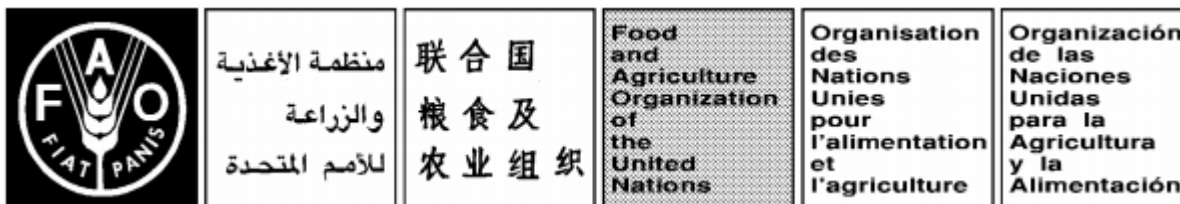


September 2019



FISHERY COMMITTEE FOR THE CENTRAL EASTERN ATLANTIC

Twenty-second Session

Libreville, Gabon, 17–19 September 2019

Summary report of the 11th FIRMS Steering Committee meeting

Summary

Reliable fisheries statistical data as well as information on status and trends disseminated in accessible and timely manner to all stakeholders is needed for effective fisheries management in the region. FIRMS provides such web-based dissemination facility and can enhance it with easier-to-understand web-based information products on status and trends. To this end, FIRMS can also catalyze actions for the implementation of standards for the collection, exchange, and reporting of fisheries data. The FIRMS information-sharing framework offers a mechanism, which can help coordinate CECAF, FCWC and its member countries' submission of fishery information, with the aim to ensure easy access to high quality information for the development/enhancement of fisheries policies and management plans at national and regional levels. The FIRMS FSC11, May 2019, was attended by CECAF and FCWC (new FIRMS Partner) becoming a good platform for discussion, coordination and development of synergies among these two bodies.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

The eleventh Session of the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) Steering Committee (FSC11) was held at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy, 13–14 and 18 May 2019. Thirty-two participants representing eleven FIRMS Partners including two new partners: the Fishery Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) and the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Organizations (SPRFMO), three FIRMS associated members, four collaborative institutions, one observer, the FIRMS Secretariat and FAO attendees. See meeting report at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5247en/ca5247en.pdf>

BACKGROUND

The Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) is a partnership of regional and international organizations, which aims to facilitate access to a wide range of high-quality information on the status and trends of global marine fishery resources, fisheries and their management. The overall goal of the FIRMS partnership is to provide decision-makers and relevant stakeholders with necessary information to develop effective fisheries policies and management plans in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

Nowadays, FIRMS is easing access to high quality information for the development/enhancement of fisheries policies and management plans at national and regional levels by collating, formalizing and digitalizing, organizing, standardizing, managing and disseminating marine resource and fisheries information, and ensuring national and regional visibility at global level guaranteeing a role in the global policy agenda. On-going efforts to optimize return on investment aim at: (i) broadening geographic and thematic coverage and timely contributions by enhancing the participation of partners, streamlining national contributions on fishing activities through the RFBs and capacity building programs; and (ii) assigning through the Global Record for Stocks and Fisheries (GRSF) a global unique identifier to each stock and fishery based on a global standard, so that it can be used, among others, to support countries and regions' work on seafood traceability and certification systems, facilitate the effective management of fisheries subsidies reporting requirements, and support countries' contribution and reporting to global political agenda (SDG 14.4.1).

CECAF has a long history in FIRMS, the regional body and its member countries have been contributing with regional and national information on marine resources and fisheries to the FIRMS database. This information has been organized, standardized and made easily available for national and regional use and globally disseminated on the FAO/FIRMS webpage.

CECAF is responsible for the content of the marine resources inventory, which are extracted from the published CECAF Working Group Reports. While countries, under CECAF coordination and periodic review, are responsible for the content of the fisheries inventory and can update the content on a routine basis. The Chairperson of the SSC is the FIRMS focal point for the CECAF region.

MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE FIRMS SESSION

The FSC11 agenda focused on expanding monitoring coverage and usage of FIRMS as authoritative source of information. The increase in Intergovernmental Organizations (IGO) membership brings FIRMS to seventeen IGO partners representing twenty-two regional fishery bodies (RFBs), including FCWC as one of the new partners.

Along the objective of expanding the FIRMS partnership and its coverage, a new legal instrument was adopted permitting new organizations, called "Collaborative Institutions", to join the FIRMS Partnership as content and service providers as well as in the capacity of an advisory role in FIRMS meetings.

FSC11 endorsed a Governance model enabling the FIRMS Partnership to lead the further development of: i) the Global Record of Stocks and Fisheries (GRSF), a comprehensive and transparent inventory of stocks and fisheries records across multiple data providers, based on a standard for unique identifiers; and ii) the Global Atlas of Tuna and tuna-like species (Tuna Atlas),

an interactive web-based mapping tool utilizing a global database.

FSC11 also reviewed FIRMS' role in contributing to the sustainable development of world fisheries as required by the UN SDG, and in particular the provision of data services for monitoring national stocks reported by countries under SDG 14.4.1. In line with the above, and following the recommendations of the FIRMS Technical Working Groups (TWGs), FSC11 endorsed as FIRMS information standards several concepts and definitions regarding typologies of stocks, aligned with SDG 14.4.1.

