



**GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR
THE MEDITERRANEAN
COMMISSION GÉNÉRALE DES PÊCHES
POUR LA MÉDITERRANÉE**



Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)

Report of the Workshop on the implementation of the Data Collection Reference Framework in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea

Madrid, Spain, 15–16 December 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The GFCM workshop on the implementation of the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (Madrid, Spain, 15–16 December 2014) provided technical suggestions for improving two sections of the DCRF document: 1) structure of the data collection; and 2) common practices for data collection. The workshop recognized that the DCRF was an appropriate tool for gathering the data and information necessary both for the provision of advice by the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and for supporting the adoption of sound management measures by the Commission. The workshop agreed on the draft terms of references related to the national focal point for data collection (NFC-DC), voiced support for this role as being instrumental in the correct implementation of, and follow-up on, the DCRF. Finally, the meeting proposed a detailed roadmap for the implementation of the DCRF and recommended using the proposed DCRF IT online platform as a core instrument in support of the DCRF; an instrument to be further developed by the GFCM Secretariat in accordance with agreed technical specifications.

1. The GFCM workshop on the implementation of the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea was held in Madrid, Spain, on 15 and 16 December 2014. The meeting was chaired by the coordinator of the Subcommittee on Statistics and Information (SCSI) of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and was attended by national experts from 19 GFCM Member countries as well as a representative of the European Union, a representative of one non-Member country, technical staff of the FAO regional projects CopeMed and EastMed, the coordinator of the SAC Subcommittee on Economic and Social Sciences (SCESS) and representatives of the GFCM Secretariat.

2. The workshop was opened by Mr Miguel Bernal, GFCM Secretariat who, on behalf of the GFCM Executive Secretary, thanked the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment and its Secretariat General for Fisheries for hosting the meeting. He also acknowledged the support of the European Union through its dedicated activity on data collection within the GFCM Framework Programme (FWP) and thanked all participants for their attendance. The high turnout underlined the importance of the event as a fundamental step in the process of strengthening the framework for the collection and processing of fisheries data in the GFCM area of competence.

3. The GFCM Secretariat recalled the fact that the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) – as the regional system for fisheries data collection for all Mediterranean and Black Sea countries - was considered instrumental in supporting the provision of advice by the SAC as well as supporting the overall GFCM decision-making process both at the regional and sub-regional levels. Participants were reminded that the DCRF was endorsed by the sixteenth session of the SAC in March 2014 and validated by the thirty-eighth session of the Commission in May 2014; the latter also issued

the GFCM Secretariat with the mandate to develop a proposal for practices in data collection and an online submission plan during the intersessional period.

4. The objectives of the workshop were outlined as follows: a) to provide additional feedback on the already approved first section of the DCRF document (“Structure of the data collection”); b) to discuss the new section “Common practices for data collection”; c) to identify the steps needed for implementing the DCRF amongst countries; and d) to agree on the terms of references for the National Focal Point for Data Collection (NFP-DC). The conclusions of the workshop together with the DCRF document would be submitted to the SAC subcommittees (February 2015) as appropriate. The consolidated version of the DCRF document would be presented at the seventeenth session of the SAC (March 2015) for its consideration before possible endorsement by the Commission at its thirty-ninth session (May 2015).

5. Mr Carlos Moreno, Deputy Director of the International Agreements and Regional Fisheries Organizations Unit of the Secretariat General for Fisheries, welcomed participants, expressing his appreciation for the holding of such an important meeting in Spain. He referred to the importance of the collection, management and transmission of fisheries data and described the three main pillars upon which the foundation of the strategy set out by the Secretariat General for Fisheries in recent years rests: i) management based on the best scientific knowledge; ii) long-term sustainability of resources; and iii) strict control of rules. Mr Moreno welcomed the current GFCM proposal to establish a general framework for data collection in the whole region, while stressing that attention should be placed on optimizing the use of human resources and avoiding overlaps with the existing regulations.

6. Mr Alaa Eldin El-Haweet, SCSi coordinator and chair of the workshop, welcomed all participants and highlighted the relevance of the workshop. He recalled the collaborative work undertaken in defining the DCRF, which involved both the technical and institutional bodies of the GFCM. In this respect, he referred to the 2014 subcommittee sessions, including the joint session between the Subcommittees on Statistics and Information (SCSI) and Economics and Social Sciences (SESS), which contributed substantially to the finalization of the document.

7. The agenda was adopted without changes and it is reproduced in Appendix A.

GFCM AND FISHERIES DATA COLLECTION: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE DCRF PROCESS

8. The GFCM Secretariat delivered a presentation on GFCM fisheries data collection, which provided background information on the DCRF process. It was recalled that the DCRF was conceived as a concrete solution to the need for a more efficient data collection programme at the subregional level and for better integration between data collection and the implementation of subregional multi-annual management plans.

9. Participants were provided with a brief overview of the series of activities carried out in 2013 and 2014 on fisheries data collection under the GFCM Framework Programme (FWP). These were activities aimed at overcoming weaknesses and consolidating the strengths of the GFCM data collection scheme. These actions involved GFCM Members, the GFCM Secretariat, the relevant FAO regional projects, national experts, and scientific bodies of the GFCM.

