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**SC10-Doc33
Cook Islands Annual Report**

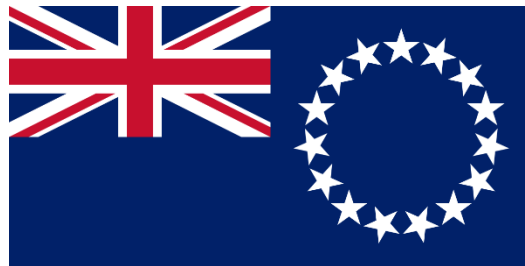
Cook Islands



Ministry of Marine Resources
GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION
Cook Islands Annual Report in the SPRFMO Convention Area for 2021

September 2022



Prepared by Offshore Fisheries Division

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1 Description of Fisheries

The Cook Islands has been a commission member to the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) RFMO (Regional Fisheries Management Organisation) since April 2012 and has operated in Convention Area since 2018 under an exploratory fishery. The first vessel flagged to the Cook Islands was a crab potting vessel which was limited to an allocated area southeast of French Polynesia (Table 1). There were no fishing activities conducted in 2021 due to unforeseen circumstances.

Table 1: The coordinates of the two areas permitted for Cook Islands exploratory fishing also shown in Figure 1.

Exploratory area	Latitude	Longitude
Foundation	31'00 S	100'00 W
Sea mount chain	40'00 S	134'00 W
Northern seamounts	21'00S	101'00W
	21'57S	101'00W
	23'55S	94'13W
	25'06S	92'50W
	27'00S	92'50W
	27'00S	84'00W
	21'00S	84'00W

The three-year exploratory trap fishing commenced on the Foundation Seamount Chain in 2019 in line with CMM 14b-2018, superseded by CMM14b-2022. In previous years only one Cook Islands vessel actively fished (Table 2). Activities in years 2019 and 2020 were carried out in line with the Fisheries Operations Plan (FOP) and relevant Conservation Management Measures (CMMs). The Northern Seamounts area was only included in the CMM14b-2022.

Table 2. Fleet composition of Cook Island flagged vessels operating in the SPRFMO area for most recent 5 years.

Vessel GRT	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
0-200	-	-	-	0	0	-
201-500	-	-	-	0	0	-
500+	-	-	-	1	1	-
Total	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	N/A

The maximum harvest level is 300 tonnes of green weight for the combined species of *Jasus spp.*, *Projasus spp.* and *Chaceon spp.*

During the first year of the exploratory program in 2019, the target species was *Jasus spp.*, however in 2020 the target species was *Chaceon spp.*

2 Catch, Effort and CPUE Summaries

There were no fishing activities conducted in the SPRFMO convention area in 2021 therefore there was no data recorded for this year.

Table 3. Catch by species in tonnes for potting fishery for most recent 5 years.

Year	<i>J. Caveorum</i> (t)	<i>Chaceon sp.</i> (t)	Others (t)	Total
2017	-	-	-	-
2018	-	-	-	-
2019	145.21	7.7	1.11	154.02
2020	1.46	13.95	0.37	15.73
2021	-	-	-	-
Total	146.62	21.65	1.48	169.76

3 Fisheries Data Collection and Research Activities

No Cook Islands fishing vessels operated in the SPRFMO Convention Area on 2021. Therefore no fisheries data collection systems were implemented, and research and assessment activities were not conducted.

4 Biological Sampling and Length/Age Composition of Catches

No Cook Islands fishing vessels of catching operated in the SPRFMO Convention Area on 2021. Therefore no biological and size-frequency sampling were conducted.

5 Ecosystem Approach considerations

In line with CMM14b-2022, the following mitigation measures were applied by Cook Islands flagged vessels during previous operations:

- a) No dumping of offal while lines are being set or while lines are being hauled;
- b) any offal or discards shall be macerated by machine prior to discarding;

- c) discarding shall take place only at the end of a haul or while steaming; and no biological material shall be discarded for at least 30 minutes before the start of any set or during any set; and
- d) discarding may only take place from the opposite side of the vessel from the hauling position.

6 Observer Implementation Reports (refer CMM 02 and CMM 16)

The Cook Islands National Observer Programme trained one observer shortly after being authorized to fish in the SPRFMO Convention Area in 2018, and one other in March of 2019. Plans are being developed to increase this to a pool of five observers. The training framework is evolving over time as this is still a relatively new gear type for the Cook Islands, and experiences and examples are being taken from other similar fisheries. Training is tailored to capture data to meet CMM 14b-2022 requirements. There were no observers deployed in 2021.

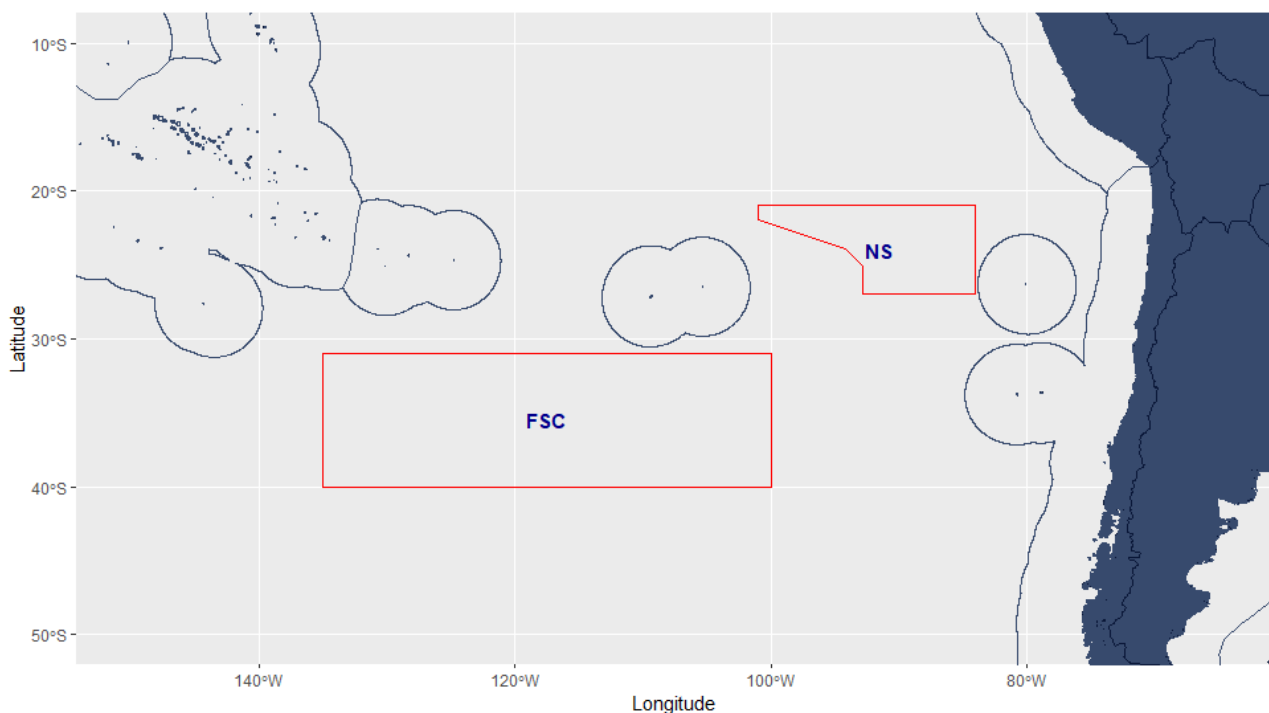


Figure 1: SPRFMO-CA and the Cook Islands exploratory fishing areas. FSC = Foundation Seamount Chain; NS = Northern Seamounts

