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Nourishing island food systems in Solomon Islands

Operational Plan 2023

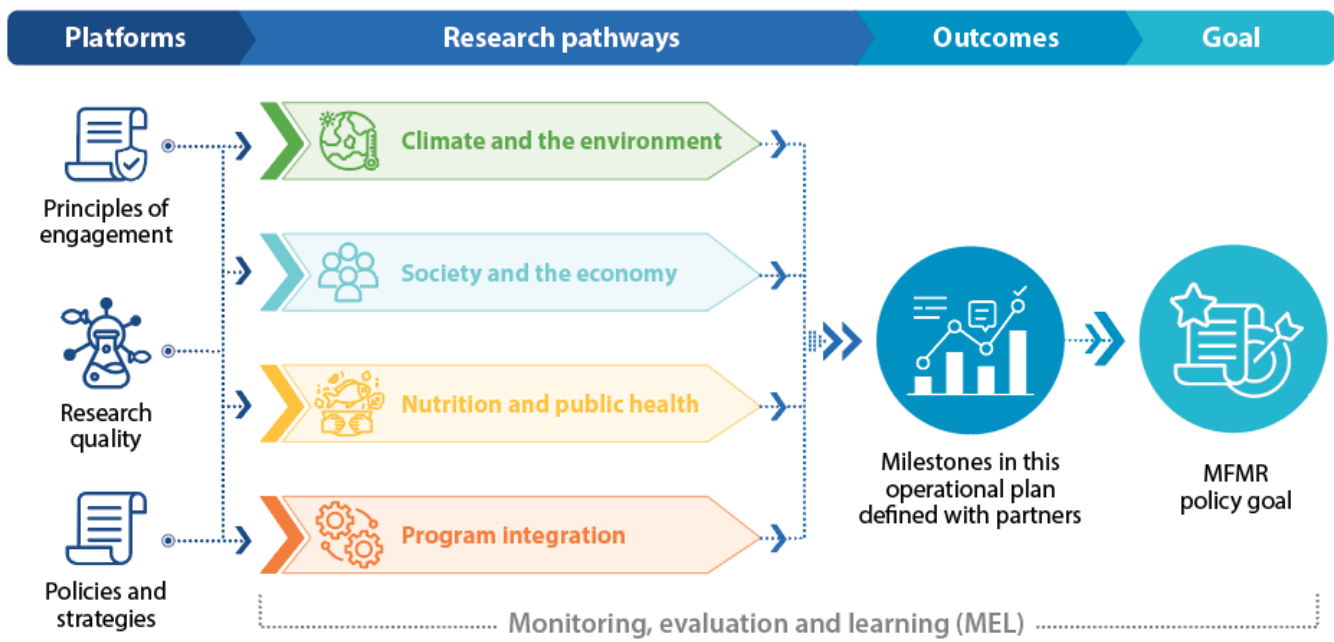


Goal

WorldFish adopts the goal of the Solomon Islands National Fisheries Policy 2019–2029:
A sustainable fisheries sector that contributes to the socioeconomic needs of all Solomon Islanders.

Our program organization

The WorldFish program in Solomon Islands is organized around four main research pathways (see figure). The first three are the agreed-upon impact areas of WorldFish, which aligns toward our adopted goal from the Solomon Islands National Fisheries Policy 2019–2029 of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR). The fourth research pathway places a deliberate emphasis on integrated planning and partnerships. Although WorldFish in Solomon Islands has many partners, we particularly integrate our research with MFMR to support national strategies toward its policy goal.





Aquatic foods are prevalent in the diets of Solomon Islanders, and fish is the most accessible and widely consumed animal-source food. With increasing and urbanizing populations, it is a national priority to secure a sustainable supply. As such, community-based resource management (CBRM) is now the adopted national model for supporting greater sustainability and benefits from coastal fisheries. In support of this model, WorldFish works with the MFMR to improve the practice of inclusive CBRM and supporting methods for scaling with provincial governments to reach more communities with information and awareness about these practices.



In Solomon Islands, per capita aquatic food consumption is 73 kg. Almost everyone eats fish regularly, though most people are not fishers. The system of producing and distributing fish connects practices of production with features of food environments, and it generates indispensable value, both as features of livelihoods for the many people involved and for food and nutrition security in island populations. WorldFish works with the MFMR, provincial governments, Solomon Islands National University (SINU) and training providers to support innovation in these systems of distribution by improving skills in fish handling and in demonstrating innovative practices and then evaluating them.



