



Laboratory capacity building to support fish exports

The project aims to develop the capacity of the National Public Health Laboratory to conduct microbiological testing on water and food products in compliance with international standards, so that testing results are accepted by trading partners and fish exports can continue uninterrupted.

STDF/PG/521

Status

On-going

Start Date

01/06/2017

End Date

31/05/2020

Project Value (US\$)

\$508,336

STDF Contribution (US\$)

\$355,408

Beneficiaries

Solomon Islands

Implementing Entities

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Background

The Solomon Islands, an LDC, is one of the poorest nations in the Pacific. Internal ethnic conflict between 1999 and 2003 deeply affected the country's economy and society. The current economic recovery has been possible in large part thanks to international trade. The national economy is based on agriculture and fisheries, with the majority of the labour force engaged in subsistence farming and fishing. The fish industry is crucial for the country, employing some 1,800 people (60% women) and also contributing substantially to government revenues and the national economy. Processed fish (mainly canned tuna and cooked tuna loins) is among the top three commodities with the highest revenues from international trade.

The Solomon Islands has been approved to export fish to the EU. Maintaining access to the EU (largest destination market) and other international markets is a national priority. Substantial support has already been provided by Australia and the EU to establish the competent authority for food safety and the infrastructure for diagnostic testing. However, additional assistance is needed to enable the national laboratory to carry out microbiological testing in line with international standards so that fish exports can continue. This support is expected to protect jobs in the fishing industry and sustain commercial fish exports which are worth approximately US\$45 million.

Expected Results

Strengthened capacity of the National Public Health Laboratory (NPHL) to conduct microbiological testing in compliance with international standards

The project will enable the NPHL to comply with international microbiological food testing standards. Laboratory staff will be trained and essential systems will be put in place to comply with international standards and good practice. By the end of the project, the laboratory will be assessed as ready for ISO 17025 certification by a relevant international accreditation body.

Greater capacity to monitor and evaluate contamination risks associated with water and food for the domestic population

Increased access to clean water and safe food are priority development goals for public health in the Solomon Islands. By strengthening the laboratory's capacity to monitor and evaluate contamination risks associated with water and food, the project will support efforts to protect domestic public health. The laboratory will also be in a position to provide testing support to government agencies and international organizations involved in the delivery of local water projects and water management interventions.