



Ministry of Marine Resources
TU'ANGA O TE PAE MOANA
COOK ISLANDS

Strategic Plan 2022-2027



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Abbreviations

Acronym	Full Spelling
AMRC	Aitutaki Marine Research Centre
CBFM	Community Based Fisheries Management
CCAMLR	Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EPO	Eastern Pacific Ocean
FAD	Fish Aggregating Device
FFA	Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency
IATTC	Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
MCS	Monitoring, Control and Surveillance
MMR	Ministry of Marine Resources
NM	Nautical Mile
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OMC	Oceans Monitoring Centre
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
SIDS	Small Island Developing State
SIOFA	Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement
SPC	Pacific Community
SPRFMO	South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System
WCPFC	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
WCPO	Western Central Pacific Ocean

Introduction/Foreword

Kia Orana,

On behalf of the government of the Cook Islands, I am proud to present the Ministry of Marine Resources new 5-year Strategic Plan (2022-2027) which will guide its work as it carries out its responsibilities as national custodians of our oceanic and inshore fisheries resources. It was developed following a comprehensive policy review, guided by MMR legislation, national policies such as the National Sustainable Development Agenda 2020+, international oceans and fisheries related instruments, and other relevant national, regional and international arrangements. The three broad goals of the plan, grounded in a **balance of sustainability, development, and good governance**, were then developed by MMR staff and management. These goals and actions were shared during a comprehensive stakeholder consultation to ensure a collaborative approach.

The plan sets the high-level policy and strategic objectives for the Ministry as the guide to carry out its mission of using good stewardship to manage the long-term sustainability of the Cook Islands marine resources for all the people of the Cook Islands. It is also the guide for what the Ministry will do to realise its vision of delivering well-balanced conservation and sustainable development of marine resources for the Cook Islands. It will be implemented from 1st July 2022 over a 5-year period and will be accompanied by an improved planning framework, enhanced monitoring and evaluation and good resource management.

In adopting this Strategic Plan, I wish to acknowledge and thank everyone involved for their support and contribution in this work. It was a collaborative team effort that reflects the way MMR intends to conduct its work. We, myself and the Ministry of Marine Resources, look forward to working closely with all stakeholders in implementing this Strategic Plan for the benefit of the resources and future generations of the Cook Islands.

Kia Manuia,

Honourable Mark Brown

Prime Minister and Minister of Marine Resources



Values and Principles

The Ministry of Marine Resources upholds the values of the Cook Islands Public Service which are set in the *Public Service Act 2009*. These values are: Honesty, Respect, Impartiality, Transparency, Accountability, Service, Efficiency and Effectiveness. We will demonstrate these values through:

- **Professionalism:** behaving ethically and as per government policy, and being committed to delivering high quality services.
- **Integrity:** being honest and truthful in everything we do including being reliable and ensuring accuracy in our work.
- **Excellence:** delivering the best quality service and support that we can including continually striving to improve.
- **Cooperation:** working collaboratively with our partners, communities and stakeholders to achieve the best outcomes from the Cook Islands.

We also support the principles for ecologically sustainable use to guide the development and management of the Marae Moana as defined in the *Marae Moana Act 2017*:

- Principle of protection, conservation, and restoration
- Principle of sustainable use to maximise benefits
- Precautionary principle
- Principle of community participation
- Principle of transparency and accountability
- Principle of integrated management
- Principle of investigation and research
- Principle of ecosystem-based management
- Principle of sustainable financing