10. The presentation concluded by underlining the main characteristics of the DCRF; the presentation also mentioned that the DCRF is designed to encompass all the requested data in a simplified way with a common structure for all the “tasks” and that it incorporates aspects related to data confidentiality policies and procedures. The main characteristics mentioned are as follows:

- Modular approach (interlinked tasks to be submitted separately) with scattered deadlines for the data submission and the establishment of official data calls;

- Detailed description of the data tasks
- Clear distinction between mandatory and optional data
- Geographical sub-areas approach (in all tasks)
- Revised fleet segmentation (group of vessels and length classes)
- Prioritization of species by subregions
- Definition of data confidentiality and access policy
- Introduction of a comprehensive data submission calendar (frequency and deadline of transmission);
- Definition of the role of national focal points for the submission of official data to the GFCM.

11. Participants acknowledged the important steps already taken to develop the DCRF, and discussed follow up actions to support its implementation. It was pointed out that countries may need technical support for the correct implementation of the DCRF, and that both the FAO regional projects and the GFCM FWP were considered instrumental in providing this support. Participants strongly encouraged discussion within the GFCM on potential budgetary implications and possible sources of funding/support. Furthermore, participants agreed that the DCRF would be regarded as a flexible tool, which should be revised by the SAC on a periodical basis according to new needs to be identified in the future.

OVERVIEW OF THE DATA COLLECTION REFERENCE FRAMEWORK (DCRF)

Part 1 - Structure of the data collection

12. The GFCM Secretariat presented the “Structure of the data collection” section of the DCRF; the contents of which had already been adopted by the Commission at its thirty-eighth session (May 2014). It was recalled that the DCRF is structured into six different “tasks” plus an extra one which encompasses a national data summary:

- T.0 – Global figures of national fisheries
- T.I – Catch (1. landing data, 2. catch data per species)
- T.II – Bycatch of vulnerable species
- T.III – Fleet
- T.IV – Effort
- T.V – Socioeconomics
- T.VI – Biological information (1. stock assessment, 2. length data, 3. other biological data, 4. survey-based indicators, 5. dolphinfish, 6. red coral)

13. The Secretariat also highlighted the need to establish official “data calls” to request that countries submit the required data, as per the DCRF. The quality of original data submitted in response to these data calls and following the DCRF obligations and formats will be under the responsibility of each country, whereas the Secretariat will check the transmitted data (through the agreed online procedures) for compliance and quality control before their final upload to the GFCM regional information systems. The Secretariat will also duly report the status of the transmitted data (e.g., completeness and accuracy) to the countries.

14. The main requests for clarification, including the responses by the Secretariat, are summarized under the section “Comments received by the GFCM Secretariat” of this report. All technical suggestions for improvement of the DCRF are reported in Appendix C.

Part 2 – Common practices for data collection

15. The GFCM Secretariat introduced the second part of the DCRF document “Common practices for data collection” developed by the Secretariat as per the request of the Commission in May 2014. The presentation focused on:

- Sampling overview
- Landing and effort data acquisition
- Socio-economic data acquisition
- Biological data acquisition
 - Sampling from different data sources
 - Selection of fleet segment
 - Selection of species (length, weight, sex, maturity and age data)

16. The presentation provided an overview of the main methods for collecting useful information to assess the status of fish resources. The main data sources and methods for collecting landing, effort, and socio-economic data were presented. It was underlined that within the scope of the DCRF, these sets of data have to be reported for all fleet segments as identified in each country. It was mentioned that, for biological purposes only (i.e., length and maturity), data should be collected and reported for the most important fleet segments in each country. In addition, the presentation provided a detailed description of the weighing procedure, based on landing (tonnes), effort (fishing days), and economic values (total landing value): this procedure should be applied in order to identify the fleet segment to be sampled for the collection of biological data.

17. Participants were informed about the criteria used to identify the main groups of species in the proposed GFCM subregions (Western Mediterranean Sea, Ionian Sea, Adriatic Sea, Eastern Mediterranean Sea, and Black Sea): the first group is related to the frequency of assessments (i.e., species that are regularly assessed); the second group is classified according to the fishery’s importance (i.e., landing, catch and/or economic value); the third group is based on conservation criteria (i.e., endangered species) or impact of their presence on the ecosystem (i.e., non-indigenous species).

18. The main requests for clarification, including the responses by the Secretariat, are summarized under the section “Comments received by the GFCM Secretariat of this report”. Technical suggestions for improvement of the DCRF are reported in Appendix C.

DCRF requirements in relation to the current GFCM recommendations

19. Participants discussed connections between existing GFCM recommendations and the DCRF. There was also active discussion on the implications of the DCRF for the countries, in particular, as it pertains to the evaluation of compliance performed by the Compliance Committee (CoC). The Secretariat explained that within the context of the GFCM, mandatory requirements are those that are included within recommendations as adopted by the Commission. In addition to these adopted recommendations, the DCRF should be regarded as a relevant framework for optimizing the efficient collection of both mandatory and optional data (data which support the SAC in providing advice). Both GFCM recommendations and the DCRF are complementary and rely on each other: while GFCM recommendations are legal instrument, the DCRF is the SAC technical framework. The DCRF was designed with this complementarity already in mind, and therefore most of the mandatory data requirements within the DCRF are already requested through existing GFCM recommendations.

