



Fisher Folk Net

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A newsletter to share information among fisher folk organisations and people in fisheries on matters relating to sustainable fisheries management and other issues of interest to fisher folk organisations throughout the region

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Fisher folk put networking and communicating high on their agenda

This issue of Fisher Folk Net is devoted to networking and communication. We hope you enjoy reading about the progress being made by fishers to form national fisherfolk organisations (NFOs) in St Kitts and Nevis, Guyana, and St Vincent and the Grenadines to strengthen their respective positions to better influence the decision-making process.

We are also pleased to bring you an update on some of the initiatives coming out of the sixth meeting of the Caribbean Fisheries Forum, which was held in Suriname from May 8-9 2008. The forum is the main regional advisory body within the CRFM on matters of fisheries management and policy and its annual meeting is one of the most important fisheries meetings in the CARICOM region.



CRFM Secretariat and RFO-CU working with NFO Steering Committees

The CRFM Secretariat continues to encourage the formation of NFOs across the Member States, which would ultimately lead to a strong regional network of national fisherfolk organisations (RFO). In May, the CRFM undertook a project, funded by the GCFI under its Small Grants Fund (SGF), that saw the coordinator and deputy coordinator of the RFO coordinating unit (CU), representatives from the CRFM, plus researchers at the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) at the University of the West Indies (UWI) in Barbados, make visits to St Kitts and Nevis, Guyana, and St Vincent and the Grenadines, to witness successes as well

as look at challenges being confronted by stakeholders in their attempts to set up NFOs in those countries.

St Kitts and Nevis field trip



During the visit to St. Kitts and Nevis, from May 13 to 17, the team visited Nevis on May 14, then spent May 15 and 16 in St. Kitts. While there, they visited the recently re-formed Nevis co-operative, which the team saw as a positive step towards organizing fishers in Nevis.

The team also visited Permanent Secretary in the Nevis Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. Pearlievan Wilkin, and took the opportunity to brief him on how the regional network of fisher folk organisations project was developing. They visited Jessups landing site to engage fishers in discussions about the development of an NFO and the RFO.

In St Kitts, the team visited the landing sites of Basseterre and Old Road and held a stakeholders meeting. They found that a number of fishers saw benefits in forming an NFO, but there was some skepticism due to past failed efforts.



While efforts are underway to form an NFO, these are being hampered by the fact that not all fisher groups are active, and communication between fishers around the island, and with those in Nevis, is limited. The fishers' involvement in the formation of the RFO is also constrained by poor linkage between the average fisher and national or regional fisher folk developments.

Guyana field trip

During the visit to Guyana, from May 19 to 24, the team paid a courtesy call on the Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Robert Persaud. The Minister welcomed the visit and the observations they made on how to make PFOs in Guyana more viable by improving communication and information sharing and promoting more sustainable fishing practices. He expressed his support for the initiatives and advised the Principal Fisheries Officer (Ag) to look into the matters

The team also met with Mr. Tejnarine Geer, acting Principal Fisheries Officer. He offered his department's support for the formation of an NFO in Guyana and welcomed the effort by the CU to promote this activity. He pointed out that inadequate management and low member participation were among the issues affecting the development of the fishermen's cooperatives in Guyana. In addition, he noted that piracy was a serious

matter affecting the artisanal fishers, but that the Guyana government was seeking to increase security in the main rivers and at sea, while establishing a revolving fund to assist those hard hit by pirates.

The team received strong support from the Guyana Fisheries Advisory Committee for the NFO, which its chairman welcomed as an effort to better organize the fisher folk at the local, national and regional levels.



A meeting with the Chief Cooperatives Officer revealed that the NFO Steering Committee was reviewing draft by-laws and looking at the best options to make the NFO an inclusive rather than exclusive grouping. It was noted that the by-laws could possibly make provision for the NFO to include or be affiliated with the industrial seafood processors and trawler operators' association. The team provided the CCO with a copy of the by-laws for the NFO recently formed in St. Lucia as a possible model for the Guyana organisation.

SVG field trip

During the visit to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, from May 25 to 29, meetings were held at the Fisheries Division, the Cooperatives Division, the Goodwill

Fishermen's Cooperative Society Limited, the Calliaquia Fishermen's Cooperative Society Limited and the Barrouallie Fishermen's Cooperative Society Limited. A meeting was also organized to discuss the development of the NFO with its steering committee.

A visit to Calfico at Calliaquia allowed the team to see the co-operative's facilities and engage with fishers. The team noticed that generally there was a good involvement of fishers in the co-operative and awareness of the need to form an NFO.



In turn, the co-operative has been instrumental in tackling a broad range of issues facing fisher folk, such as poverty and the need to widen the knowledge base of its fishers.



