EU-PACIFIC BUSINESS FORUM

Nadi, Fiji - 4-5 September 2025

Breakout Session: Realising the Blue Pacific Continent – Investing in Ocean for Sustainable Growth

Parallel Session 3 - Sustainable Aquaculture and Fishery

Date/Time: Thursday, 4 September 2025, 14:00-15:30
Venue: Sofitel Denarau Island, Ballroom 2

Session Concept Note

Background

Sustainable aquaculture and fisheries are central to the Blue Pacific Continent vision, offering a crucial pathway for climate resilience, economic diversification, and inclusive growth. For many Pacific Island Countries (PICs), these sectors go beyond food and income. They are a source of cultural identity, community well-being, and valuable export revenue. When developed sustainably, aquaculture and fisheries can strengthen the economic resilience of coastal communities and small enterprises by supporting value chain development, enhancing local value addition, and unlocking high-value export markets. Environmentally, these sectors contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation, particularly through the restoration of blue carbon ecosystems and the advancement of circular economy models. Socially, they offer important returns in terms of gender empowerment, human rights, and the development of coastal communities that are often underserved and vulnerable.

In recent years, there has been growing interest across the Pacific in developing high-value, sustainable aquatic food systems. These include offshore tuna processing, coastal and small-scale fisheries, emerging mariculture industries, and circular blue economy innovations. The global market for sustainable "blue foods" is expanding rapidly, with especially strong demand in the European Union for traceable, eco-certified products. Blue foods are now among the fastest growing and most widely traded food commodities worldwide. Studies suggest that food from the sea could increase by 21 to 44 million tonnes by 2050, 36-74% increase compared to current yields. This growth potential is particularly relevant for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), where the blue economy potential remains largely untapped.

However, despite these opportunities, persistent challenges threaten the sustainability of these sectors. Pacific coastal ecosystems are under severe pressure from climate change, including rising sea temperatures, ocean acidification, and increasingly frequent extreme weather events.

Overfishing, destructive fishing techniques, pollution, and unsustainable tourism further degrade these ecosystems. Small-scale fisherfolk and aquaculture producers, many of whom are women and rural youth, often operate with limited access to markets, financial services, or technical assistance. The impacts of these pressures are disproportionately felt by vulnerable populations who depend directly on coastal ecosystems for their livelihoods, food security, and protection.

In addition, investment in key infrastructure and services, such as cold chains, value-added processing, product certification, and restorative aquaculture, remains limited. Many small and medium-sized enterprises are caught in the "missing middle": too large for microfinance but too small or risky for commercial lending. As a result, they are unable to grow sustainably or attract responsible investment. Strengthening market linkages, supporting fisherfolk organizations, and promoting responsible investment are essential steps to ensure that the benefits of the fisheries sector remain within the region and contribute to both export growth and improved local nutrition.

The European Union, through initiatives such as the Global Gateway and the Pacific–European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP), has demonstrated strong support for sustainable fisheries, trade facilitation, and ecosystem resilience in the Pacific. It has recently announced its support for the East New Britain Initiative launch by the Papua New Guinea and members of the Forum's Fisheries Agency. The initiative was established to explore innovative ways of increasing the economic and socio-economic benefits from fisheries revenue, particularly through enhanced participation in the global fisheries value chain. The interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA) provides an opportunity to deepen collaboration and scale up high-impact, inclusive investments in the fisheries sector. Indeed, under the EU-Pacific EPA's rules of origin, Pacific States benefit from a unique derogation on "Global Sourcing", allowing them to source fish (tuna) everywhere in the world and process it locally, and export the canned tuna to EU duty-free quota-free. Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands have been using the derogation since 2009 and 2020, respectively, and Fiji since 1 August 2025. Since the start of the iEPA, the share of fish from the PICs, more particularly of processed fish products in EU's total imports, has increased considerably.

This session will explore how PICs and their partners can unlock greater value from aquaculture and fisheries through innovation, sustainability, and investment to advance resilient blue economies and promote inclusive trade across the region.

Topics Driving the Panel Conversation

1. **Impact of the iEPA on Pacific Fishery Exports**
   What tangible impacts has the iEPA had on Pacific fishery exports to the EU, particularly in terms of market access, local economic benefits, diversification and employment opportunities?
2. **Upgrading small-scale fisheries and aquaculture**
   What role can sustainable fishery and aquaculture play in supporting climate resilience, food security, and economic diversification across the Pacific? How can small-scale fisheries and aquaculture be better integrated into export value chains to improve livelihoods, resilience, and inclusion in the blue economy?
3. **Investment for Value Addition and Competitiveness**
   What kinds of investment are most needed to support value addition, meet market requirements, and enhance the global competitiveness of Pacific fishery products?
4. **Capacity for Compliance with Sustainability Standards**
   What are the key gaps and opportunities in strengthening the capacity of PICs to meet EU sustainability and traceability standards, and how can partnerships across governments, regional bodies, and the private sector help address them?

