

FOREWORD

This book is the result of the work by nine independent scientists who agreed to contribute their time to write on specific topics within their individual expertise on live reef food fish (LRFF) trade issues. At a workshop in Suva, the Fiji Islands in September 2002, it was agreed that the alarming data and information published recently about the perilous state of most of the world's fish populations more than justified the need to document the special concerns about the LRFF trade in a stand-alone publication. This book does not in any way claim to cover all the different aspects of the LRFF trade, but should be read as offering a thorough analysis of the situation in 2003.

The workshop was the last in a series of activities funded by the Asian Development Bank under a regional technical assistance project on Strengthening the Live Reef Fish Trade Management in the Pacific Developing Member Countries, which was jointly implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the International Marinelife Alliance. Community consultations, assessments of fish abundance, and appropriate awareness materials were produced to assist the countries and the various stakeholders with the challenging management issues facing the expanding LRFF trade.

The picture that emerges from this book is extremely worrying: the LRFF trade has caused degradation of the resources on which the trade depends, and hence has to move farther and farther from the main market centers in order to continue to supply them.

The LRFF trade not only threatens to deprive coastal populations in remote islands (in South and Southeast Asia and the Pacific) of one of their few livelihoods, but it also threatens the resilience of the reef ecosystems by removing key predator species. Especially in the Pacific region, many reef ecosystems are already under strain from the increased frequency of the El Niño phenomenon, which has resulted in the warming of surface waters and bleaching and death of corals. These factors, when added to unsustainable fishing practices and the ever-growing quest for other high-value species, such as sea cucumber, trochus, and other

shellfish, all add up to the increased probability that reef ecosystems will lose their inherent robustness and face unpredictable changes.

It is clear that management plans and awareness materials for the LRFF trade alone, such as those developed under this technical assistance project, are not sufficient to secure the livelihood of future generations or the health of these important ecosystems. Extreme caution needs to be applied if we are to safeguard these resources for the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hovland". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large, prominent initial letter.

Jeremy Hovland
Director General
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ABBREVIATIONS

AFCD	Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (Hong Kong, China); formerly Agriculture and Fisheries Department
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CPI	consumer price index
CSD	Census and Statistics Department (Hong Kong, China)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IMA	International Marinelife Alliance
IUCN	World Conservation Union
LRFF	live reef food fish
PRC	People's Republic of China
SARS	sudden acute respiratory syndrome
SCRFA	Society for the Conservation of Reef Fish Aggregations
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community

NOTE

\$ means US\$ throughout, unless otherwise specified.

CONTENTS

Foreword	iii
Acknowledgments	v
Abbreviations	vi
Summary	ix
1 Introduction	1
Characteristics of the Live Reef Food Fish Trade	1
Scope and Objectives of the Book	8
2 Economic and Trade Issues	19
Volume of Trade	19
Trade Value	28
Analysis of the Trade	36
Macroeconomic Issues	40
3 The Fish Resources	43
Fish Species in the Trade	43
Biological Characteristics of Target Species	46
Target Fish Productivity	49
Annual Grouper Production	51
Long-term Effects of LRFF Fisheries	55
Implications for Management	58
4 Social Issues	61
Evolution and Nature of the Trade	61
Motivation for Participation	66
Impact on Fishers and Communities	69
5 Management of the Trade	73
Fisheries Management: Methods and Implementation	74
Priorities for Management	82
Demand-side and Trade Controls	88
Influencing Consumer Behavior	90

6 Aquaculture	93
Scope and Production	93
Constraints	98
Prospects	100
7 Institutional Aspects	105
Existing Institutions	106
Future Regional Cooperation	108
Role of Regional/International Donor Organizations	109
8 Conclusions and Recommendations	111
Conclusions	111
Recommendations	117
References	121
Appendixes	135
Appendix 1 Conventional Management Tools and the LRFF Trade	136
Appendix 2 Current Management and Regulatory Tools Employed by Countries in the LRFF Trade	140
About the Authors	143