20. Participants were informed that the DCRF was designed from the beginning with a view to being consistent and complementary to the existing GFCM recommendations. However, it was also noted that in its first implementation phase, additional efforts may be required in order to ensure complete consistency between both tools. Within this context, a preliminary comparative analysis between the provisions of DCRF and the GFCM decisions currently in force was presented. This analysis highlighted that most of the data reporting proposed as “mandatory” through the DCRF are

already requested through existing decisions. Moreover, introducing the DCRF would imply a simplification of the already existing data and information reporting requirements, especially the requirements associated with the current Task 1 obligation.

21. Participants discussed if the implementation of the DCRF would imply the amendment, repealing, or modification of existing recommendations, or the preparation of new ones. The meeting proposed the continuation of this discussion at the SAC and Commission levels. The meeting also suggested submitting the comparative analysis (described in the paragraph above) to the Commission for a discussion on whether any potential amendments to existing recommendations (including their repealing) were needed to support the implementation of the DCRF.

Comments received by the GFCM Secretariat

22. All the comments received prior to the workshop and those that were raised by participants are reported below by topic. The technical suggestions for the improvement of the DCRF are provided in Appendix C.

FLEET SEGMENTATION

23. It was noted that fleet segmentation within the DCRF is too aggregated, in particular the artisanal fleet (polyvalent small-scale vessels). The implications of this are that in several countries, most of the national fishing vessels will appear to pertain to the same segment. It was clarified that the eight fleet segments (out of 40) for small-scale vessels are just a starting point for assessing the national situation: they are the minimum set which is common for all the countries, thus allowing data comparison at a regional level. However, this will not prevent countries from carrying out a sampling programme with a more detailed level of fleet segmentation. Moreover, it was recommended that the SCESS improve the definition of the polyvalent group in order to avoid the risk of vessels being over-reported under this wide category.

24. Landing, effort and socioeconomic data should be collected by fleet segments as defined in Appendix B of the DCRF. However, in order to optimize the efficiency of sampling activities, it may be possible to merge fleet segments when the exploitation pattern is the same (e.g., trawlers 6–12 and trawlers 12–24 merged in a single fleet segment: “trawlers 6–24”). When fleet segments are merged, a proposal should be brought to the attention of the SAC and corresponding references should be provided (i.e. existing scientific studies). This could be a valid option for economic data as well. The subsequent session of the SCESS should provide suggestions in this regard.

25. The issue of differences between GFCM fleet segmentation and the national or regional systems (e.g., the EU-DCF, Reg. CE 199/2008) was highlighted as a factor that adversely affected the processes of data collection and reporting to the GFCM. It was pointed out that the length classes of the vessels are compatible; the EU-DCF includes more length classes but the boundaries correspond to the DCRF segmentation. Moreover, it was recalled that, in order to define the fleet segments within the DCRF (as reported in the Appendix B of the DCRF document), the GFCM segmentation already in force was slightly modified to incorporate the most recent developments. In this regard, participants were reminded of the participatory approach (technical workshops) used to define the GFCM fleet segmentation. The current fleet segmentation was officially adopted by the Commission in 2007. Countries were invited to address any outstanding compatibility problems related to the fleet segments in question.

FLEET DATA

26. No major issues were raised in relation to the DCRF fleet data; only a handful of minor issues were tabled for discussion. Concerning the field “port of registration”, it was noted that either “operational port” or “landing port” would be more appropriate. The need for a clear definition of “operational status” (i.e., active or inactive) was also identified; participants agreed on the following

text: “A vessel is considered active when it executes at least one fishing operation during the year in the GFCM area of competence”.

27. Regarding the IMO number, which is only obligatory for vessels over 15 metres, it was suggested to amend the field name by adding “if any”. Moreover, it was recalled that this information is in line with the FAO global record, which was designed with the aim of acting as a global repository (database) for the reliable identification of vessels through a unique vessel identifier. The FAO global record is also meant to be an international tool to assist on the fight against IUU fishing activities.

28. It was noted that within the subtask entitled “Fisheries Restricted Areas”, the only requested data regarding fishing vessels: SAC should evaluate the potential inclusion of additional information.

BYCATCH AND DISCARDS

29. The importance of data on bycatch and discards was widely recognized by participants; however, the difficulties in gathering such information were also underlined. It was recalled that bycatch means the part of a catch of a fishing operation that is taken incidentally, in addition to the target object (encompassing both species and size) of the fishing operation. It may refer to the catch of commercial and/or non-commercial species that are kept on board and can also refer to the incidental catch of rare, endangered, or vulnerable species, such as marine mammals. Through the DCRF, countries are required to provide some information (e.g., the number of specimens) on the bycatch of certain rare and vulnerable species (e.g., turtles, cetaceans, sea birds and sharks and rays included in Annex II and Annex III of the Barcelona Convention¹). This information is meant to be provided through the countries’ existing sampling programmes, which traditionally make use of observers either at sea and/or at landing places. With regards to the incidental catches of vulnerable species, the meeting was reminded that there are already GFCM recommendations addressing the reduction of by-catch of species of conservation concern.

