

FFA PEUMP co-sponsored tuna companies attend Global Seafood Expo, secure deals worth USD 1.5 million



Caption: (L) Longliners transshipping in Noro Port. (R) Deal negotiation at Barcelona Seafood Expo 2023. Supplied by PEUMP FFA

The European Union-funded Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) PEUMP Programme, in partnership with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, sponsored the attendance of four tuna companies from the Pacific region at the Global Seafood Expo (GSE) in Barcelona, Spain.

The companies, Soltuna of Solomon Islands, Hangton Pacific and Golden Ocean Fish from Fiji, and Kiribati Fish Ltd from Kiribati, were able to effectively promote and market their tuna products to buyers from the UK, EU, USA, Asia and other parts of the world.

The GSE is the largest seafood event worldwide, serving as a crucial platform for seafood buyers and suppliers from across the globe. This year's GSE featured 2,078 exhibiting companies from 87 different countries. It attracted an estimated attendance of over 34,000 visitors, including buyers and suppliers.

The four FFA PEUMP-sponsored companies were able to secure deals worth an estimated USD 1.5 million at the GSE. Soltuna Ltd received 43 leads from companies located in a range of countries, including the UK, China, Latvia, France, Spain, Ireland, Singapore, USA, Vietnam, Netherlands, Belgium, UAE, Panama, Germany, Japan, Ecuador, Italy, Switzerland and Turkey.

Golden Ocean Fish Ltd and Kiribati Fish Ltd met with 40 prospective buyers from Japan, the USA, Vietnam, Singapore, Hong Kong, Britain and the EU. They have signed deals to supply sashimi tuna loins to a company in Japan over the next four months. They have also sent samples of fine sashimi products, Saku, cubes, and steak ground meat to a prospective buyer in the USA. The buyer is now looking to place monthly orders for tuna products.

Hangton Pacific Ltd held meetings with prospective buyers from the USA, Spain, Portugal, and Asia. They are currently advancing discussions with four tuna buyers and a trade financier. They are negotiating to supply fresh tuna to Ocean Seafood Marketing, a US-based company. Hangton is also working with Fiji Airways to seek concessions on the freight charges.

Overall, the representatives of the four companies effectively engaged in the GSE, leading to successful agreements, prospects, and interactions with potential buyers. The accumulated value of the secured deals resulting from their participation in the event is estimated at around USD 1.5 million with the potential to increase by end of 2023, while additional leads estimated at USD 430,000 are currently under negotiation.

This is a great success for the FFA PEUMP Programme and the four companies involved. It demonstrates the potential of the Pacific tuna industry to export its products to global markets. The FFA will continue to support the development of the Pacific tuna industry and help companies to access new markets.

From training to response: SPC provides vital support to the emergency response to an avian disease detected in the Solomon Islands



Caption: Solomon Islands MAL Livestock officers with the SPC team during the animal surveillance training in October.

SUPPLIED BY SPC

"As new and existing animal disease threats emerge around the world and the region, it's incredibly important to strengthen surveillance and monitoring in our region and ensure the early detection of these diseases."

Dr. Sripad Sosale, Animal Health and Production Adviser at The Pacific Community (SPC), voiced this sentiment during animal disease surveillance training in the Solomon Islands in October last year.

Through the European Union-funded Safe Agricultural Trade Facilitation through Economic Integration in the Pacific (SAFE Pacific) project, SPC joined forces with Australia's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) to strengthen the capacity of livestock officers in the Solomon Islands in sample and data collection, as part of animal disease surveillance and monitoring.

Dr. Sosale and Elenoa Salele, Pacific Heads of Veterinary and Animal Production Services (PHOVAPS) Coordinator at SPC worked closely with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) which involved field visits and capacity-building activities in Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces while DAFF remained focused on the Guadalcanal area. SPC also provided crucial lab consumables and equipment to the MAL team.

"We know, and we have heard of a lot of animal diseases that are emerging which are very dangerous for animals and farms, and the Solomon Islands is no exception," said MAL Department of Livestock and Veterinary Services Acting Director Rickson Wate.