Coordinating Unit endorses urgent need for CFP&R

Deputy coordinator of the co-ordinating unit (CU) for the regional fisherfolk network Mr. Joslyn Lee Quay, is advocating the urgent need for CARICOM countries to push ahead

with the finalisation of the Common Fisheries Policy & Regime (CFP&R) initiated in 2003.

Following the CRFM visits to St Kitts and Nevis, Guyana, and St Vincent and the Grenadines, Mr. Lee Quay had this to say: "During our visits we (the CU team) saw the need to have a common fisheries policy for the region and a higher level of monitoring, like in undersized conch and fish."

He said fishing needed to be carried out in a more sustainable manner, especially as the price of grain and other foods rise steeply worldwide. He also stressed that communication among fisher folk within the region was going to be absolutely necessary if the regional fisher folk organisation was to be achieved.



Regional fishermen fuel woes voiced at the CARICOM level.

The CRFM has taken fishers' call for a reprieve from rising diesel costs to the region's ministers of agriculture.

On the final day of the Sixth Meeting of the Caribbean Fisheries Forum, in Paramaribo, Suriname from May 8 to 9, the CRFM executive agreed to ensure the matter was tabled before agricultural officials at the preparatory meeting for the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) scheduled for May 21 in Guyana. It was expected that it would then be placed on the

agenda of the 27th special meeting of COTED two days later, which was devoted to agricultural issues.



Suriname minister calls for "cautious approach" to fishing



Suriname's Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Dr. Kermechand Raghoebarsing addressing the CRFM's 6th Fisheries Forum

Suriname's Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Dr. Kermechand Raghoebarsing has called for a "cautious approach" to harvesting if the region is to avoid depletion of fish stocks, which might "ultimately have serious repercussions not only for the industry but the consumers at large." Suriname took over chairmanship of the CRFM during the Sixth Meeting of the Caribbean Fisheries Forum in Paramaribo.

Minister Raghoebarsing said, as he officially opened the two-day meeting, that the fisheries industry was a source of affordable protein for the people of the region, but this would only be sustainable if it was managed scientifically. He also noted that while fish is

a naturally renewable resource, it is not unlimited and therefore regional countries must speed up exploration into opportunities for aquaculture development.



Caribbean governments asked to re-priorities resources for marine matters



Executive Director of the CRFM, Mr. Hugh Saul addressing the CRFM's 6th Fisheries Forum

Caribbean governments have been asked by Executive Director of the CRFM, Mr. Hugh Saul, to re-think their priorities when it comes to devoting resources to land-based over marine initiatives.

The Executive Director made this call as he addressed the opening of the Sixth Meeting of the Caribbean Fisheries Forum in Suriname. He pointed out that 82 per cent of the jurisdiction of CARICOM member states is ocean space, which leaves about 18 per cent as land, but this was not reflected in governmental priorities.

"Our national governments need to revisit their development practices and direct more of their resources (human, material and financial) at this large, and to a great extent under financed, asset," said Saul.



First meeting of St Kitts-Nevis NFO steering committee

The newly nominated members of the St. Kitts and Nevis NFO steering committee held their first meeting with the Advocacy Group on May 27. At that meeting the committee leaders were elected and discussions started on the adaptation of the by-laws with a view towards having the organization officially registered. The committee now comprises the following persons:- Ms. Lorna Warner of the Dieppe Bay Co-op, chairperson; Mr. William Warner of the Sandy Point Co-op, vice-chairman; Mr. Lee Graham of the Basseterre Association, secretary; and Mr. Anderson Williams of the Dieppe Bay Co-op, Mr. Theophilus Taylor of the Sandy Point Co-op, Mr. Michael Davis of the Old Road Co-op, Mr. Oliver Spencer of the Old Road Co-op, Mr. Lorenzo Buchanan of the Basseterre Association, Mr. Winston Hobson of the Nevis Co-op, and Mr. Rogol Mills of the Nevis Co-op, each as ordinary members.

The committee has agreed to meet on a weekly basis until the official registration of the NFO. Aspects of the bylaws that have led to much discussion include: the name of the

cooperative or group and its contact address, the cost of shares and minimum quantity of shares for membership, the reinvestment of fifty percent of patronage bonus into shares, and the responsibilities of members of the board.



Belize and St Lucia fisheries stakeholders share best practices



Exchange participants visiting the National Fishermen Cooperative Society Ltd. in Belize. From left to right: Silvano Cobb (National Fishermen Co-operative, Belize), Charles Heusner (Chairman, National), Petronila Polius (Fisheries Dept., St. Lucia), Elmer Rodriguez (National), Julieta Herman (Fishing Co-op, St. Lucia), Barbara Bradley (Executive Secretary National), Mitchel Luis (Co-op dept.), Mitchel Lay (Fisher, Antigua), Nadine Nembhard (BFCA), Jaime Villanueva (Fisheries Dept), Alan Burn (National), Daniel Dawson (National).