30. Discard is the part of ‘by-catch’ that is not retained on board and is thrown away at sea (for one reason or another). This includes catches of target species or any other species (commercial and not commercial) that are discarded at sea. It was specified that discards data (by weight) should be collected and reported, in the related tables, per identified priority species and per fleet segment. As already clarified, discards data could also be reported by grouping fleet segments with similar exploitation patterns together. Furthermore, the need for a clear methodology on how to estimate the discards value was requested. Current national experiences (e.g., Italy with the Cochran formula) and already existing reports of ICES and the EU on this topic could be used for this purpose.

BIOLOGICAL DATA

31. On the topic of age data, the Secretariat clarified that this information is related to species of Group 1 only. Furthermore, it was clarified that the age of crustaceans is not required. It was suggested that age data could be provided through the stock assessment forms and only for those stocks requested by the SAC.

32. Participants also suggested reporting length at maturity for Group 1 species only (Table entitled “Size at first maturity”) and independently from fleet segment and fishing gear.

33. When the data source is an ‘experimental survey’, some of the requested fields in the related table of the DCRF are not needed; therefore it was recommended to clearly specify the fields that do not have to be completed by countries. Moreover, for the requested biological information, it was recommended to specify the length values of specimens sampled as well as including standard length as an alternative parameter to be collected.

¹ Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean.

34. Participants asked whether maturity could be reported at a more aggregated level than fleet segments. This was not considered feasible due to potential differences in maturity stages of the catch composition for different fleet segments (e.g., season, area and/or mesh size). It was recommended to keep the maturity data at the level of fleet segment only (with no reference to the fishing gear), since this will be important for the provision of advice.

35. Participants discussed the use of “exemption rules” to be applied, in order to avoid having to sample and estimate biological parameters for non-representative cases. The proposed exemption rules to be used for the collection of biological data related to species are: “the species is/are not present in the country” and “the species is present in the country, but its weight accounts for less than 2% of total landings”. In applying these rules, the weight of the species at the country level should be referred to. Furthermore, it was clarified that, if a species, not present in one of the three groups of identified species (DCRF - Appendix A), is important, for any reason, at the national level, the country could propose to add this species in its sampling scheme.

EFFORT

36. Reporting fishing activity at fleet segment and fishing gear level was requested. This will allow for monitoring of the activity (i.e., fishing days) developed by certain fleet segments (mainly polyvalent and small-scale vessels). Therefore, in Table IV.1 (“effort data”), data should be reported at two levels of aggregation “Fishing days by gear” and “Fishing days by fleet segment”. It was also suggested to improve the definition of CPUE. Moreover, in order to better define the link between gear and fleet segment, a better description of Appendix F (fishing effort measurements) should be provided.

STOCK ASSESSMENT FORMS

37. The group suggested that the SAC should provide a draft list of stocks to be assessed yearly, and this list should be discussed and potentially endorsed by the Commission, in order for it to become compulsory. This should be further discussed by the SAC and the Commission, in light of the complementarity between the DCRF and existing recommendations (see section entitled “DCRF requirements in relation to the current GFCM recommendations” of this report). The Group agreed on the importance of the landing and fleet data included in the SAF – for those stocks identified by the SAC – being official. The SAC or its subsidiary bodies may apply required modifications (e.g. addition of estimates of IUU fishing) to perform sound stock assessment. In addition, participants highlighted that unofficial data of relevance to stock assessments could be submitted for the consideration of the stock assessment working groups. However, it was pointed out that in such cases, the conclusions might not be clear enough for providing sound management advice.

RED CORAL

38. Recognizing the importance of data collection for red coral, participants suggested including the most relevant information in a single table and recommended the inclusion of red coral in with Group 3 species. This would be in order to collect size data which in the case of coral would be branch diameter. Furthermore, it was recommended that detailed information on red coral relevant to stock assessments should be requested through the SAFs. According to written comments received from Greece, the red coral fishery no longer exists in Greece; therefore, Greece should be removed from the list of countries concerned. In the case where this activity re-starts again in the future, the GFCM would be informed accordingly.

DOLPHINFISH FISHERY (*CORYPHAENA HYPPURUS*)

39. On the topic of dolphinfish (*Coryphaena hyppurus*)- due to the difficulties in obtaining some of the requested data in the optional Table VI.5.2, participants asked to split the specific field into “number of FADs targeted per fishing trip” and “number of FADs visited per fishing trip”.

Furthermore, according to written comments received from Greece, there is no dolphinfish fishery in the country. In the case this activity starts in the future, the GFCM would be informed accordingly.

EEL (*ANGUILLA ANGUILLA*)

40. It was proposed to add eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) as a separate sub-task, under the DCRF Task VI "Biological information" and to consider it as a Group 3 species since it is a species under a recovery plan and is included in appendix II of CITES. Additionally, it was suggested to include a minimum set of information on eels through the DCRF (e.g. catches for the different eel life stages). More detailed information could then be requested through the SAFs.

