

PACE-Net+ Think Tank

Coastal ecosystem disturbances, fish and shellfish poisoning and their socio-economic implications

18-20 November 2014 – Secretariat of the Pacific Community - Noumea

In the Pacific, epidemics and food poisoning caused by fish consumption are widespread and can lead to severe illness and death. Their effects jeopardise food security and local economies. Population growth and climate change are likely to make these events more common. There is therefore an urgent need to conduct relevant research and find new ways of restricting these occurrences.

To help produce proposals in this regard, from 18 to 20 November 2014, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, with European Commission, French Pacific Fund and ACIAR support, organised a think tank session on the theme of “Coastal ecosystem disturbances, fish and shellfish poisoning and their socio-economic implications”.

Four thematic areas were discussed: marine toxins, the effects of climate change and environmental disturbances, health and society, and cultural and economic aspects.

Some fifty experts (scientists, senior government officers, industry representatives) from the Pacific (Australia, Fiji, Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, French Polynesia, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu) and Europe (Germany, Denmark, Spain, France) actively contributed to the meeting.

After constructive discussions, the participants selected a number of priority research areas, highlighting the need to consolidate regional data bases so as to enhance the knowledge available and enable enlightened decision-making. The need to use traditional knowledge was also emphasised. The innovations seen as necessary by participants included easy-to-use diagnosis kits to identify fish and affected persons.

Some ten new project ideas designed to find solutions were also outlined. These project concepts were based on cooperation between the European and Pacific partners present over the 3 days. As always with PACE-Net+, relationships were formed and paths opened up for new networks with future potential.

Joint endeavours of this kind are fully consistent with European policy. Indeed, in his introduction at the think tank, Mr Efstratios Pegidis, European Bureau Chief for the Pacific Overseas Countries and Territories, stressed the importance of scientific and technical cooperation between Europe and the Pacific, in a setting where challenges such as climate change and food security are global in nature.



Lastly, the Think Tank participants drafted recommendations that will inform regional and bi-regional political dialogue on scientific and technical cooperation and innovation, to be encouraged by PACE-Net+ with the main research players and decision-makers.

The outcomes of the Think Tank will be presented at the bi-regional dialogue to be held in Auckland on 10 and 11 December 2014.

For more information on PACE-Net+ and this Think Tank: <http://pacenet.eu>