A CRFM organised visit, funded under the GCFI-SGF, to Belize for the Coordinator of the CU and some St Lucia fisheries stakeholders resulted in a fruitful exchange of knowledge and best practices on both sides. Participants observed a number of common areas that need strengthening in both St. Lucia and Belize. These include the

issue of unsecured loans for members of co-operatives in Belize and St. Lucia leading to both countries implementing a loan recovery programme; and the recognition by both countries of the need to have a strong NFO.



The delegates from St. Lucia strongly recommended to their Belizean counterparts that the umbrella association of Belize host workshops and training programmes to encourage diversification into deep sea fishing, given that there are some seemingly under-exploited fisheries in Belize. The St Lucians also shared with the Belizeans the benefits derived from government assistance, such as the fuel refund scheme and tax exemptions on industry-related purchases. The delegation suggested that, like St. Lucia, Belize cooperatives could consider finding safe storage for fishermen's boat engines where feasible.

On the other hand, the St Lucia delegation will take home lessons learnt in Belize to ensure that the St Lucia Fishermen Association formed last September is successful. Among the initiatives that the St Lucia delegation picked up from Belize and intend to apply are providing training opportunities for its members and staff; engaging in advocacy programmes; and conducting research that involves the fishers.

St Lucia fisheries officer sees benefits from exchange visit



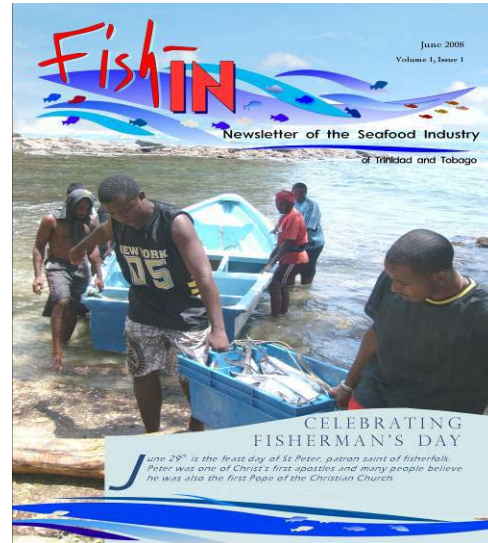
Ms. Petronila Polius

St Lucia Fisheries Extension Officer Petronila Polius is seeing definite benefits in her job from a recent exchange visit to Belize organised by the CRFM Secretariat.

"With the demand for high quality marine products in Saint Lucia, the exchange experience has helped enhance my capabilities to more effectively carry out my functions and duties as a well rounded resource person in that field. As a result, I will be better able to help improve the socio-economical status of fishers and their families in managing and sustaining the fragile marine resources on which they depend for their basic livelihood. The training has also helped improve my practical knowledge, skills and expertise in the said field," said Ms. Polius following her trip.



SIDC issues first newsletter



The cover of the first SIDC newsletter

The first newsletter of the Sea Food Industry Development Company (SIDC) has been issued to provide information from the fisheries communities and the industry to all who are interested. With input coming from industry stakeholders, SIDC representative Mr. Joslyn Lee Quay said they hoped that the newsletter would improve fisheries communication links. The first issue was distributed to fisherfolk organizations across the twin-island republic. Subsequent issues will be put out on a quarterly basis.



CERMES wraps up communications workshops



Final CERMES communications workshop in Nevis

CERMES has completed training of 88 fisheries stakeholders across five eastern Caribbean territories in the fundamentals of communication skills and techniques as a means of building capacity for networking and advocacy within the industry.

The six one-day workshops entitled "Enhancing Marine Resource Governance through Developing Capacity for Communication in the Eastern Caribbean" were held between March 25 and June 5, 2008 on the islands of Barbados, Grenada, St Lucia, St Kitts, Nevis, and St Vincent.



Grenada-China knowledge transfer

Grenada Fisheries Officer Francis Calliste was the only Caribbean national out of 32 participants from 17 countries to have

benefited from a technical training course on aquaculture held in China from April 25 to June 23, 2008.



Mr. Calliste receiving instruction in the artificial propagation of pearl culture mussel

The course, which was aimed at promoting friendship and cooperation between China and Grenada and accelerating human resource development, including economic and social progress, was sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce in the Peoples Republic of China. It was held in the city of Wuxi in the province of Jiangsu at the Freshwater Fisheries Research Centre (FFRC) and the Chinese Academy of Science (CAS).

Mr. Calliste described the course as informative despite the language barriers and said he welcomed the exposure to new techniques and knowledge.



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