ECOSYSTEM INDICATORS

41. The group was informed that the indicators proposed in the current version of the DCRF (November, 2014) had been revised during the *MedSuit Regional Workshop on indicators and targets to ensure GES of commercially exploited marine populations in the GFCM area* (Rome, 6-7 November, 2014). A set of new common indicators (spawning stock biomass, total landing, fishing mortality, fishing effort, abundance of vulnerable and bycatch species) was proposed and selected by this expert working group. Further technical work on the methodology to estimate the different indicators, aggregate them at regional and sub-regional levels, and assess their performance is expected. These indicators are expected to be incorporated into the DCRF upon adoption by the SAC.

SOCIOECONOMIC DATA

42. Participants agreed on the importance of having socioeconomic information but they cited difficulties in gathering this type of data due to the human and financial resources needed. The GFCM Secretariat recalled that the issue of the deadline for socioeconomic data was already discussed during the 2014 session of the subcommittees. Participants were reminded that a subset of the DCRF socioeconomic component was foreseen to be collected on a biennial basis: in doing so the planning of data collection at the national level would be facilitated. However, a number of EU countries argued that it is not possible to have socioeconomic data more recent than reference year minus two (y-2) and it was suggested to review the frequency and deadline of data submission. The group suggested that the data requested in Tables V.2 (other operating costs), V.3 (species value) and V.4 (other economic aspects) should refer to reference year n-2 and the deadline should be moved to March of every year.

43. The GFCM Secretariat emphasized the fact that shifting the submission of socioeconomic data (y-2) would affect the socioeconomic analysis on the effects of management plans (an analysis requested by the Commission). Further work on this front would be carried out by the upcoming sessions of the subcommittees (February 2015).

44. The meeting requested improving the definition of a couple of the variables (i.e. fuel consumption and fuel price). In addition, participants requested the preparation of guidelines on how to calculate the capital cost (to be completed by the SCESS).

GFCM SUBREGIONS, GSAs AND FAO STATISTICAL AREAS

45. Requests for clarification on the meaning of the GFCM subregions used in the tables of priority species were received. The Secretariat explained that the GFCM subregions were introduced to answer specific needs in the managing of the Mediterranean and Black Sea by taking into account the specificity of each identified area. Additionally, participants asked about the differences between the GFCM geographical subareas (GSAs) and the FAO statistical divisions. To this end, it was pointed out that GSAs were originally defined for management purposes, whilst the FAO divisions were defined just from a viewpoint of facilitating the collection of statistics.

STANDARDIZATION AND QUALITY INDICATORS

46. The workshop underlined the importance of data standardization (codifications and methods) in the GFCM area of competence. This discussion also touched upon the issue of data standardization amongst non-GFCM Members. Furthermore, the need for having quality indicators was highlighted and it was suggested to work towards having national reports on this matter in the foreseeable future.

Proposal for data submission procedures

47. The GFCM Secretariat provided participants with an in-depth overview of the proposed online instruments to be made available for the sake of submitting DCRF data to the GFCM. Participants were reminded that, as per the DCRF, data communication is meant to be carried out through the DCRF IT Online Platform by the NFP-DCs only; transmission by e-mail is no longer regarded as a valid practice.

48. The meeting was informed that the DCRF IT Online Platform is a set of subsystems that is entirely integrated within the already existing GFCM Extranet (which has been gradually established since November 2012). The aim of the platform to provide every NFP-DC with a familiar and secure environment, where the following services are delivered to eligible users through a unified access credential system:

- Secure data submission tools leveraging a flexible and cost-effective infrastructure;
- Enterprise-level mailboxes (150 GB) “@gfcmonline.org” for official correspondence;
- Online wikis, training material and FAQ repositories allowing NFPs to easily obtain any relevant training material and update on data requirements pertaining to the DCRF; and
- At-a-glance compliance reporting system, providing NFPs with an immediate and exhaustive report of the overall compliance level for his/her country.

49. Participants were made aware of the reasons for the proposed online cloud-based system:

- Ubiquitous cross-platform capabilities: ease-of-access anytime, anywhere, through any one of the latest web browsers (such as Google Chrome, Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox) on both Windows and Mac OS systems;
- Reliability of cloud enterprise-level service (Solid security and compliance combined with high levels of service);
- Significant cost-efficiency and enhanced flexibility to cope with emerging needs within contained budget implications.
- Fine-grained access policy mechanisms ensuring that relevant information is disclosed to eligible audiences only, in accordance with flexible approval mechanisms;
- Enhanced integration with other GFCM thematic portals and systems, thereby improving collaboration, information retrieval, and delivering high-quality document management tools; and
- Transforming instruments from being simply “means” to a true enabling factor that facilitates knowledge management and sharing practices.

50. The GFCM Secretariat highlighted the advantages of NFP-DCs having at their disposal a dedicated web page in the GFCM Extranet for managing the overall process of data submission to the GFCM:

- Multi-level access system (if needed at national level);
- Clear data submission procedures: online form or file upload;
- Calendar with all the deadlines by tasks;
- Description of data fields and codification;
- Wiki to guide users through the data submission process;
- A record of historical data submissions;
- A record of historical feedback issued by the GFCM Secretariat;

- A record of historical e-mail correspondence (through the use of the “@gfcmonline.org” mailbox); and
- Provision of data analysis and charts, once data are transmitted, processed and stored in the databases by the Secretariat.