Outside of the village, it can be difficult and expensive to transport and distribute highly perishable fresh foods from the garden or sea to consumers. This is a driving factor behind the influx and acceptance of refined foods like rice and flour or convenience foods with a long shelf-life, all of which paradoxically tend to outcompete domestically grown crops and fish in price, access and availability in urban settings. Shifts from domestic production of nutritious crops to imported, nutritionally unrewarding foods is symbolic of a contemporary transition to “modern” and convenient foods that has been underway for some time, with severe public health consequences. To counteract current food system trends, WorldFish works with community partners and training providers to strengthen and advocate for traditional practices and indigenous foods.



High-quality research to provide sustainable development solutions in aquatic food systems requires a deliberate theory to apply it at scale. One frequently defined pathway in theories of change for scaling research innovation is through partnerships. We seek to make our research impactful by working in partnership with national research entities, training providers and government services. Our national host is the MFMR, which has undergone a significant increase in operational capacity over the past 10 years. Together, we have taken steps to integrate research on aquatic food systems within national development trajectories by co-designing and co-implementing our program of work. We integrate by planning all research activities together to support the MFMR’s CBRM strategy and the 2015 Fisheries Management Act, and by sharing and promoting our research together. In 2023, two WorldFish staff will be seconded to the MFMR to focus on supporting data management and coordinating provincial fisheries services.



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Platforms

To be a locally impactful and globally relevant organization we stand on platforms that combine national and international structures, place emphasis on multidimensional research quality, and take a deliberate approach to “how” we work. The platforms provide our purpose and core values.

Policies and strategies



The strategic context for WorldFish’s engagement in Solomon Islands and the Pacific Island region is provided by a range of external and internal planning documents and processes. WorldFish in Solomon Islands is mostly guided by our partners and the country’s national plans and strategies, such as the Solomon Islands National Fisheries Policy 2019–2029 of the MFMR.

In addition, we take guidance from the National Environment Management Strategy 2020-2023 of the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management, Meteorology; the Solomon Islands National Oceans Policy (SINOP) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade; and the National Food Security, Food Safety and Nutrition Policy 2019-2023 of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, and MFMR. Regional plans and inter-governmental agreements such as the Noumea Coastal Fisheries Strategy also guide our work.

Internally, the WorldFish 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy provides the basis for how we engage, our ambitions and how we measure progress. At a higher level, our program in Solomon Islands is also guided by the CGIAR Strategic Results Framework, which emphasizes development outcomes from research and is aligned to the global targets on sustainable development.

These strategic documents provide both a platform for our work—“what we do”—and the outcomes we seek—“why we do it.”



Research quality



WorldFish places the highest emphasis on quality research by following the CGIAR Frame of Reference of Quality of Research for Development:

Dimension	Requirement
Relevance	Learning that is aligned with national and regional priorities and incorporates stakeholder engagement in planning.
Scientific credibility	Dependable and sound knowledge that is logically interpreted and gained from a rigorous method and evaluated in peer review.
Legitimacy	Ethical and fair representation of all involved and sensitive to the perspectives of contributors and intended users.
Effectiveness	Knowledge, products and services that have high potential to address a problem and contribute to innovations and solutions.

Principles of engagement



WorldFish follows a set of guiding principles of engagement for quality research in Solomon Islands:

1. Be transparent: WorldFish will be transparent with our partners about intentions and impacts, including communities where we work.
2. Be accountable: WorldFish will be predictable and accountable in planning with our partners, including communities where we work.
3. Be inclusive: WorldFish will actively seek input and participation from all without bias in hierarchy, gender, religion or ethnicity.
4. Be committed: WorldFish will form mutually beneficial partnerships with national agencies and communities built on non-extractive research and a long-term commitment to people and places.

Adhering to these guiding principles is critical for WorldFish to continue to enjoy the trust of our partners and a wholesome reputation and image in Solomon Islands.

Research pathways



Climate and the environment

Island food systems are places governed with strong community and traditional institutions. We have yet to see a more promising innovation for securing inclusive and sustainable management than CBRM. As such, we will work to evaluate practices and support the national priorities of scaling CBRM through information, awareness and training activities.

2023 Milestone	Application
Gaps in CBRM awareness identified and prioritized in a key report, and provincial regions with CBRM gaps reached through awareness trips by the MFMR and WorldFish.	To identify where gaps in funding and capacity are so that provincial and national governments can prioritize support to ensure most communities have the information they need to manage their resources.
Provincial staff trained in inclusive CBRM scaling.	To strengthen staff capacity with skills and tips for provincial officers in inclusive CBRM scaling, which requires extra effort to make sure women, youths and other marginalized groups have information and are included in decision-making around CBRM.
CBRM reviews conducted in communities (as per needs to be determined in 2023).	To enable community adaptive management through planned reviews at the local level of CBRM.
A report generated on options for inclusion of people with disabilities into CBRM through collaboration with civil society and government.	To support national staff with more and new information on options for including people with disabilities, who have been identified as among those marginalized from decision-making.
A capacity needs assessment conducted with government in relation to CBRM.	To identify strengths and gaps that enable strategic prioritization of resources and funding requests.
Experiences of CBRM across contexts shared at learning events.	To share lessons learned from CBRM experience among partners, both nationally and regionally.
Options papers generated on topical issues on specific local priorities for CBRM.	To respond to requests from provinces with custom-designed research that meets their specific needs relating to cultural and environmental conditions.