Mandate and Purpose

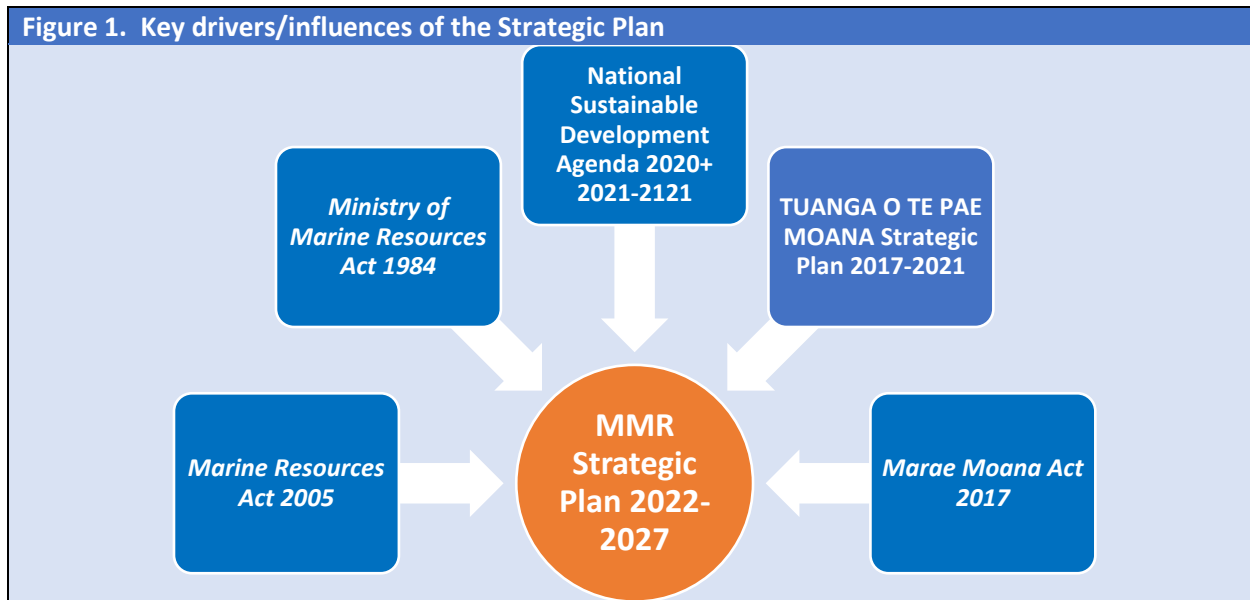
MMR was established under the *Ministry of Marine Resources Act 1984* with the principal objective of seeking and promoting a “*rational approach to the development, exploitation, management, and conservation of all living and non-living resources that are found in waters under Cook Islands jurisdiction*”. Under the *Marine Resources Act 2005*, the Ministry of Marine Resources (MMR) mandate “*is to provide for the sustainable use of the living and non-living marine resources for the benefit of the people of the Cook Islands*”. This includes the ability for MMR to establish regulations and procedures “*to ensure effective protection for the aquatic environment from harmful effects which may arise from exploration or exploitation of non-living resources*”.

This Strategic Plan replaces the last Strategic Plan: TUANGA O TE PAE MOANA Strategic Plan 2017-2021. A key part of the development of this new Strategic Plan was a comprehensive review of all the laws, regulations, policies, plans and other relevant documents that MMR works with. This includes interagency and regional documentation that influence the way MMR operates. While relevant information, guidance and direction from all of these documents are reflected in the Strategic Plan, a number of legislative and high-level planning documents emerged as key drivers/influencers (Figure 1).

Aside from legislated responsibilities, one of the key drivers for MMR’s new Strategic Plan is the new Cook Islands:

- Te Ara Akapapa’anga Nui - National Sustainable Development Agenda (NSDA) 2020+ 2021-2121;
- Te Ara Akapapa’anga Nui NSDA 2020+ Te Akapapa’anga Uki One Generation – 25 years; and
- Te Ara Akapapa’anga Nui NSDA 2020+ Te Kaveinga Iti 5 Year Score Card.

These documents set the high-level objectives of the Cook Islands Government and MMR seeks to support as many of these objectives as it can with this Strategic Plan.



This Strategic Plan is intended to be the guiding document for “**WHAT**” MMR would like to achieve over the next five years. It seeks to support MMR’s legislated duties and the strategic directions of the Cook Islands Government. The MMR Business Plan and Annual Work Plans will document “**HOW**” MMR will operationalise its strategic goals and actions. All the actions and activities from these lower-level plans will roll up and contribute to this Strategic Plan.