51. The DCRF IT Online Platform was designed with the intention of being adaptable to the various possible national scenarios in managing the workflow of data submission. Where there are several persons in charge of different data topics, the system can be modulated in order to give them access to certain features only and grant the validation feature exclusively to the nominated NFP-DC.

52. Through the DCRF IT Online Platform, several data transmission procedures will be made available according to the different data tasks:

- Online form (on the basis of the recent experience with the SAC national reports);
- Online upload of pre-defined Excel files, with all the fields and messages in both English and French and an embedded data integrity check (missing fields and codification control); and
- Online upload of pre-defined Word files (already in use for the stock assessment forms).

53. An online glossary with the definition of all the variables as well as the description of each data field (string, numerical, number of decimals, etc.) was requested. Concerning the type of data files to be uploaded through the DCRF IT Online Platform, the possibility of transmitting XML or CSV files in addition to Excel was raised. Moreover, some extra data checks were requested, including the control of duplicate values to be granted directly online. The importance of the proper use of data symbols for zero (0) and “not available” (NA) values was underlined. Furthermore, participants asked about the modification of datasets once officially submitted to GFCM. Finally, the possibility of having pre-defined Excel files in Arabic was raised.

54. The Secretariat welcomed all inputs aimed at further developing the proposed DCRF IT Online Platform. In relation to the questions raised, it was clarified that the Excel file was proposed because it is commonly used by all the countries in question. However, this choice will not prevent the consideration of other format options in the future such as CSV or XML. Concerning additional data-checking features, it was underlined that in the short-term, any online validation in real-time was not considered due to the varying status of internet connections in the involved countries. The request for additional languages within the pre-defined Excel files was noted by the Secretariat.

55. Participants agreed on the importance of establishing a pilot study to finalize the development of the new proposed data submission tools through the DCRF IT Online Platform. This pilot study would be carried out in 2015 by the GFCM Secretariat in coordination with Members and following the recommendations of the SAC.

Data confidentiality provisions

56. The Secretariat introduced the topic of data confidentiality provisions by recalling the existing Resolution GFCM/35/2011/2 Data confidentiality policy and procedures. Participants were informed that this decision covers the general aspects, including provisions on data security, pertaining to all data, reports, and messages (electronic and of other nature) sent and received pursuant to GFCM recommendations. Concerning the provisions on data confidentiality, the resolution explicitly refers to the data provided under Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/3 (more precisely, Task 1).

57. On the topic of data security, participants were informed about a recent joint UN-wide activity led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), involving 13 UN agencies in a procurement engagement for IT cloud technologies. Through this process, special provisions have been negotiated between the provider and the UN, ensuring that UN privileges and immunities are duly granted. Such provisions also apply to the technologies and services used by the GFCM within

the framework of the ongoing Enterprise Agreement between the FAO and Microsoft. These services rely on infrastructure and technologies, which are designed, implemented and maintained on the basis of a strong security development life cycle.

58. Participants looked favourably upon the choice to align to cutting-edge IT standards through the use of technology and services acknowledged at the UN level; this was considered as a valid and sustainable strategy. Particular praise was voiced for the crucial advantages provided by the system. These advantages include the flexibility to address emerging needs in data submission, cost-efficiency, service levels, data security, data privacy provisions in compliance with relevant standards, and added value to the NFP-DC and Members in general(as end users).

59. The meeting agreed that this was not the forum for decisions to be made on data confidentiality issues related to the DCRF provisions. This included attributing status (public, partially private and private) to the submitted data for consultation by external users. It was suggested that this topic will be addressed by the SAC and that the matter of amending the current resolution as necessary has to be discussed at the Commission level by national delegates.

Implementation of the DCRF: the role of NFP-DCs

60. The Secretariat introduced the role of the NFP-DCs and presented a draft proposal for the associated terms of references (ToRs). It was pointed out that NFP-DCs will be crucial for the implementation of the DCRF because they will coordinate the collection and submission of fisheries data to the GFCM Secretariat at the national level. This will facilitate the interaction between countries and the GFCM Secretariat thus ensuring regular communication regarding meetings and activities relevant to the DCRF. Participants were informed that the ToRs were drafted with the aim of profiting from the excellent experience of the GFCM-SIPAM² national focal points for aquaculture. In addition, the draft ToRs took into account the DCRF structure.

61. Participants recognized the importance of establishing the system of NFP-DCs and agreed upon the proposed TORs with few minor amendments as reproduced in Annex D.

Implementation of the DCRF: transposition of the DCRF into GFCM decisions

62. On the issue of translating the DCRF into GFCM decisions, and in reference to the presentation previously delivered by the Secretariat on the comparative analysis between the DCRF provisions and the GFCM decisions currently in force, it was noted that the adoption of the DCRF *will* have an impact on the GFCM normative scenario.

Conclusions

63. On the basis of the discussions held at the workshop, the following conclusions concerning the GFCM DCRF and its implementation were reached:

- The work undertaken to develop the DCRF as a framework for defining data collection and submission requirements as per GFCM binding recommendations was praised, and the need to implement this tools at regional scale was highlighted. Consensus was expressed on the DCRF Part 2 “common practices for data collection.”
- The DCRF was acknowledged as an appropriate tool to gather necessary data and information for the purpose of SAC advice and to support the adoption of sound management measures by the Commission. The DCRF was regarded as an adaptive tool, which could be modified according to new data needs and/or to new recommendations adopted by Members.

