



联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

E

FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Thirty-fifth Session

1-4 September 2020¹

**Web Annex 1: Building resilience of small-scale fisheries to ensure food security and nutrition in the Pacific -
Note on COVID-19**

Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:

APRC Secretariat

APRC@fao.org

¹ Rescheduled from 17-20 February 2020, Thimphu, Bhutan

Introduction

1. This note aims to communicate the effects of COVID-19 on small-scale fisheries in the Pacific Island States as well as sharing emerging practices and actions that can protect capture-fisheries livelihoods. In Oceania, 460 000 fishers and 12 000² fish farmers are engaged in the primary sectors; thousands more work in secondary activities such as marketing where women predominate. Although most Pacific Island States have no cases of the COVID-19 thus far, almost all have been affected by economic hardship and uncertainty. Many Pacific Islands States have introduced measures to reduce the risk of exposure or stop the spread of the virus, and as a consequence have become further isolated with increased economic hardships. In addition to the hardships caused by COVID-19 between January and April 2020, ten tropical cyclones passed through the South Pacific, causing USD 132 million in damages and 32 deaths. The cyclones affected a total of 16 islands in the South Pacific.
2. COVID-19 presents a particularly challenging situation for the Pacific Island States because of their small populations, remoteness and associated logistical difficulties, limited health-care facilities, and in some cases, limited domestic-food systems. Many countries in the Pacific region have put in place measures, including the closing of national borders, various movement restrictions, closure of schools, and complete or partial closures of ministries and businesses, including hotels, restaurants, food services, local markets, transportation and cold-chain services. Some Pacific Island States have encouraged people to relocate to outer islands to reduce the risk of exposure. Falling demand or closures in major import markets have hindered regional and international trade and commerce in fishery products.
3. The fisheries sector is suffering from, fear and uncertainty; fear of catching the virus and uncertainty about when and how livelihoods will return to normal. Many in the fisheries sector have been hit hard, such as exporters and small-scale fishers and vendors who depend on daily income to support their families. These groups, although able to catch, eat and sell fish, are often highly dependent on cash to buy basic necessities. Reduced demand for fish due to shrinking remittances and economic activity may also affect their income and health in the short and medium term.

Strategies to protect the livelihoods of men and women in the capture fisheries and aquaculture supply chain

- a. Where possible, include fishers and fish workers in relief schemes and social protection measures, ensuring that women benefit from these measures and schemes.
- b. Provide specific information to men and women in the fish and aquaculture supply chains, such as on improved management and handling of fish and fishery products to reduce virus transmission, or preventative measures and contingency plans in fish farming.
- c. Support sustainable and safe fishing in coastal areas to maintain food security and boost incomes, given the reduction in overseas remittances.
- d. Support small-scale fishers through buying fish to supplement food assistance to other parts of the population, including through the use of social media and electronic tools.
- e. Prepare new policies on how capture fisheries can be improved post-COVID-19, such as integration of natural, technological and epidemiological disaster preparedness into

² FAO. 2020. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020. Sustainability in action*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9229en>

fisheries policy, planning, strategy, and management and strict collaboration with other agencies and ministries.

- f. Improve monitoring of fish prices to ensure price stability and affordability.
- g. Some export businesses may decide to switch target species away from export species so as to remain open until the situation improves.
- h. Explore new technologies and provide support to improve fishing and reduce post-harvest losses. Adopt improved sustainable fish aggregation device programmes, new fishing techniques, safer boat designs, solar dryers and solar chest freezers on outer islands.
- i. Encourage and promote good management of coastal resources to reduce the risk of increased impacts on near-shore marine ecosystems.
- j. Ensure that safety-at-sea measures and regulations are in place and enforced to support the safety of those venturing out to sea.