The Operating Environment of MMR

The operating environment of MMR is, to say the least, very complex. MMR’s scope as a resource manager on behalf of Crown is mainly focussed within three sub-sectors:

1. **Offshore:** This includes oceanic waters from the 12 nautical miles (nm) territorial seas to 200 nm EEZ and high seas beyond the Cook Islands EEZ.
2. **Inshore (Coastal):** This includes near shore waters within the 12 nm territorial seas, reef and lagoonal ecosystems, foreshore areas from the mean low water to high water mark and internal waters.
3. **Aquaculture:** any mariculture or freshwater farming activities.

Offshore Sector

The Cook Islands has an exclusive economic zone of 1.98 million km². It has sovereign rights over the marine resources that occur in this zone, but cooperates with other countries to ensure they are well-managed. The Cook Islands also participate in several internationally-managed fisheries. These fisheries are managed under a complex international framework which recognises that fish move between maritime boundaries, and requires countries to cooperate to ensure their ongoing sustainability. These frameworks obligate the Cook Islands to a number of coastal and flag state requirements. They come from participation in and agreement at a number of international fisheries management organisations ('Regional Fisheries Management Organisations', or 'RFMOs'):

- Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) - responsible for management of tuna and tuna-like species in the Western Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO).
- South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) - responsible for non-tuna species, such as orange roughy, jack mackerel, jumbo flying squid and lobsters, in the South Pacific Ocean.
- Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) - is responsible for non-tuna fisheries in the Southern Indian Ocean such as orange roughy, alfonsino and toothfish.
- Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) - responsible for conservation in the Antarctic, and managed valuable fisheries.

Rules agreed in these forums are implemented within the Cook Islands exclusive economic zone, its vessels and, in some cases, on Cook Islands nationals. Cook Islands flagged bunker vessels and fish carrier vessels also supply fishing vessels with fuel and provisions, and tranship catches in areas beyond national jurisdictions provided they have been given proper authorisation by MMR.

The Cook Islands domestic EEZ fisheries mainly target the highly migratory tuna stocks of albacore, skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye species using longline and purse seine fishing methods. Almost all the tuna caught in the Cook Islands are from the northern Cook Islands waters, where the oceanic waters are warmer and more productive. Aside from a few locally owned and operated vessels based in Avatiu, the majority of vessels that operate in Cook Islands waters are based in Samoa, American Samoa, and French Polynesia.

There is a strong focus on monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) activities at the Oceans Monitoring Centre (OMC) at MMR. Activities includes monitoring the movement and activities of vessels using satellite-based vessel monitoring systems (VMS); placing regionally accredited fisheries observers on board vessels to collect scientific information of catches from ports in countries such as American Samoa, Fiji, Samoa, Ecuador, Peru, South Africa, Mauritius and the Cook Islands; at sea monitoring and boarding with the Police patrol vessel Te Kukupa; dockside port inspections of the vessels; and collection of scientific and catch and effort data.

Ecological monitoring of oceanic resources within and outside the Cook Islands EEZ is done by MMR in partnership with other regional organisations such as the Pacific Community. Since most of the oceanic fishery's resources are highly migratory, this regional approach to monitoring is the most practical.

Inshore Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector

The inshore fisheries and aquaculture sector covers the activities and resources within 12 nm of the coastline including reefs, lagoons and also covers internal inland waters such as streams and lakes. This sector covers artisanal and subsistence fishers, commercial and traditional users of the marine resources as well as for aquaculture. It also covers limited freshwater aquatic resources. MMR manages this sector in partnership with island councils.

Inshore fisheries

The inshore artisanal and semi-commercial fishery are comprised of pelagic and reef fish as well as invertebrate species. Common pelagic species targeted near shore include albacore tuna, yellowfin tuna, skipjack tuna, bigeye tuna, swordfish, marlin, mahi mahi, flying fish and wahoo; reef fish include such species as trevally, snapper, parrot fish, milkfish and rabbit fish. Invertebrates gleaned from the reefs and lagoon include trochus, giant clams, sea urchins, sea cucumbers, sea grapes, sea snails and clams. Small scale artisanal fisheries are present at different levels in the Cook Islands. Most fish caught are for subsistence and communal purposes, but some are sold to generate household income. MMR also deploys moored inshore Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) in support of the near-shore artisanal fishers and the big-game charter operators.