² The GFCM network on aquaculture

- The role of the national focal points for data collection (NFC-DC) was acknowledged as instrumental to the correct implementation and follow-up of the DCRF.
- The need to have a dedicated DCRF IT online platform as part of the GFCM Extranet to provide a secure environment for the submission of data and other information related to the DCRF was recognized as instrumental to the efficient implementation of the DCRF.

Recommendations for the Scientific Advisory Committee

64. On the basis of the discussions and conclusions, the following recommendations were formulated by the workshop for the consideration of the SAC:

- Technical suggestions to improve the definition of items in the different Tasks of the DCRF (as reported in Appendix C) should be part of the DCRF document to be endorsed by the SAC at its seventeenth session;
- The efficiency of the DCRF and its data collection and submission procedures should be regularly assessed by the SAC so that possible modifications and improvements could be adopted, as necessary;
- The SAC should ensure that the data required per GFCM recommendations are indicated as compulsory in the DCRF and that other data that are considered relevant for the work of the SAC are included as optional. To support the implementation of the DCRF, the GFCM Secretariat should initially provide an analysis of the differences between the data requirements included in the final version of the DCRF and the existing GFCM recommendations. GFCM Members should subsequently discuss possible amendments to – or the repealing of – relevant provisions in existing GFCM recommendations, and examine potential new decisions regarding other data considered as crucial within the DCRF;
- Proposed terms of reference for the National Focal Point for data collection (NFP-DC) are provided in Appendix D for the consideration of the SAC and possible submission to the Commission;
- The GFCM Secretariat should further develop the DCRF IT online platform, in parallel with the phased implementation of the DCRF, in order to effectively support data collection and submission by Members. The development of this system should be carried out in consultation with experts and with the SAC, and pilot tests should be designed by the Secretariat in coordination with Members and following the recommendations of the SAC.
- The following roadmap for the implementation of the DCRF was proposed:
 - Submit meeting conclusions, recommendations and DCRF document to the 2015 session of the subcommittees to obtain technical inputs and subsequently submit them to the seventeenth session of the SAC for approval;
 - Perform a comparative analysis of existing GFCM recommendations and DCRF requirements to be submitted to the Commission;
 - Following its final adoption by the Commission, the DCRF should be progressively implemented, as follows:
 - Run a testing phase in 2015 to finalize the development of the online data submission tools. During this stage, the GFCM Secretariat should evaluate: the completeness and quality of data submitted by Members within each Task; the performance of the

submission tools used; the information flow with the identified National Focal points for data collection (NFP-DC);

- At the beginning of the sampling year (starting from 2016), following the guidelines provided by SAC, Members, should submit a list containing: all the fleet segments operating in the country; the fleet segment based on the weighting procedure being identified for the collection of biological variables; the species for which the data collection will be carried out following the regional species groups identified (Appendix A of the DCRF);
- Members should submit data on Task 0 (global fissures of national fisheries), 1.1 (landing), 3 (fleet), 4 (table 4.1 – effort by fleet segment), 5 (table 5.1 – economic and social data), 6.2 (length) by May – November 2016 (according to the data submission calendar of the DCRF);
- The SAC should examine and endorse Members’ proposals, at its eighteenth session, or give feedback as necessary;
- The remaining DCRF Tasks should be implemented by May – July 2017 (according to the DCRF data submission calendar), following the data submission scheme approved by the SAC.

Closure of the meeting

65. The workshop was closed by the chair and general satisfaction was expressed for the results achieved.

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AGENDA

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda

- *Welcome speeches (by hosting Country and GFCM Secretariat)*
- *Introduction of the workshop (by Chair)*
- *GFCM and fisheries data collection: background information about the DCRF process (by GFCM Secretariat)*

2. Overview of the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF)

- *Part 1 - Structure of the data collection (by GFCM Secretariat)*
- *Part 2 - Common practices in the data collection (by GFCM Secretariat)*

3. Requirements within the DCRF in relation to the current GFCM recommendations

(Comparative analysis of the DCRF provisions with the GFCM decisions currently in force)

4. Comments received by the GFCM Secretariat

(Discussion on the inputs received by the GFCM Secretariat before the workshop and inputs arising from participants)

5. Proposal for data submission procedures

- *Online submission through the GFCM Secretariat IT platform*
- *Data confidentiality provisions*

6. Implementation of the DCRF

- *Role of National Focal Points for data collection (NFP-DC)*
- *Transposition of DCRF into GFCM decisions*