Fast forward less than a year, and the training bore fruit as the MAL Livestock Officers sprang into action to confront an urgent animal disease threat. Reports of unusual chicken deaths on farms in Guadalcanal had raised alarm bells. A virus causing high death rates in young chickens was detected, prompting a rapid response in July.



Caption: A Solomon Islands MAL Livestock officer who was trained in October with the SPC team during the emergency response to the avian disease in July. SUPPLIED BY SPC

DAFF and SPC, supported through SAFE Pacific, swiftly mobilised a response team to provide vital technical support on the ground.

Avian disease outbreaks have the potential to devastate not only the poultry population but also the livelihoods of those who depend on it. Dr. Sosale emphasised the gravity of the situation, stating, "This viral infectious bird disease seriously threatens the poultry industry and people's livelihoods."

SPC, DAFF and MAL worked hand in hand with farmers, providing essential equipment and support for sample collection and helping devise containment strategies to control the disease outbreak effectively.

"Thanks to the vigilance of MAL in their ongoing surveillance and farmers, we've responded quickly. As we're working to combat the avian disease, it's also important for farmers and farming communities to adhere to biosecurity guidelines and preventative measures," said Dr. Sosale.

Response efforts included media awareness to educate farmers and communities about symptoms and prevention mechanisms for avian diseases. As part of this, MAL Livestock Department Deputy Director Ricky Wate appeared on radio talk shows to provide updates and raise awareness on preventing the spread of the disease.

"Farmers are urged to report any suspected cases and monitor for unusual animal deaths," said Mr. Wate. "It is important to restrict movement between farms or when interacting with animals. Protective wear and proper hygiene on farms are a must."

The Solomon Islands government has expressed its deep appreciation for the support from SPC, DAFF and the EU. The partnership exemplifies a collective commitment to fostering regional cooperation and addressing veterinary public health challenges in the Pacific.

EU-Pacific Partnership Agreement success stories highlighted at Solomon Islands outreach event



Caption: Participants at the IEPA Outreach Consultative Dialogue on 9th August. *SUPPLIED BY PIF*

SolTuna is able to compete in the EU market because of the duty-free, quota-free trade arrangement ... the EU provides a very important raw material sourcing opportunity for our tuna industry through global sourcing arrangements under the Interim EU-Pacific Partnership Agreement (iEPA).

Trade Commissioner Barrett Salato of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade (MFAET) made the remarks while opening the first EU-Pacific EPA Outreach Programme and Joint Public-Private Sector Consultative Dialogue for the Solomon Islands at the Heritage Park Hotel in Honiara on Wednesday, 9th August.

SolTuna, a key player in the Solomon Islands' tuna industry, shared successes in accessing the EU market, acknowledging the vital opportunity for the local tuna industry was made possible through the iEPA.

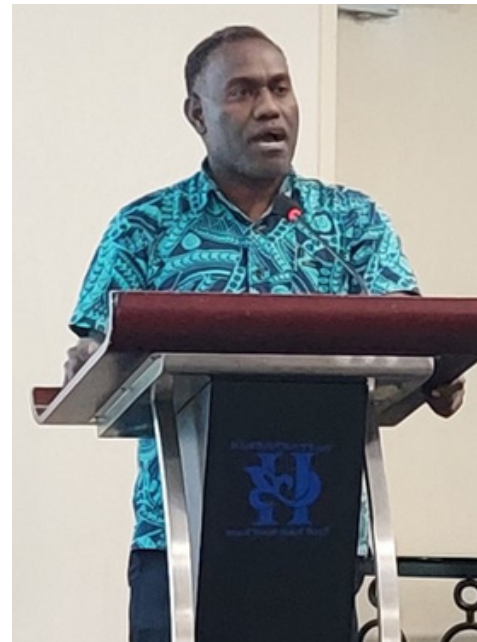
The event was organised and led by the EU-funded Strengthening Pacific Intra-Regional and International Trade (SPIRIT) project implemented by the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) to foster dialogue between the public and private sectors. The event was attended by 32 participants from the public sector and included private sector exporters.