The sports fishery involves big game charter operators based in Rarotonga and Aitutaki, who typically troll targeting tuna, mahi mahi, wahoo and marlin. A licensed sports fishery for bonefish also operates on Aitutaki and is a source of employment for guides.

Aquaculture

The largest aquaculture industry in the Cook Islands is the production of black pearls from cultivation of the black-lipped pearl oyster which has been centred at Manihiki atoll where naturally abundant stocks of these oysters occur. Minor levels of production have also historically occurred on Penrhyn and Rakahanga. Other species in cultivation or of interest in the Cook Islands are: giant clam, sea grapes, milkfish, land crab, and trochus in the marine environment, and tilapia, prawn and mud crab in fresh or brackish water.

MMR operates the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre (AMRC) which was opened in 1991, with financial aid from Australia's AusAID program, following a request from the Aitutaki Island Council for MMR's help in restoring giant clam stocks in the lagoon. At that time the main function of the AMRC, or "hatchery" as it has become known, was clam aquaculture.

Three species of giant calms from Palau and Australia were introduced. Besides these introduced species, the hatchery has also been successfully working on reproducing our native species.

Over the years the scope and remit of the hatchery has expanded beyond clam aquaculture to include turtle rescue, coral restoration, marine resource survey and assessments, establishment and maintenance Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs), Enforcement and Compliance, Bonefish permitting, Visitor Centre, Fisheries Officer base and training, Water Quality Sampling, Trochus surveys, Crown of Thorns monitoring, and artisanal fisheries data collection.

Integrated approaches

Integrated approaches to managing the environmental health of the lagoons is required in order to minimise stress from as many potential sources as possible. The ra'ui system is the traditional method of conservation and management that is practiced throughout the Cook Islands and supports integrated

management, however now requires contemporary measures to support its effectiveness. Community Based Fisheries Management (CBFM) solutions are also being pursued by MMR to help with this integrated approach of managing the inshore resources and ecosystems.

