

QUARTERLY REPORT

April-June
2023

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Competent Authority
Division

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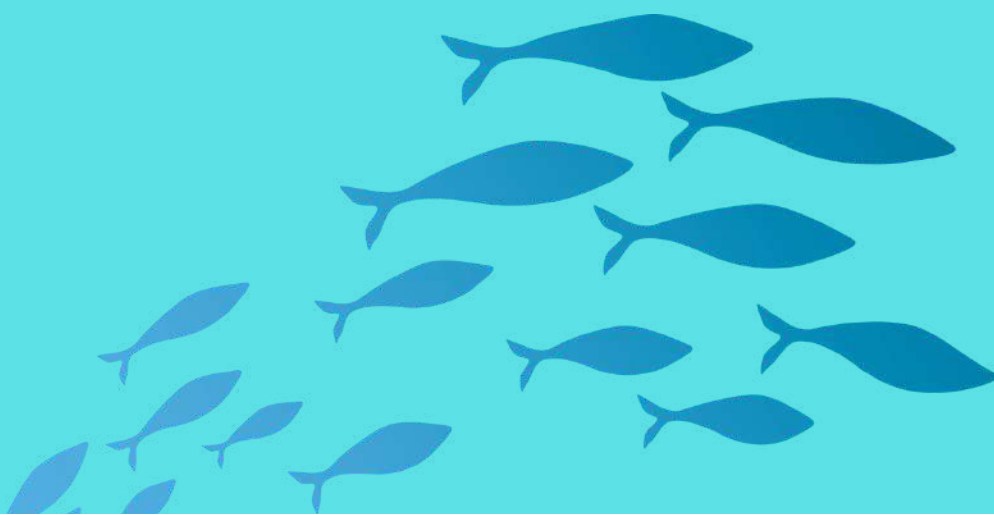
Introduction

The second quarter of 2023 composed of several seminars, training sessions, inspections and achievements by the Competent Authority.

The CA focused on inspection audits to supplement records for RMI's objective of joining the EU market.

RMI hosted the 2023 FFC official and ministerial meetings, and were respectively chaired by MIMRA Director Glen Joseph, and RMI Minister of Natural Resource and Commerce John Silk.

Walmart Executive Brandon Nikolish was warmly welcomed to the RMI, and discussions took place on Walmart's continued procurement of RMI-sourced tuna from the joint venture Pacific Island Tuna (PIT).



RMI Gender Equity & Social Inclusion in Fisheries

During April, a two-day training was conducted with MIMRA staff and key fisheries stakeholders on applying Gender Equity and Social Inclusion(GESI) concepts and ideas in the workplace. The objectives of this training were:

- Participants to be more gender aware; and sensitive towards socially inclusive approaches.
- Participants to be better equipped with GESI knowledge, tools, and processes to apply more broadly in the areas of coastal fisheries and aquaculture work.
- Participants to be more aware of the key findings and recommendations from the RMI Gender and Fisheries Analysis report

The training material, as explained through a comment by the MIMRA Director, taught GESI concepts and ideas, some of which have been in practice within MIMRA, and also within the Fisheries industry in the RMI, evident in the number of women employed and the key positions they hold.



Constitution day

The MIMRA staff, along with numerous government bodies, private sector members, and the visiting Taiwan Navy, gathered together to celebrate the Republic of the Marshall Islands 44th Independence Day.



World Tuna Day

World Tuna Day was celebrated on May 5th in Majuro. MIMRA hosted the event to bring awareness to the benefits of tuna and the importance of sustainable management of their marine ecosystem.

Three competitions took place during the event: tuna cooking, tuna poke, and tuna carving.

Public school children also participated in an art competition, with submissions including a poster, poem, essay, song, and videos.

The Taiwan and Japan embassies collaborated to present tuna delicacies from the respective nations, while the US embassy printed tuna outline drawings for children to color and enjoy.

MIMRA appreciates the many contestants, submissions, and spectators who showed support for World Tuna Day.



Customs-Asycuda

In May, The Ministry of Finance, Division of Customs, Tax & Revenue hosted a half-day seminar, to introduce ASYCUDA (Automated System for Customs Data) to all stakeholders concerned, particularly key players in RMI's commerce, which includes importers and exporters. ASYCUDA is a computerized system that was developed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to assist customs authorities worldwide in automating and controlling their core functions, as well as producing valuable information to support government planning. The Competent Authority staff participated in this introductory seminar with a keen interest in the system, in regard to the exporting of fish and fishery products from the RMI, and the traceability of the product under this system.

National Implementation Plan for Persistent Organic Pollutants Workshop

Tatiana attended the National Implementation Plan Endorsement workshop conducted by RMI EPA and its counterpart SPREP. The RMI National Implementation Plan facilitates the fulfillment of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. Data has been collected at different sites of the RMI that confirmed that the eight originally listed POPs pesticides are not present, but there are low concentrations of several POPs residues that have been found in the air and breast milk of women in the RMI. Tatiana noted the relevance of these pollutants to the exportable fish products of the RMI, and initiated a meeting between MIMRA and a team from the Biodiversity Research Institute, to develop a further understandings of the workshop studies.

USFDA

The US Food and Drug Administration reached out to MIMRA requesting assistance with their interest in inspecting local establishments that they consider to have started exporting fish and fishery products into the US, even for small-scale and/or reef-fish exporters. The Competent Authority then informed and met with the local establishments, conducting an assessment of their facilities, then provided advice on meeting the basic requirements of a food processing establishment producing fish and fishery products, to be ready for a planned USFDA inspection which will eventually take place.



