bodies to carry out the above referred activities to better understand the biology and the migratory patterns of the stock.

9.1 Actual reduction of fishing effort to be more than the imposed 30%

As earlier discussed in para 7.2.3, in order to avoid the long lines drifting into the imposed “no take” MPAs, an additional 20% of the EEZ may have to be imposed by the national fishing fleet by creating a buffer in order to avoid their lines from being pushed into the “no take” MPAs by strong under water currents.

In other words, there will only 50% of our current fishing area will be remaining, which we sadly state here if actually approved by the Fiji Government will only see vessels tying up in port followed by redundancy to employees and closure of businesses.

9.2 Loss of employment opportunities

Currently there is a total of 63 tuna long line vessels within the FFIA membership of which they come under the management of 18 companies. In addition, there are 5 accredited fish processing factories within the membership that either processes fish to the customers’ requirements or maintains them in their original form but frozen. The later are either for canning or for the sashimi markets.

**Employees directly involved in FFIA membership
seagoing and shore-based activities**

Industry employment component	Employee Number
Fishing vessels - Officers and crews	1,006
Processing factories/Cold storage	305
Engineering workshops	64
Administration/Finance	149
TOTAL	1,424

Please take note, the above figures are specific to the FFIA membership. There is another 17 vessels under 6 small fishing companies, 2 tuna canneries and 3 medium to large fish processing factories and a few other fish handling centers that are not included in the table and not part of the FFIA membership.

At the same time, the other supporting services that are directly linked to the fishing industry that will be affected includes the shipping agents, fuel companies, transport industry (public and private), Fiji Airways and Air New Zealand, farmers, butchers, supermarkets, engineering workshops, maritime safety equipment suppliers, packaging manufacturers (cartons and plastics), Fiji Maritime Academy for the training of fishing seafarers, FRCS and Government Ministries (loss of tax, VAT and fees and charges), etc.

9.3 *Social challenges to Government*

The loss of employment from the implementation of the “no take” MPA will no doubt create more burden on Government through increase in social ills within our already fragile community that is still being experienced through the loss of employment from COVID-19.

Definitely there will be more family breakups as experienced from COVID-19 and who else will be the most affected, yes, they will be the women and the children.

To be suddenly denied a source of income, with nothing much is there as an alternative, we are afraid that the vulnerable and innocent sector of our community will have to cope the repercussions of being victims of crime.

9.4 *Loss of economy to the nation*

Fiji’s export of tuna is around \$200million per annum with our main markets being the United States, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the EU. Apart from these we also export to Vietnam and Thailand for their canneries.

Furthermore, the economic spin-offs generated by the tuna fishing industry is huge that generate quite a large amount of money within the national economy.

With the closing of the fishing industry due to the reduction of our fishing capacity of up to a possibility of 50%, since buffer zones needs to be created to avoid lines drifting into the 15 proposed “no take” MPAs, it surely will create further dent into our already fractured economy.

Surely, the Ministries of Waterways and Environment and our line Ministry, do not want to be responsible for all the negative implications that will come out of the proposal, noting very well that we are only targeting highly migratory fish stock that don't belong to Fiji but only transiting through our waters before they exit and enter into the next EEZ.

The industry is already going through numerous national challenges that has yet to be addressed by Government and by throwing in another spanner to the already flooded challenges, then this could be the final one to completely wipe us out of the regional fisheries.

7. Conclusions

The national commitment to reserve 30% of our waters was made by Government without consulting those that will be impacted, by such decisions and continued to be supported by incoming Governments. Sadly, this was done without even knowing the repercussions the decisions they made will have on the Fijians who are legally using the maritime space for their livelihood. In this regard, all ramifications coming out of the unilateral action by Government should be borne through financial compensation by Government so that none of the affected "Fijians are left behind". This is because, right now, and confirmed by the Reserve Bank of Fiji's October 2020 economic review (Fiji Times 1 Nov 2020) that job opportunities in Fiji have declined by more than 60%.

A lot are happening around the world whereby, it's the people at the bottom of the hierarchy of developing countries like us, are usually the victims of decisions that are made by national leaders to please the superpowers. In saying this, aligning ourselves with the "30by30 Global Ocean Alliance Initiative" is indeed scary to those of us fishers since more than what's in the plan will be taken away from us that will badly impact in our fishing efforts within our own waters. What is scarier is that when we bow to such demands, whatever funds promised to assist in effectively implementing the initiative remains with Government. The victims are usually quietly told to fend for themselves, which is truly cruel in nature.

We need to stand on our own feet and properly manage and exploit our natural resources through acceptable and appropriate management measures. We should not

rely too much on foreign ideologies since they will always come up with initiatives that looks perfect on paper, impractical to implement and will be very costly to us small island developing States. In other words, it will make us to be always reliant on these superpowers and for them to continue to control us at all times.

In this regard, Fiji should properly rethink on how to implement the not so well thought out commitment made in Mauritius in 2005.

8. Recommendations

- i. The regional highly migratory tuna and tuna like species that transits through Fiji's EEZ is already well managed through the provisions of our existing fisheries laws, policies and the regional conservation and management measures annually adopted by the WCPFC. In this regard, Fiji Government is to ensure that our laws are continued to be reviewed and our active participation at the WCPFC and other forums where the discussion on the management of EEZs and resources therein are held.
- ii. Instead of having our EEZ turned into a "no take" MPA, it instead should declare our waters as a **Marine Managed Area (MMA)** whereby the taking of highly migratory fish in the upper columns of our water continues.
- iii. If the Fiji Government insists in the "no take" MPAs, then we are suggesting to turn the long disputed boundary with Tonga and the borders of our neighbours be declared as "no take" - the borders with the neighbours are already a no take areas since vessels creates a buffer of 15 - 20 miles to avoid the vessels and lines accidentally drifting into the neighbours' territories.
- iv. We see the customary fishing right areas as more vulnerable areas due to their proximity to direct human activity, both on land and in the waters, and therefore needs to be seriously considered by Government as MMAs.
- v. When coming up with the management on oceans and natural resources therein within our jurisdiction, Government should seek views from the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and the Pacific Community (SPC) for expert advice since they are experts in the area and understands better the socio-economics of each member country despite their unique differences and has been doing this jointly for many years.