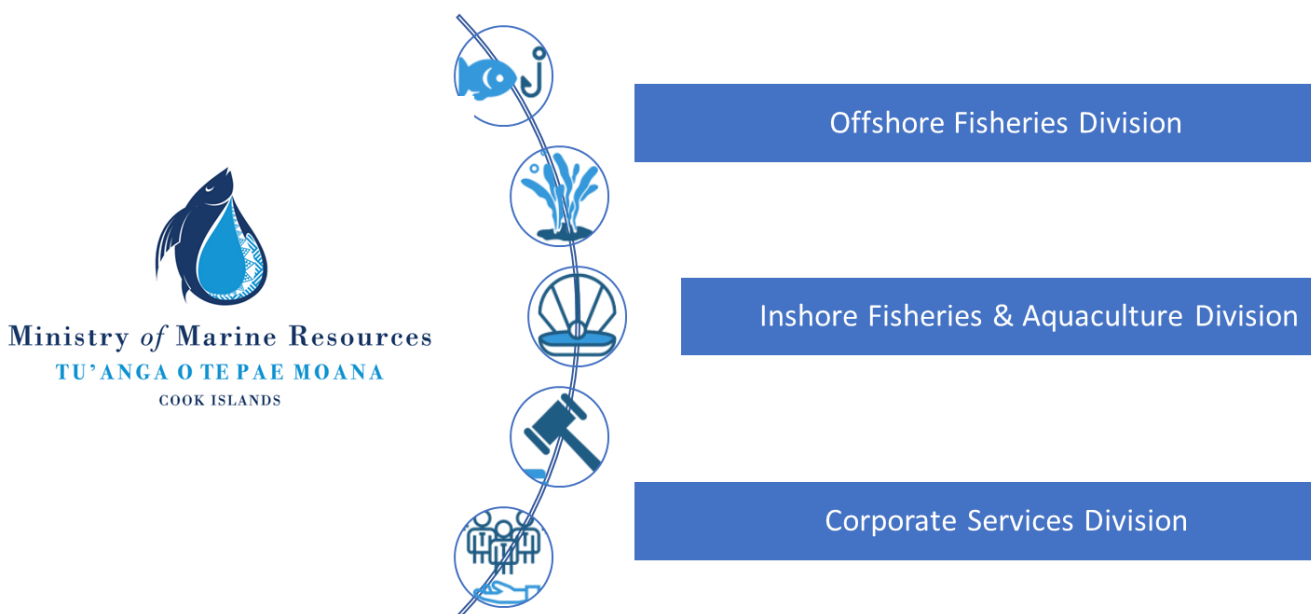
Ecological monitoring

The reefs and lagoons are important areas for natural biodiversity. Some of this biodiversity is under threat from inshore development and overfishing and with growing tourist numbers visiting the Cook Islands, marine and freshwater environments are under increasing pressure which threatens the health of these ecosystems and the availability of clean water. MMR conducts routine monitoring of ecological and water quality parameters on the islands of Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Manihiki. Water parameters are analysed, reported and graded against three standards of reference: bacterial count, water clarity and nutrient concentration. Monthly reports are then disbursed to key stakeholders and other interested groups (including community, Government, Island Governments, statutory agencies and the private sector) to advise and guide management decisions.

Climate change, inshore development, fishing pressure and global impacts, such as coral bleaching and biosecurity challenges, are causing declines in coral reef biodiversity, keynote species and the health of the ecosystem. MMR conducts reef surveys and monitors biodiversity as an indicator for reef health and to monitor the impacts of climate change and fishing pressure for fisheries management. It is also working with partners to implement a National Biosecurity Plan to help protect these environments through a National Strategy on Aquatic Biosecurity for the Cook Islands.

Structure and Resources of MMR

The Ministry has three divisions and their main objectives are described below:



Offshore Fisheries Division

- To expand benefit deriving opportunities from sustainable offshore fisheries, through effective management and policy, capacity building, infrastructure and market development.
- Enhance scientific knowledge and research capabilities to support sustainable ecosystem management approaches, and evidence-based decision-making.
- Enhance monitoring, control and surveillance capabilities to ensure compliance with MMR's regulatory framework and to contribute to the broader security of the Marae Moana.

Inshore Fisheries & Aquaculture Division

- Enhancing local capacity to ensure safe, sustainable fishing and conservation practices, and the preservation of marine resources related culture and traditions.
- Promoting livelihood opportunities and contemporary fisheries management approaches that support economic stimulus and long-term food security.
- Increase capacity, awareness and support to achieve and maintain viable aquaculture opportunities and quality products for food security benefits, economic returns, and replenishment of wild stocks.
- Develop capacity in cross-cutting areas within the marine sector concerning environmental management, ecosystem monitoring, public health safety and food safety programmes.

Corporate Services Division

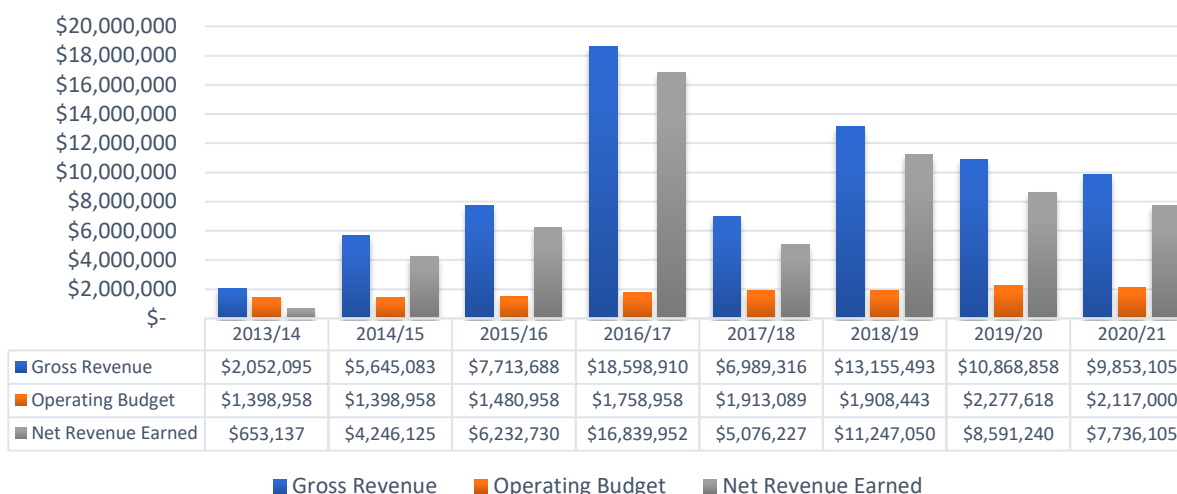
- Ensure appropriate legal and policy frameworks governing the Ministry and marine resources sector are in place.
- Provision of effective and efficient administrative, financial and human resource management, informed by and compliant with Government policies and procedures.
- Ensuring a safe and secure workplace, and the provision of excellent information, communication and technology infrastructure that caters for current and future needs whilst maintaining robust user policies.