Speakers

Presentation:

Ms Ingrid Morvan, EU Policy and Regulations Expert, COLEAD

Moderator:

Mr Maurice Brownjohn, Brownjohn Consulting

Speakers:

- **Mr Adrian Wickham,** Senior Advisor, SolTuna Ltd, Solomon Islands
- **Ms Jodie Smith**, General Partner, Matanataki
- **Ms Elodie Vitalis**, Head of Office in Fiji, French Development Agency (AFD)
- **Ms Ingrid Morvan,** EU Policy and Regulation Expert, COLEAD
- **Mr Jope Tamani**, Trade Development Advisor, Forum Fishery Agency

Biographies

Mr Maurice Brownjohn, Brownjohn Consulting

Maurice Brownjohn OBE is a naturalised PNG citizen who has been at the forefront of Papua New Guinea and Pacific Island fisheries for 45 years, since leaving the UK industry.

Highly knowledgeable about the sector, his lifetime experience includes 7 years as a coastal fishery extension officer in remote PNG communities, 23 years owning the main fishing gear manufacturer servicing the PNG fishery sector and exporting, 14 years as the leading sashimi tuna longline operator and exporter, 18 years as the founding chair of the PNG fishing industry association [FIA] an deputy chair of the regional body, PITIA.

On the government side, 23 years as a founding director of the PNG National Fisheries Authority [NFA]. More recently appointed as a founding director of the Tuvalu Fisheries Authority board. Also served 13 years as commercial manager for PNAO in Majuro, establishing the PNA office and managing the PNA region's purse seine tuna fishery, which sustainably delivers 50% of global skipjack supply, attained the world's first MSC certification for purse seine tuna and launched the World Tuna Day annually.

Well-known and highly respected in both industry and governmental circles globally, Maurice has represented the Pacific region internationally in many fisheries, trade, development, and management forums and negotiations, including EU, IEPA, EPA, ACP, UN, WCPFC, USMLT, WTO, etc.

Awarded the Order of the British Empire [OBE] in December 1998 for “Service to the Fishing Industry in Papua New Guinea”. Maurice remains a leading authority on all aspects of Pacific Island fisheries.

Ms Ingrid Morvan, EU Policy and Regulations Expert, COLEAD

Ingrid Morvan has over 27 years of experience in European policies and regulations relating to food of animal origin. She worked for 24 years for the European Meat and Livestock Trade Union (UECBV), particularly on food safety and veterinary issues, representing the sector at European and International level. She was Deputy Secretary General of the UECBV when she joined COLEAD in 2022. She is an expert in European policy and regulations within COLEAD's Regulations and Standards Department and she is part of the AGRINFO team. She is a lawyer by training (Master's degree in Business Law and International Law, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, FR).

Mr Adrian Wickham, Senior Advisor, SolTuna Ltd, Solomon Islands

Adrian Wickham has been involved in the Solomon Islands tuna industry for over 35 years and has seen the industry evolve from humble beginnings to where today, it is a mainstay of the national economy, and the largest employer outside of government

Adrian began his tuna industry career in the fishing sector with Solomon Islands second fishing company, the Government owned National Fisheries Developments Ltd (NFD) in 1989. The company operated a fleet of 12 pole and line fishing vessels and 2 purse seine vessels that later grew to 3. A year after joining the company it was privatized when in 1990 SI Govt sold the company to BC Packers of Canada. Seven years later NFD was sold to TriMarine International of Singapore. He rose to the rank of General Manager, a position he held for 12 years. During that time Adrian witnessed the fishery evolve from being a predominantly pole and line fishery into a fully-fledged purse seine fishery. As a Solomon Islander Adrian says his country is truly blessed to be in one of the largest sustainably managed tuna fisheries in the world.

Ms Jodie Smith, General Partner, Matanataki

Jodie Smith is CEO and General Partner of Matanataki, which has been operating in Fiji since 2016. Matanataki's "interconnected deal flow" approach, designed to strengthen supply chains and amplify impact in Small Island Developing States, was profiled in the 2023 Financing the UN Development System report. Jodi is a fifth generation Chinese Fijian, who forged a career in business and more recently investment management after 20-years of making studio movies. Jodi is the founding GP of Matanataki Pacific Fund 1, a $50m blended finance fund for the Pacific, targeting a final close 2026. Jodi is responsible for overall strategy, community business change management, and investor relationships.

Ms Elodie Vitalis, Head of Office in Fiji, French Development Agency (AFD)

Ms. Elodie VITALIS is the Head of the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) Office in Fiji. She has 19 years of professional experience in strategic advisory, international development, sustainable finance, and public policy A graduate of Sciences Po Bordeaux and holder of a Master's degree in Public Affairs (2006), she joined AFD headquarters in Paris in 2013 as a policy officer for agriculture and biodiversity, before moving on to AFD's operational activities in sustainable finance and the development of inclusive and resilient financial systems.

Before taking up her current role in the Pacific, Ms. Vitalis served at the AFD Campus, where she led projects supporting sustainable transitions in France's overseas territories, and initiatives aimed at strengthening the capacity of PPP (public-private partnership) stakeholders and improving the governance of state-owned enterprises.

Earlier in her career, she worked as an analyst for the World Bank (IBRD), focusing on remittances and the evaluation of national payment systems.

Mr Jope Tamani, Trade Development Advisor, Forum Fishery Agency