The outreach programme covered iEPA awareness, the National iEPA Implementation Plan (NIPA), and the role of the Pacific Regional Integration Support (PRISE) programme in facilitating trade across the region.

Deputy Head of Mission of the EU Delegation for the Pacific, Dr. Erja Askola, spoke on the success of the Solomon Islands, where "exports have almost doubled in the last 15 years from around €45 million to €85 million" since entering the EPA in 2019, after which it grew by 40 per cent.

The event was an opportunity for exporters in the country and those positioned for export to discuss issues and challenges. They highlighted the cost of organic and other certification requirements for export markets, particularly for value-added products. They also reiterated the need for manufacturing, transportation, storage, and laboratory testing infrastructure.

The participants learned more about the PRISE programme and its implementing partners, PIFS, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and The Pacific Community (SPC).



Caption: Ambassador Barrett Salato delivers his opening remarks during the Workshop. *SUPPLIED BY PIF*

From UNCTAD, Dhanushki Sahabandu, Team leader of the PRISE component project titled Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade (IMPACT), discussed the project activities targeted to build capacity within customs departments in the region. She also presented the articles under the iEPA that related to customs.

From SPC, the Safe Agricultural Trade Facilitation through Economic Integration in the Pacific (SAFE Pacific) project team also presented their respective activities under the PRISE umbrella, including strengthening the competitiveness of sustainable agricultural value chains in the Pacific and Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) and Organic Certification activities. PGS are locally focused quality assurance systems. These systems provide a valuable tool to transition to more sustainable agriculture practices.

In his closing remarks, PIF Trade Programme Adviser Noah Kouback spoke on the need for financing to grow exports, particularly corresponding banking relationships, “If we cannot trade under a particular currency, or even have access to finance, it will create additional layers of obstacles...” to trading with partners.

The Solomon Islands Department of Trade is reviewing the NIPA through ongoing consultations with stakeholders to ensure it best meets the needs of the public and private sectors within the available resources.

The event is part of a series of iEPA Outreach events in the region in 2023. Similar events have taken place in PNG, Kiribati, Fiji and Vanuatu, and more are scheduled for PNG and Timor Leste later this year.



Senior Trade Officer Kevin Meplu of MFAET presents on the NIPA during the Workshop. *SUPPLIED BY PIF*

Building Capacity to Strengthen Harmonised Systems (HS) in the Pacific



Caption: Participants at the Regional Workshop on the HS System in Apia Samoa. *SUPPLIED BY UNCTAD*

In a step forward to strengthen trade facilitation in the Pacific, the Oceania Customs Organization (OCO), in collaboration with the PACER Plus Implementation Unit (PPIU), successfully conducted a Regional Workshop on the Harmonized System (HS) in Apia, Samoa.

The five-day regional workshop enhanced the capacity of Pacific countries to successfully implement the Harmonized System Nomenclature 2022, an internationally recognised standard where a numerical code is applied to classify traded goods.

Several notable outcomes emerged from the event, shaping the future of customs procedures across the Pacific. The first major accomplishment was the successful review of the countries' adaptation of HS 2022 to ensure that the existing historical concessions and market access conditions remained unaffected by technical revisions to scheduled tariff commitments.

The workshop brought together customs experts and representatives from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Fiji, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu to evaluate and refine their capacity on HS and the Pacific Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (PACHS).

The event was organised by the European Union (EU)- funded Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade (IMPACT) project implemented in partnership with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and OCO.

The participants were able to engage with the regional experts to critically analyse the existing framework, ensuring alignment with international best practices and standards. This comprehensive review established a solid foundation for further advancements in Harmonized Systems.

The PPIU Operations and Secretariat Manager, Mrs. Laisiana Tugaga said, "Implementing the latest version of the HS is critical amongst the Pacific Island Countries to simplify intra-regional trade transactions and enhance the quality of trade statistics compiled in the region. We are very grateful for the input from our experts during the workshop for their assistance."

Ms. Nancy T. Oraka, Head of OCO, expressed appreciation for the participants' eagerness to unlearn old thinking and embrace new methodologies, reflecting their dedication to continuous improvement and the pursuit of best practices in harmonised systems.