MMR is an income-generating agency for the Cook Islands with revenue far exceeding the cost of administering the Ministry (Figure 2), equating to many millions of dollars each year. The operational budget for MMR is approved each year through annual government appropriations with a 4-year medium term outlook. Whilst budgets are designed around core work programmes, annual work plans will respond to emerging areas of national interest.

MMR has over 40 employees stationed in Rarotonga and the Pa Enua. A range of contracted workers and service providers based in the Cook Islands, overseas, or at-sea, contribute to MMR's service delivery. All employees and contractors are managed centrally and are included in one of the three main output areas:

1. Output 1: Offshore Fisheries
2. Output 2: Inshore Fisheries and Aquaculture
3. Output 3: Corporate Services

Figure 2. MMR Revenue Earned vs. Cost of Operating



Key Challenges and Opportunities

MMRs operating environment is complex and not short of challenges and opportunities. Working across multiple oceans, regions and sectors with a wide variety of stakeholders and partners requires a good understanding of the challenges and opportunities that MMR faces. MMR is committed to meeting these challenges and leveraging opportunities on behalf of the people of the Cook Islands. The strategic goals and actions identified in this plan will guide MMR as it operationalises its responses to risks, challenges and opportunities.

Challenges

MMR is a relatively small organisation relative to its responsibilities. Operating on behalf of the Cook Islands in multiple international, regional and inter-island forums is politically and technically challenging. This type of work relies on continuous engagement and a diverse subject matter expertise. It is critical to the long-term interests of the Cook Islands to be competently represented at these forums to look after national interests while at the same time working in partnership with other Pacific Islands and Territories to advance regional priorities. Funding to meet these needs is not always readily available. MMR often needs to rely on funding support from regional organisations and donors to support its technical work and representation. While MMR earns many millions of dollars in revenue for the country, mostly from licensing and access agreements in offshore fisheries, this revenue is inconsistent due to the very nature of the highly migratory species of fish and the nature and characteristics of the Cook Islands fishery being located on the periphery of the tropical tuna fishery. Abundance and distribution of these fish is mostly driven by climatic changes such as the El Nino-La Nina cycle, and of course the impacts of climate change over the longer term.

The Cook Islands are heavily import dependent and are far from large market centres making the cost of living and the cost of doing business very expensive. Even shipping between the Pa Enua and Rarotonga within the Cook Islands is unreliable and expensive. Having access to premium markets is both expensive and difficult to attain and maintain, and developing new economically viable fisheries and aquaculture businesses is challenged due to limited options and workforce. The current pandemic has placed

additional strain on the Cook Islands economy and general well-being. The recent Cook Islands Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) graduation to being a “High Income Country” which ends its eligibility for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) has not changed the fact that its vulnerabilities as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) persist. This change has limited the ability of the Cook Islands to seek funding assistance and has changed the way it works with traditional donors.

The impacts of climate change and development have not spared the Cook Islands, particularly in the water quality of its lagoons and the fishing pressure on inshore reef systems. MMR has staff in all the Pa Enua which work with local island governments to help manage their marine ecosystems but there can be at times conflict between different user groups and stakeholders making this difficult. Getting better alignment between all the various stakeholders and local governments would be helpful in managing these difficulties. There have been at times international organisations that complicated local management due to their incomplete understanding of the full Cook Islands governance, culture and context.