7. Any other matter

8. Conclusions and recommendations for the Scientific Advisory Committee

9. Closure of the meeting

Technical suggestions for the improvement of the DCRF

TASK		TOPIC	SUGGESTIONS
I.2	Catch data per species	Discard	Considering the outputs of specific working groups and the relevant scientific studies that already exist, a more detailed description on how to calculate discards should be provided.
III	Fleet	Fleet segment	It should be possible to merge fleet segment (e.g. aggregation of length classes) with similar exploitation patterns for biological purposes. In order to merge fleet segments, each Country should make a proposal, supported by scientific evidence, to be evaluated by GFCM.
III	Fleet	Fleet segment	It should be possible to merge fleet segment for economic purposes. In order to merge fleet segments, each Country should make a proposal, supported by scientific evidence, to be evaluated by GFCM. SCESS can provide suggestions on how to do this.
III	Fleet	Fishery Restricted Areas (FRA)	The Group recognises that the only available information on the FRA is the number of vessels operating in those areas. SAC should evaluate possible inclusions of additional information in order to evaluate the efficiency of the FRA.
III	Fleet	Operational status	The Group suggested improving the definition of vessel operational status (i.e. active or inactive). The suggestion from the group is: <i>"A vessel is considered active when it executes at least one fishing operation during the year in the GFCM area of competence"</i>
V	Socio economics	Fuel	The Group suggested improving the definition of fuel consumption and fuel price (e.g. it would be better to specify which type of fuel is being referred to i.e. diesel, bio-diesel, petrol, oil). SCESS can provide suggestions on how to do this.
V	Socio economics	Capital costs	Detailed guidelines on how calculate depreciation and opportunity cost should be provided. SCESS can provide suggestions on how to do this.
V	Socio economics	Deadline for data	The group suggested reviewing the frequency and deadline for submitting socio-economic data. This data, as requested in tables V.2, V.3 and V.4, should refer to reference year n-2. The deadline should be moved to March of every year (e.g. in March 2016 Countries are requested to submit the socio-economic data of 2014).
VI	Biological information	Source of data	When the source of data is <i>"survey"</i> , the related tables should clearly specify which fields do not have to be completed by Countries.
VI.2	Length data	Standard Length (SL)	The group suggested including standard length (SL) as an alternative parameter to be collected for length. A description should also be reported in the related section.

TASK		TOPIC	SUGGESTIONS
VI.2	Length data	Length	The group suggested specifying, in the appropriate tables, the length values of specimens sampled. These measurements should be reported within size class intervals of one cm, or half cm, for fish (including elasmobranchs) and cephalopods. Size classes of one mm should be used for crustaceans. A different level of aggregation could be requested through the stock assessment form.
VI.3	Other biological data	Age	The group suggested deleting table VI.3.1 and instead, providing age data through the stock assessment forms, as appropriate.
VI.3	Other biological data	Length at maturity L ₅₀	The group suggested reporting length at maturity for only Group 1 species and independent from fleet segment and gear. Countries are encouraged to provide this data also for Groups 2 and 3, if available (optional). References should be also provided.
VI.6	Red Coral	Mean diameter	The group suggested inserting red coral in Group 3 species.
VI.6	Red Coral	Summary information	The most relevant information for red coral should be summarised in a single table.
VI.6	Red Coral	Stock Assessment	Detailed information on red coral, oriented to stock assessment, should be requested through a stock assessment form.
All tasks		Compulsory data	The minimum set of compulsory data to be submitted should be clearly specified within the mandatory tables. Data requested should be in line with existing recommendations.
All tasks		Data confidentiality	The group agreed that the attribution of the status (public, partially private and private) to the submitted data for their consultation by external users should be addressed by the SAC and then submitted to the Commission for its consideration.
All tasks		Policy for the data modification	The group suggested defining the policy and the deadlines for the modification of the already submitted data according to the DCRF provisions. Subcommittees can provide suggestions.
-	Eel	Information on eel	The group suggested including eel (<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>), as a separate sub-task, under the DCRF Task VI "Biological information." Eel should be inserted in Group 2 species. The group suggested including a minimum set of information through the DCRF (e.g. catches for the different eel life stages) and requesting detailed information through the stock assessment form.
-	Appendix A	Species	If a species, not present in one of the three Groups of identified species (DCRF - Appendix A) is important (for any reason) at the national level, the Country can propose to add this species in its sampling scheme.
-	Appendix A	Species	Exceptions can be applied according to the following list of ordered criteria: the species is/are not present in the Country; the species is present in the Country, but its weight accounts for less than 2% of total landings.
-	Appendix B	Polyvalent vessel	The group suggested improving the definition of "polyvalent fleet segment" (i.e. polyvalent vessels, small-scale vessels with or without an engine).

Draft terms of reference for the National Focal Points for Data Collection (NFP-DC)

Recognizing his/her government's commitment to the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the nominated* National Focal Point for Data Collection (NFP-DC), in coordinating at the national level the collection and submission of fisheries data to the GFCM Secretariat, shall:

- be abreast of GFCM codification standards, as required within the DCRF, to effectively compile and submit required data and eventually propagate such information to relevant parties;
- ensure the submission of data to the GFCM through the information systems established by the GFCM Secretariat, according to the DCRF provisions;
- address inquiries for verification from the GFCM Secretariat to be undertaken on data submissions baring missing or wrong codifications/information and consequently liaise with relevant national institutions in charge of providing such data;
- Ensure the transmission of information to his/her Country on meetings and activities relevant for the GFCM - DCRF, and coordinate to ensure attendance as appropriate.

** by relevant national authorities*