Society and the economy

Island food systems are places of local innovation with aquatic food practices. We will evaluate past development activities and demonstrate innovations on a gradient, from locally led to externally supported. A key action component of this work is to design practical fish handling and processing upskilling activities that are accessible to communities.

2023 Milestone	Application
A compendium of briefs highlighting positive examples of fish-based livelihood innovations co-published with MFMR branding.	To spread simple information demonstrating innovation in aquatic food systems as a potential catalyst for sparking new ideas in new places.
Fish distribution at the Auki market mapped, including aspects of how trading aquatic foods integrates with livelihoods.	To guide prioritization of formal food environment planning and sustainability activities in the Auki area.
Skills among WorldFish and MFMR researchers developed in diverse community economies through ('floating coconut') livelihood mapping methods.	To evaluate past development activities in the fisheries sector using a shared research framework.
Livelihood changes resulting from involvement in solar freezers and fisheries centers evaluated.	To learn from past investments in fisheries to guide government service planning and delivery.
A co-designed program implemented with the MFMR to monitor how PFCs and CFCs are used at selected sites.	To evaluate economic activities and aquatic food production at centers to guide government service planning and delivery.
Past fish handling training in the province of Malaita evaluated with lessons learned and current demand for similar activities assessed.	To inform development and implementation of a revised program on improving the skills of fishery actors in fish handling, including preservation and processing.
New fish handling training activities developed with SINU and the MFMR, and a "train the trainers" program piloted with partner organizations.	To incorporate fish handling upskilling activities into partners' services with communities and associations (e.g. provincial fisheries officers' extension delivery, the Kastom Gaden Association (KGA), rural training centers).



Nutrition and public health

Island food systems are undergoing change. We will support the strengthening of traditional food practices and integrate aquatic foods with partners that focus on advocacy and training in traditional agriculture and indigenous foods.

2023 Milestone	Application
Roles of rural food system actors in Solomon Islands defined.	To enable deliberate planning of place-based forums seeking to strengthen services and support for traditional practices and indigenous foods.
A cookbook published featuring indigenous and aquatic food recipes from all provinces.	To celebrate and exemplify indigenous foods and traditional practices that support healthy island food systems.
A training package on nutrition guidelines with aquatic foods developed.	To include nutrition-sensitive information in fisheries activities and training of community-based fisheries staff to improve practices.
Nutrition trade-offs with cold storage in rural communities evaluated.	To guide nutrition-sensitive service planning.
An advocacy campaign developed with the Kastom Gaden Association (KGA) building on aquatic food outputs (e.g. a cookbook, video and nutrition guidelines).	To promote healthy and sustainable island diets that are built from traditional practices and indigenous aquatic foods.
A KGA–WorldFish place-based forum hosted focusing on “island food systems in transition.”	To synthesize diverse perspectives to co-produce sustainable and nutrition-sensitive development pathways that are countervailing to changes that lead to poor nutrition and public health outcomes.
Proceedings of a forum published through post-forum follow-up discussions and co-authorship.	To co-develop recommendations and practical actions with partner organizations.