Full verification of PPF and MIFV

During April, the RMI Competent Authority conducted Full Verification Audits of Marshall Islands Fishing Venture and Pan Pacific Food's processing plants. The scope of the Audits covered the necessary documentary checks, including:

- Implementation of HACCP and prerequisite programs
- Identified and documented Critical Control Points
- Ability to trace products
- Inspection of structural, temperature control, and water requirements
- All other requirements stipulated under the RMI Industry standards, the National Control Plan, and the RMI Fish Processing and Export Regulations of 2020

For MIFV and PPF, the audits were able to identify their areas of strength and weaknesses that require improvement to meet national standards and importing market requirements. The CA commends the cooperation received from both Marshall Islands Fishing Venture and Pan Pacific Foods, and their willingness to take the necessary measures to improve their establishments.

Vessel Inspections

From May to July, the RMI Competent Authority was able to conduct Full Verification Audits on 5 RMI RMI-flagged purse Seiner Fishing vessels, three belonging to Koo's Fishing Company and two belonging to Pan Pacific Fishing. Similar to the scope for verification for land-based establishments, the Full Audits entailed:

- verification of HACCP and prerequisite program implementation on board each vessel
- availability of documented records,
- inspection of structural requirements, and particular emphasis on hygienic conditions of fish handling and storage areas,
- temperature control capabilities and requirements for water used on board.

The audit is part of an ongoing effort to have all 11 RMI-flagged vessels audited to determine their capability of meeting the national standards and to provide a baseline for vessels and companies interested in future opportunities to export their products directly to the EU and other potential markets. Despite challenges following a schedule for vessel inspection due to the varied vessel movements, cooperation with fishing companies allowed for audits of the following five vessels: F/V Lometo (PPF), F/V Lajabwil (PPF), F/V Koos 108 (KFC), Marshalls 201 (KFC) and Koos 102 (KFC).

FFC126

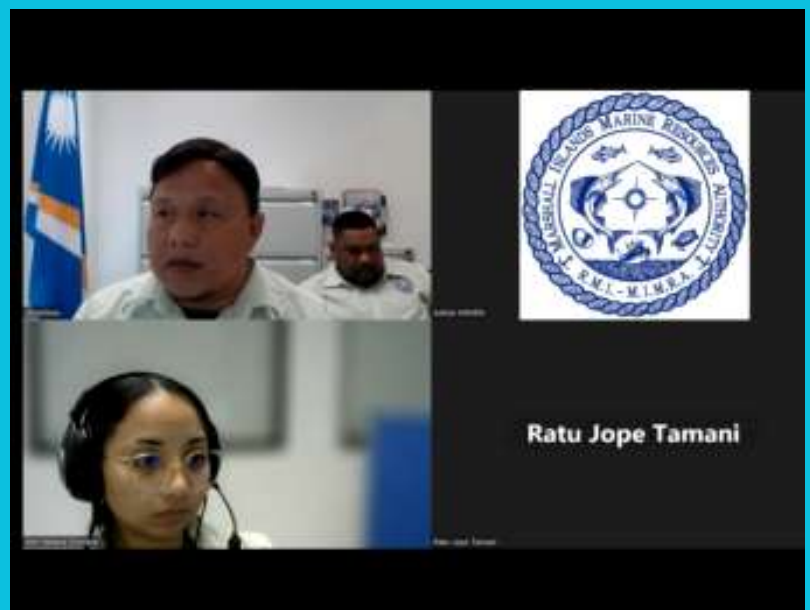
The Forum Fisheries Committee gathered in Majuro for the 126th FFC meeting to discuss important issues on sustainable fisheries management, IUU measures, FFA operations, etc. A total of 17 FFA member countries gathered with over 50 participants. The first week consisted of pre-meeting agendas while the second week held the official meeting. Several MIMRA and CA staff prepared and led logistical efforts during the meeting, such as venue preparation, scheduling of events, and extracurricular activities.



FFA market access

Zoom sessions

As part of CA capacity building, the FFA Market Access Team conducted a lecture on Audit rating and Technical Report writing. They also tackled the EU standards of the specific for Fishing Vessels.



Walmart Visit

A team of Walmart executives planned to visit the RMI to discuss the continuation of receiving certified, sustainably sourced tuna from the RMI, through the Pacific Island Tuna (PIT). Unfortunately, rough weather in the US permitted only Brandon Nikolish, Director of Global Sourcing for Walmart, to be able to make the flights to Majuro. MIMRA led Nikolish, along with other stakeholders, TNC (The Nature Conservancy), and PIT, to several activities, including visits to industries and processing facilities, courtesy calls with the President and cabinet, and an overnight trip to Arno.



FFC Ministerial

The FFC Ministerial was held in the RMI, following the officials meeting a few months prior. A total of nine FFA ministers were present, including the minister of New Caledonia as a special observer. The week consisted of high-level meetings and decision-making for FFA countries. Similar to the official meetings, Various MIMRA staff members facilitated many of the FFC Ministerial meeting's activities, including liaising for each of the ministers.



Budget

The CA still awaits approval from World Bank.



Achievements

MIMRA CA officers' signatures are now registered with China Customs for the Health and Export Certificates.

Challenges

Due to FAD closures, purse seine fishing has seen limited activity, thus creating delays in the fishing vessel audits.



Recommendations

Industries/companies should develop a Quality Control department that will deal with regulations and Industry Standards, as well as coordinate with MIMRA CA matters and concerns.

Acknowledgments

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MIMRA Management and the Board

Fisheries Industry

Competent Authority Team

World Bank

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We thank you for your continued support.

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