

Hello to all concerned,

Attached is the final draft of the report. It has been accepted by the Fisheries Division and the Minister but has yet to go before Parliament. The draft differs substantially from the previous draft as explained in the excerpt from the report:

6.1 Export statistic problems

Unfortunately, the value of the statistics have been severely diminished through the Fisheries Division practice of including aquarium products collected in other countries as Fiji exports. All live coral and rock statistics are a composite of unknown proportions of material from Tonga, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Bali, Indonesia as well as Fiji. Walt Smith Int'l is the only firm currently trans-shipping. With respect to CITES, this practice misrepresents the origins of collection and provides inaccurate documentation that the trans-shipped reef products have come from Fiji. It has the unfortunate effect of crediting Fiji as the source of much more material than is actually the case and obscuring the origin of reef products. Any comparison of exports with other South Pacific countries and, more importantly, globally is skewed. This practice of re-export is common, globally, with 16% of all coral traded re-exported. The USA exported to 19 different nations coral products that originated from 15 others (Green and Shirley, 1999).

More importantly, the number of specimens actually permitted by the Fisheries Division and the numbers actually exported are vastly different. This is due to a convenience in permit application whereby the exporter applies for permits for a quantity well in excess of the species to be sent. The consequences of not having ample permit numbers of any of the consignment species might result in the confiscation of the shipment. To guard against this, a large number of a particular item is permitted for. This is routinely done as a template with the same large number covering many of the categories. The importing countries such as the United States don't regard the excess permitting as a problem to their system. From an operational point of view, this mechanism has advantages. As much of the shipping is done at night or on the weekend to accommodate the flight schedules, documentation by the Fisheries Division must be pre-arranged to be practical. This caters for the need to send the living organisms as soon as possible after collection, delays in the permit processing or the prospect of not permitting for an adequate number of specimens. The arrangement would be valid, were it not for the recording by the Fisheries Division of the hypothetical maximums as actual data of export. The result of this practice has led to the apparent high numbers being attributed to export from Fiji. The exporters, generally, submit a summary document which details of their exact exports but this hasn't been used in the recording of the fisheries export data. The permit numbers are often 4-10 times the actual exported quantity.

I hope that this explains the numbers problem. I was unable to include the seven months data as I only had Walt's and Fisheries wanted the final report hurried to the Minister. I will fax you the total fisheries export figures for the last 7 months. These are the accurate export numbers as obtained from industry.

With respect to the Green and Shirley (1999) report, they appear to have lumped the live rock with the curio and live coral to give their 1997 export peak, which is greatly inflated otherwise. This gives the mis-impression that it represents the quantity of curio and live coral being exported. I have emailed them for some explanation but Dr. Green is on leave for two weeks.

Please contact me if you need more information.

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