Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FAO Project TCP/PLW/3601/C1
Strengthening Biosecurity Capacity of Palau

National Consultation on Biosecurity Regulations for Aquatic Animals in Support of the Biosecurity Act of 2014

28th March 2017
VENUE

Prospectus

Introduction

Species movement for farming can be one of the many sources of biological threats to the well-being of farmed aquatic animals as well as to humans and ecosystems, especially when done in a haphazard manner. With aquaculture intensification and diversification, the biological hazards and risks to farmed animals, people and ecosystems also increase in number and diversity, with potentially serious consequences. Infectious diseases, animal pests, public health concerns on residues and resistance of antimicrobial agents, zoonosis, invasive alien species, release of genetically modified organisms and biosecurity risks posed by climate change are examples of these hazards. The growing number, complexity and seriousness of these risks have driven the development of the concept of biosecurity and its increasing application. Biosecurity is an integrated strategy to manage biosecurity, business, environmental and social risks in a comprehensive and systematic manner to protect the health and well-being of animals, plants and people, and to maintain the functions and services of ecosystems.

Transboundary aquatic animal diseases

These are highly contagious aquatic animal diseases or pathogens that can spread very rapidly anywhere and cause serious losses and long-lasting damage. Increases in trade increase the potential of facilitating new mechanisms by which pathogens and diseases may be introduced and spread to new areas together with host movement. Domestic and international movements of infected broodstock and seed are proven pathways for the entry and spread of these pathogens. Infectious diseases are constraining the development and sustainability of the industry through direct losses (in many cases, costing millions of US dollars), increased operating costs, closure of aquaculture operations, unemployment, restrictions on trade, and impacts on biodiversity.

Biological invasions

Biological invasion refers to human-assisted introductions and subsequent natural range expansions, is a major cause of global biodiversity loss.

Aquaculture can be an important source of biological invasions, either because the organisms being raised are invasive, such as tilapia, or because of contaminants in imports, such as frogs (Guam reportedly has several species of introduced frogs, all or most of which are suspected to have arrived as contaminants in shipments of other organisms). Aquaculture organisms can also carry diseases which may impact the aquaculture industry, and may spread to native aquatic and marine organisms. All proposed introductions should be preceded by a scientific risk assessment, and should only be allowed if the assessment concludes that the proposed import will not become invasive.

In order to reduce pressures on stocks of wild marine fish and other marine organisms of economic importance, the national government has decided to increase aquaculture efforts, both marine and freshwater. Ongoing efforts have focused on breeding native fish and shellfish, such as groupers, clams, and mangrove crabs, but there is pressure to import non-native organisms, such as tilapia and white shrimp. Palau already imports fry of milkfish, both for baitfish and for raising to eating size.

Shipping has been a major marine biosecurity concern in the last decade and is known to cause the global spread of marine organisms. All groups of marine organisms may be transported through ballast water. Encrusting organisms (e.g. macro-algae, bivalve molluscs, barnacles, bryozoans, sponges and tunicates), can be carried by hulls, and which may not only introduce novel pathogens but more seriously foul ports, coasts and aquaculture facilities. These may add costs (for treatment and clearing) and weaken the economic viability of marine farms.

Palau is increasingly becoming a destination for recreational yachts and other vessels. Recreational vessels are a very high risk for hull fouling organisms, as they are slow moving and may lack the economic incentives of the shipping industry to keep their hulls immaculate. We urgently need clear regulations on hull fouling which will be enforceable by our current staff. There have been incidents in the past of barges entering Palau waters; these slow-moving vessels are also very high risk for hull fouling and should be regulated.

Request for FAO Technical Assistance

Aware of the lack of capacity in the area of marine and aquatic biosecurity, the BOA has requested technical assistance to develop appropriate policies and regulations, as well as to clearly define the capacity development needs to be able to enforce any new regulations. FAO through this TCP facility will strengthen the biosecurity capacity of Palau's Biosecurity Division through the development of several technical and legal documents (including their implementation) that will assist the prevention and management of hazards and risks that may be brought about by haphazard and ill-planned movement of aquatic animals for aquaculture and through shipping movements. These technical and legal documents include: (i) Aquaculture

(Import and Export) Policies and Regulations; (ii) Hull fouling regulations; and (iii) Green/Red Lists or Species Assessments.

In this context, this one day national consultation is being organized as part of project implementation.

Purpose: The purpose of the National Consultation is to report on the outcomes of the field mission conducted by FAO, to disseminate the above-mentioned technical and draft legal documents and to build consensus among relevant stakeholders.

Participants:

Programme

Timing	Activity
08:30-09:00	**Opening Session**
	Welcome Remarks: TBI Self-introduction of participants Group photo
09:00-09:10	**Background and purpose of the National Consultation** Director Fernando Sengebau, Bureau of Agriculture
09:10-09:30	**The Role of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and TCP/PLW/3601/C1** Dr Melba Reantaso, Project Lead Technical Officer, FAO, Rome
09:30-09:50	**Aquaculture Development in Palau: history, potential and issues** Representative, Palau Aquaculture Association or former Director Theo Isamu, BMR
09:50-10:20	Coffee break
10:20-10:50	**Transboundary Aquatic Animal Pathogens (TAADS) and Their Potential to Destroy National Aquaculture Development** Dr Melba Reantaso, Project Lead Technical Officer, FAO, Rome
10:50-11:10	**Aquaculture – a Potential Gateway for Invasive Aquatic Species** Mr Isechal Remengesau, National Invasive Species Coordinator & National Project Coordinator, and Dr Joel Miles, FAO National Consultant
11:10-11:45	**Aquatic Biosecurity - Protecting Aquaculture and the Aquatic Environment from Invasive Aquatic Species and TAADS** Dr Richard Arthur, FAO Consultant, Canada
11:45-12:00	Discussions
12:00-13:00	Lunch break
13:00-13:30	**Supporting Regulations for Hull Biofouling: a Risk Management Based Workflow, Thresholds/Species Assessment and Required Knowledge Bases** Dr Glenn Aguilar, FAO Consultant, New Zealand
13:30-14:00	**Biosecurity Database Development** Ms Joy Rina Ambatang, FAO Consultant, Philippines
14:00-14:20	**The Biosecurity Act of 2014: Protecting Palau from Exotic Pest and Diseases** Director Fernando Sengebau, Bureau of Agriculture
14:20-15:00	**Proposed draft Biosecurity Regulations for Aquatic Animals and their Products** Dr Richard Arthur, FAO Consultant, Canada
15:00-15:20	Coffee break
15:20-16:45	**Working Group discussions and presentations**
16:45-17:15	**Conclusions and the Way Forward** Director Fernando Sengebau, BOA and Dr Melba Reantaso, Project Lead Technical Officer, FAO, Rome
17:15-17:20	Closing