The legal and regulatory system in the Cook Islands is complex and much of the legislation and policies need updating. This includes legislation that MMR is responsible for as well as legislation and policies from other agencies that affect MMR. Historically, there has been some lack of clarity of roles between agencies and governments as well as some lack of understanding of the legal and regulatory system by various stakeholder groups. MMR is committed to improving its regulatory framework over time to ensure it is clear and accessible for all stakeholders.

MMR is no different from other government agencies in the Cook Islands in that it can struggle to find and retain highly qualified and motivated staff. Building capacity takes time and resources, both of which are hard to come by in a busy and complex operating environment. Recruitment and training of these staff takes a significant amount of time resulting in a need for MMR to use regional/international experts to supplement elements of MMRs operations.

Opportunities

Even though the Cook Islands has limited access to Overseas Development Assistance, it can still work with other donors, partners and organisations to bring in new and additional resources and ideas to diversify its economic portfolio. This is done internationally by working with regional organisations like the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and the Pacific Community (SPC) to improve national and regional outcomes, protect the security of the Cook Islands and to improve the quality of information and data collected to inform good regional, bilateral and national decision making. These agencies and others also support capacity development.

At the national level, the government has supported the Pa Enua with vital infrastructure such as solar power which can reliably power freezers and run equipment to enable production from the Pa Enua to get to market in Rarotonga and beyond. MMR can work with stakeholder groups in the Cook Islands to leverage this support to develop new and improved fisheries and marine livelihood opportunities such as through the identification of niche products and market development, local development grants and fuel subsidies. Aquaculture and tourism (bonefish) also provide livelihood opportunities for Cook Islanders.

MMR's data collection, monitoring and research activities can improve conservation and management outcomes across all the Cook Islands. Research at facilities like the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre can be used to support marine ecosystem rehabilitation and restoration.

MMR having a centralised operating model with staff presence in all the Pa Enua makes doing its work more efficient and effective. Relationships with key agencies, local governments and stakeholders can be built and maintained through this network and supports a consistent application of MMR's services around the country. Working with traditional leaders and local stakeholders improves understanding of marine management issues and offers finding new tools and technologies to improve outcomes for everyone. MMR seeks to build on all of these relationships.

Mission Statement

The Ministry of Marine Resources will use good stewardship to manage the long-term sustainability of the Cook Islands marine resources for all the people of the Cook Islands

Vision Statement

The Ministry of Marine Resources delivers well-balanced conservation and sustainable development of marine resources for the Cook Islands

Strategic Goals and Actions

1. Strategic Goal: MMR will work so that the long-term sustainability of marine ecosystems and resources is improved and maintained for the benefit of the Cook Islands.

1.1. MMR will ensure that the Cook Islands is seen as a strong and responsible fishing nation by:

- 1.1.1. Being a clear voice contributing to norm-creating discussions advocating national and regional priorities.
- 1.1.2. Protecting the interests, data and security of the Cook Islands.
- 1.1.3. Ensuring fisheries management is sustainable, balanced, science-driven, cost-effective and well-governed.

1.2. MMR will ensure it meets its obligations under national laws, treaties, and measures, by:

- 1.2.1. Partnering with national, regional and international organisations to implement obligations, as well as our bilateral counterparts.
- 1.2.2. Ensuring international obligations are incorporated into Cook Islands laws, regulations, policies, and plans.
- 1.2.3. Ensuring MMR has the tools and resources to manage, monitor and enforce the obligations.

1.3. MMR will support the sustainable management of our inshore fisheries resources with its partners by ensuring:

- 1.3.1. Commercial fisheries in the Cook Islands are well managed and supported.
- 1.3.2. Artisanal fisheries in the Cook Islands are protected, well managed and supported.
- 1.3.3. Aquaculture development is sustainable, well managed and supported.
- 1.3.4. Recreational fishing and tourism are supported.