Caption: Mr. Michael Ligo presenting at the Regional Workshop on the HS System in Apia Samoa. SUPPLIED BY UNCTAD

Moreover, the workshop provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the EU-Pacific States interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA) applied by EU 27 Member States, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Samoa.

On the first day of the workshop, Trade Facilitation Expert Mr. Michael Ligo presented on the iEPA and expanded on the benefits of the Agreement between Pacific Island States and the EU. Mr. Ligo also provided a detailed background on the initial initiatives between the EU and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific States and how it

developed into the current bi-lateral Economic Partnership Agreement. He also analysed the EU Market Access Offer (MAO) and the tariff requirements for the Pacific States.

"The workshop was excellent, the facilitators were great, and the information and assistance provided were practical. The knowledge on iEPA and its requirements is something that I will take back to my administration," expressed Ms Sharon Manaseitava, Customs Officer, Fiji.

Similar sentiments were also shared by Ms Grace Isaia Leone from the Samoa Ministry of Customs. She stated, "The information received on iEPA will be used to conduct further consultations on how best to implement iEPA and its requirements".

In addition, Mr. Massimo Diomedi Camassei, Trade Correspondent/Programme Manager at the EU Delegation for the Pacific, added that presently, the iEPA governs the liberalisation of Trade in Goods between the parties. Trade liberalisation involves removing barriers to trade between different countries and encouraging free trade, such as reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers. The parties are considering the option to include the liberalisation of Trade in Services as a new component of the agreement.

To support Pacific Island Countries to benefit from the iEPA, the EU funded a €37 million Pacific Regional Integration Support Programme, of which IMPACT is one of the projects that will continue working with Pacific States to facilitate their accession if interested and the creation of trade opportunities in the future.

Tuvalu's Compliance and Boarding Officers trained to Combat Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing



Caption: Tuvalu's Compliance and Boarding Officers participating in the High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI) Training Supplied by PEUMP FFA

The small island nation of Tuvalu has a land area of a mere 26 square kilometres, but its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) stretches over a staggering 900,000 square kilometres of ocean. Its waters are teeming with marine life, primarily tuna, which forms the bedrock of the nation's economy and contributes more than 50 percent of its income. The ocean's vastness often means that its treasures are prone to exploitation, most notably from Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities.

To prevent and reduce IUU activities, the country is interested in increasing its surveillance to areas adjacent to its EEZ and has started improving the capacity of its fisheries compliance officers.

This aligns with regional commitments such as the Pacific Island Forum Fisheries Agency's Strategy, which strives to coordinate member countries' Marine Conservation and Surveillance (MCS) activities in high seas to mitigate IUU risks.

In April this year, 10 compliance and boarding officers from Tuvalu attended a four-day High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI) Training workshop in Suva, Fiji. The focus of the training was to teach the officers the skills and knowledge to ensure that fishing vessels in the region complied with international and regional legal fisheries instruments.



A Dive into Deep Waters

Officers started their learning journey by understanding the objectives of the workshop and exploring the legal frameworks that underpin fishing operations in the region. Over the five days, the participants gained the knowledge, tools, and techniques necessary in HSBI, including the utilisation of advanced tools for intelligence analysis and risk assessment.

The training enhanced the officers' knowledge on various topics, including the components of the Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) system, understanding of IUU risks, and the intricacies of catch reporting requirements.

Participants experienced real-world scenarios with practical exercises in the port of Suva, which provided insights on potential challenges and actions to be taken in case of non-compliance detection.

Setting Sail with New Skills

The training also set the stage for Tuvalu's operational readiness in compliance with Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Boarding and Inspection Procedures (CMM 2006-08). Tuvalu's boarding officers emerged, not just with certifications but with an improved understanding of their role as compliance officers, as well as a heightened awareness of the regional and international MCS framework.

There were recommendations for developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and discussions on organising sub-regional training targeting countries with HSBI capabilities and interests in adjacent high seas areas.

The workshop was supported by the FFA Pacific European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) Programme, New Zealand Ministry of Primary Industries, and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority.



Caption: High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI) Training participants at the Port in Suva Supplied by PEUMP FFA