Statement made to the OFMP II Project Design Workshop by Ms Tima Tupou representing the Pacific Islands Tuna Industry Association (PITIA)

7 May 2010, FFA Headquarters, Honiara, Solomon Islands

Appreciation extended to the OFMP PCU for the support extended to the Pacific Islands Tuna Industry Association and for the invitation to participate at this meeting.

PITIA was incorporated in February 2005 in Pohnpei, FSM with the following objectives:

1. To provide a united voice for the Forum Island Countries’ domestic tuna fishing and associated industries.
2. To facilitate and encourage the promotion of the economically and biologically sustainable use of tuna and tuna-related resources by Forum Island Countries’ domestic tuna fishing and associated industries in the region.
3. To undertake, co-ordinate and promote liaison and negotiation with national, regional and international bodies and other entities having an interest in or an effect on the fishing or associated industries of the Forum Island Countries.

The essential concept of PITIA is that it is an association of the various National tuna trade associations within the PIC’s. In effect “an association of associations” drawing upon support from its members. There are currently six tuna trade associations within the 14 PIC’s. None of these is financially robust enough to lend financial support to PITIA as originally envisaged.

In recent years and continuing the industry was affected by high fuel prices and the world depression. Substantial losses were incurred by most PIC fleets, however the Purse Seine fleet fared better than LL. At the same time major issues were arising and are still current in the Pacific including;

(1) The firming up of governance within WCPFC and signing off of shark fishing, transhipment measures ,VMS, etc.
(2) EPA and IEPA negotiations with the EU
(3) SPS approvals ( or lack of ) for PIC product into the EU
(4) EU IUU fishing regulations and catch documentation.

What is certain is that as WCPFC “beds in” many Industry issues will become more generic and there will be a closer liaison between PIC Industry members. PITIA’s role is to disseminate information on WCPFC and trade issues to member organisations. In this regard a particular emphasis being placed on those smaller nations who do not have either the funds or available “manpower” to attend the numerous workshops and meetings that are available and pertinent to them.

It should be emphasised that PITIA is an “Industry” association thus the style of information needed and passed to members has a more commercial bias. Issues such as the cost of compliance with EU Sanitary Regulations, handling concerns with shark bodies in small vessels, lack of accredited laboratory facilities etc. are just some examples. All these are “spin offs” of conventions or regulations recent in the making. Too often these are signed off without full consideration of the commercial impact. PITIA looks to play a role in increasing officials’ awareness of the fiscal implications of such.
In PITIA’s efforts to fulfil its obligations to the PIC domestic industries and under the agreement with the OFM Project it has in the past tried to send a delegation to relevant workshops and meetings but like the national governments this was proving difficult for various reasons.

PITIA Board then made what was the most sensible decision at the time, and put the organisation into a ‘Correspondence Mode’ until more acceptable arrangements could be made.

On the 1st of April 2010 PITIA signed a management contract with the Fishing Industry Association of Tonga and assumed the role of Secretariat to the organisation with myself as the primary representative.

The immediate focus of the secretariat will include increasing representation of the industry interest to WCPFC and WCPFC related meetings and the dissemination and increasing the awareness and understanding of the industry of its compliance obligations from these arrangements. We will also look to strengthening collaboration of the industry players at the national, sub-regional and pan-Pacific level.

MALO