Program integration

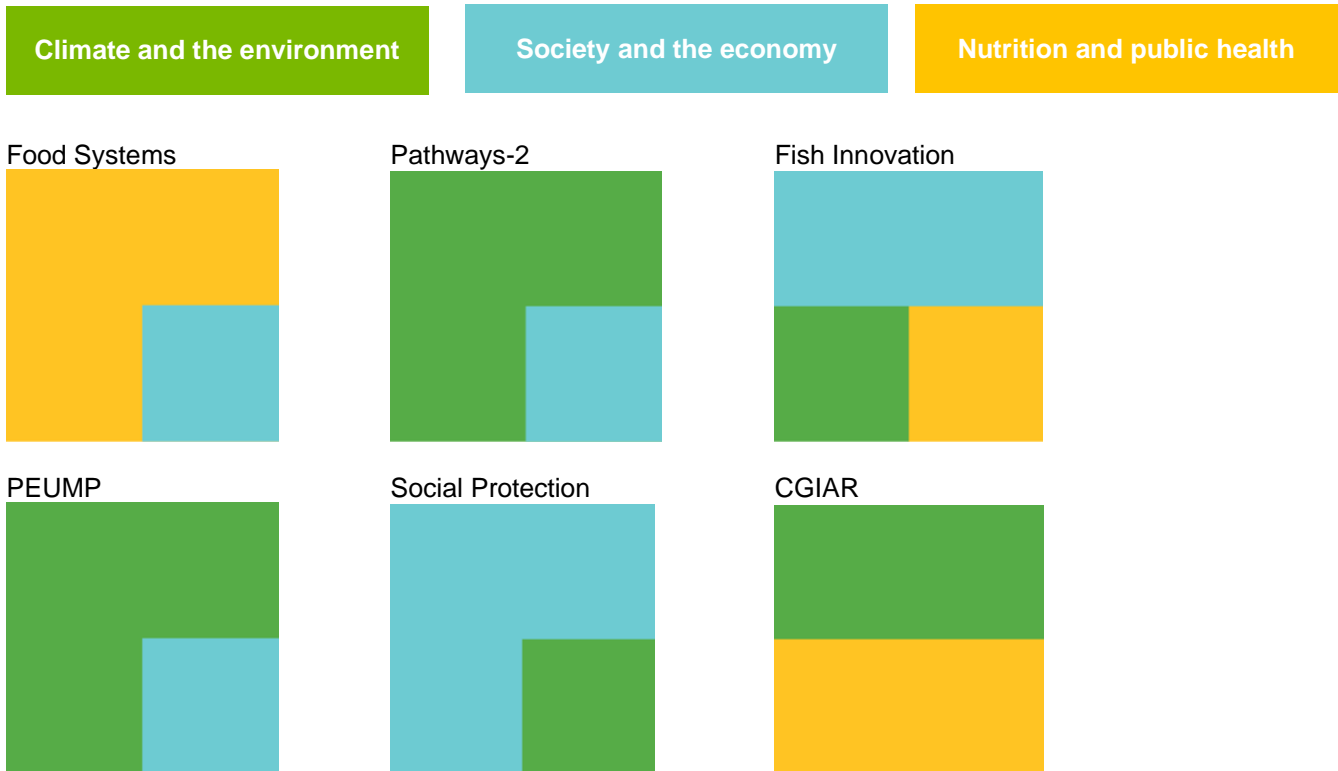
WorldFish will work along the principles of engagement seeking to be the research partner of choice in Solomon Islands and will act as a research-practice-policy interface contributing to national learning events and making dissemination products accessible for uptake.

2023 Milestone	Application
Seconded provincial networking officer supporting MFMR provincial planning for PFO training and services.	To coordinate and support provincial activities for effective service delivery supporting the 2015 Fisheries Management Act.
Seconded data officer supporting the integration of CBRM scaling with socioeconomic and catch data.	To collate and organize multiple data sources for oversight and strategic planning in policy and implementation.
Quarterly updates sent to partners about WorldFish program implementation and milestone tracking.	To update partners on WorldFish program implementation with opportunities for cooperation and adoption of new tools and techniques.
The 2023 FishSMARD event hosted with the MFMR, as well as partners from Vanuatu and Kiribati.	To enable effective collaboration and coordination among partners, with increased capacity to adjust and implement coastal fisheries service models improved through regional information sharing.
Strengthened the post-graduate program with SINU and the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security at the University of Wollongong.	To create scientific capacity building opportunities with partners for next-generation national scientific leadership.
Progress made at the Nusatupe Island Food System Innovation Hub.	To demonstrate a nourishing, sustainable and climate-resilient island food system.



Delivering 2023

Our program is made up of six projects and CGIAR Initiative investments. These investments map onto our three agreed-upon impact areas of WorldFish, which we define as our three research pathways.



Monitoring, evaluation and learning

For the Operational Plan to be effective, it must be monitored and tracked against milestones to learn and adjust critical issues in a timely manner. WorldFish uses a CGIAR-developed web-based knowledge sharing and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) platform. The platform is used as a tool to ensure responsible and adaptive program operations and includes the tracking of indicators to assess overall progress toward objectives and targets in the program. In monitoring outcomes, methods are employed to capture distributional effects of activities on different groups, including disaggregation by age and gender.

The WorldFish Solomon Islands team

The WorldFish program in Solomon Islands is led by the country director and a senior scientist who are responsible for delivering this Operational Plan. The team is made up of 16 staff members working at three offices. We have a national headquarters in Honiara at Ace Complex in Kukum. We operate the Nusatupe research station at Gizo in Western Province, which is being repurposed to become an innovation hub demonstrating a nourishing, sustainable and climate-resilient island food system. We also have a field office in Auki, Malaita. Our team is made up of national research staff trained and skilled in community facilitation and research methods attuned to the research pathways in the Operational Plan. We have five PhD-level staff and one MSc-level staff in the program, as well as international PhD-level scientists through our international program on island food systems. The research team is supported by program administration support staff in Solomon Islands and the Project Management Unit at WorldFish Headquarters in Penang, Malaysia.

Citation

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