1.4. MMR will support the cultural and ecological values of the marine ecosystem in the Cook Islands with all the tools and resources available to it by:

- 1.4.1. Developing robust data collection and monitoring systems to ensure the health of marine ecosystems.
- 1.4.2. Provision of sound advice using science and the precautionary approach to support decision making.
- 1.4.3. Ensuring security, livelihoods, culture and history are supported in fishing communities.

1.5. MMR will support Cook Islands efforts to meet the challenges of climate change and disaster risks by natural and man-made hazards by:

- 1.5.1. Building inclusive, resilient management systems that protect vulnerable marine ecosystems and communities.
- 1.5.2. Strengthening management of biosecurity and aquatic biosecurity risks.

1.5.3.Ensuring access to available financing for climate change adaptation and disaster risk management

2. Strategic Goal: MMR will support sustainable development of Cook Islands marine ecosystems and resources for the maximum benefit of the Cook Islands people.

2.1. MMR will be adaptive to seek the maximum sustainable benefits to the Cook Islands through its partnerships and fishing access arrangements by:

- 2.1.1.Working with its fishing partners to capture the best value for the Cook Islands.
- 2.1.2.Ensuring that doing business with the Cook Islands is fair, clear and mutually beneficial.

2.2. MMR will support fishing industries in the Cook Islands so they can be profitable and resilient by:

- 2.2.1.Facilitating market access opportunities for Cook Islands marine products.
- 2.2.2.Working to promote value adding and fishery development opportunities.

2.3. MMR will support the sustainable development of our inshore fisheries resources with our partners by ensuring:

- 2.3.1.Inshore commercial and artisanal fisheries receive sound advice and support for equitable livelihood development and food security opportunities.
- 2.3.2.Sustainable aquaculture development is supported and encouraged.
- 2.3.3.Development and management of recreational and tourism fishing opportunities are supported.

3. MMR will use best practice governance to be as effective, efficient and accountable as possible on behalf of the people of the Cook Islands

3.1. MMR will work with its partners in a transparent and accountable manner to share its knowledge and expertise by:

- 3.1.1.Developing a comprehensive outreach, awareness and communications programme so Cook Islands communities are aware of marine related issues and challenges and know where to receive relevant information and support.
- 3.1.2.Meeting its international, regional and national reporting commitments and obligations and by making relevant information available to all stakeholders.
- 3.1.3.Making clear, well documented, justifiable decisions as it performs its work.

3.2. MMR will work to ensure its operating environment is clear and well understood by all stakeholders involved by:

- 3.2.1.Ensuring its legislation, regulations, policies and plans are kept up to date so they are understood and useful for all relevant stakeholders.
- 3.2.2.Ensuring all of its internal processes and procedures are well documented and understood by staff so that it becomes more efficient, effective and resilient in its operations.
- 3.2.3.Working with its partner agencies and organisations to clarify roles and responsibilities so that working relationships and service delivery are optimised.

3.3. MMR will work to ensure that it has the capacity and resources to deliver on its mandate and strategic plan by:

- 3.3.1.Working within its budget and to manage the resources available to it efficiently and effectively.

3.3.2.Supporting its staff to achieve high work force capability and facilitating career development in the marine sector.

3.3.3.Ensuring MMR has the right technology, systems and hardware to deliver on its work programme.

Monitoring & Evaluation

This Strategic Plan is intended to guide the operation of MMR over the next five years. The high-level goals and actions contained in this plan will be operationalised through the MMR Business Plan and Divisional Annual Work Plans by ensuring that every action that MMR plans and carries out will directly correlate and support the strategic goals and actions in this plan. Reporting will be done through the Cook Islands Government Business Plan and other reporting processes. This will ensure that progress against the objectives of this Strategic Plan, the National Sustainable Development Plan, as well as the operational actions will be monitored on a regular basis.

A mid-term and final evaluation of the effectiveness of the MMR Strategic Plan will be carried out by an independent evaluator during the life of this plan. The quantitative data for this evaluation will be found in the Business Plan reporting. Qualitative evaluation can be done through a consultative process. The final evaluation will produce recommendations for inclusion into the next MMR Strategic Plan.