FSC11 conducted the normal progress review on performance during the intersession, including new and updated Partners data contributions, and the FIRMS Secretariat work in providing support to Partners for disseminating stock and fisheries status and trends. To date, the FIRMS database of marine resources and fisheries holds inventories on approximately 1 470 marine resources and 730 fisheries worldwide, and disseminates status and trends information reported by FIRMS Partners for about 800 marine resources/stocks and 250 fisheries, through fact sheets published on the FIRMS website. In addition FIRMS disseminate 700 historical records, thus progressively building time series of stocks and fisheries status and trends. FSC11 also endorsed as FIRMS information standards several definitions regarding typologies of stocks, which were prepared by the FIRMS TWG.

Finally, a workplan was elaborated with the objective to continue providing the required support and capacity building to FIRMS Partners, and to release GRSF and the FIRMS Tuna Atlas in a good timing in respect of the FAO International Symposium on Fisheries Sustainability, Rome 18-21 November 2019.

FSC11 AND CECAF-FIRMS

CECAF attended the FSC11 as FAO Associated Member and it was represented by the Chair of CECAF Scientific Sub-Committee (SSC), Carlos Monteiro from the "Institut National de Développement de la Pêche" in Cabo Verde.

Currently CECAF-FIRMS has 286 Marine Resource records in the inventory with 172 status/trends reports of which the latest 96 stocks based upon SSC7 (reporting year 2016), and 289 Fishery records in the inventory with 77 status/trends reports, all published as fact sheets¹. Following the Commission endorsement of the CECAF SSC report on stock status, the CECAF Marine resource fact sheets will be updated with about 80 stocks. The CECAF- FIRMS fisheries status and trends reports were provided by 6 countries (Angola, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Spain and Togo) and published in 2011 and these should be updated. For various reasons, other fishery status reports were submitted but have never been finally validated for publishing in FIRMS.

In the last CECAF SSC8 (October 2018) an enhanced way of citing CECAF and recognizing related

¹ Fisheries:

[http://firms.fao.org/figis/website/FIRMSSearch.do?dslist\[0\]=fishery&refxml=false&startrow=1&bsize=15&lixsl=webapps/figis/firms/format/searchfsfirmslist.xml&kw\[0\]=owner&kv\[0\]=CECAF&kw\[1\]=approach&kv\[1\]=Activity&logop=and](http://firms.fao.org/figis/website/FIRMSSearch.do?dslist[0]=fishery&refxml=false&startrow=1&bsize=15&lixsl=webapps/figis/firms/format/searchfsfirmslist.xml&kw[0]=owner&kv[0]=CECAF&kw[1]=approach&kv[1]=Activity&logop=and)

Marine Resource:

[http://firms.fao.org/figis/website/FIRMSSearch.do?dslist\[0\]=resource&refxml=false&startrow=1&bsize=15&lixsl=webapps/figis/firms/format/searchfsfirmslist.xml&kw\[0\]=institution&kv\[0\]=CECAF&logop=and](http://firms.fao.org/figis/website/FIRMSSearch.do?dslist[0]=resource&refxml=false&startrow=1&bsize=15&lixsl=webapps/figis/firms/format/searchfsfirmslist.xml&kw[0]=institution&kv[0]=CECAF&logop=and)

contributions by third-party institutions and authors was also agreed for the forthcoming CECAF-FIRMS fact sheets. Furthermore, the design of CECAF-FIRMS fact sheets as easy-to-understand/easily accessible information products on state of stocks for policy makers, other relevant stakeholders and the general public, making use of simple text, infographics and traffic lights was suggested as a very useful tool, which FIRMS could provide as a return of CECAF member countries efforts. Along the same line, FSC11 also recommended that regional stock status summary pages based on dynamic and visually attractive charts be developed, under the coordination of RFB members.

CECAF-FCWC-FIRMS

FCWC attended its first FSC as new FIRMS Partner and FCWC Secretary, Séraphin Nadjé Dedi, represented it.

In introducing the FCWC-FIRMS Partnership Arrangement, Mr Dedi stated in what way the lack of reliable fisheries statistical data and information is an obstacle for effective decision making on marketing, investment and the sustainable management and exploitation of fisheries resources. He explained how with the support of FAO, FCWC member states were now in the process of collecting, compiling and disseminating the list of core fisheries indicators, and indicated that FCWC wants to preserve this significant progress made and continue to promote the development of standards for the collection, exchange, and reporting of fisheries data. In particular and under this FIRMS-FCWC agreement. As a partner in FIRMS, FCWC hopes to secure a return on their effort and investment for FCWC member countries *(i) promoting the development of standards for the collection, exchange, and reporting of fisheries data and coordinate Member countries' submission of fishery information; including (ii) improved visibility at the global level; (iii) clear participation and support for countries contribution to political programs, such as the Pan-African Strategy on the Improvement of Fisheries and Aquaculture Data Collection, Analysis and Dissemination and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG); (iv) benefit from the availability of FIRMS data services in support of monitoring the status of stocks and fisheries in West Africa; and (v) to make this partnership a catalyst for funding opportunities for strengthening capabilities.*

Annex2 of the FCWC-FIRMS partnership arrangement specifies the information to be contributed to FIRMS by the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) and the context for such contribution, as follows: "the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) is a sub-regional organization operating within the Eastern Central Atlantic region (FAO Area 34). FAO, as FIRMS partner, contribute to the partnership for the Eastern Central Atlantic region through the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF), a FAO body under Article VI of the FAO Constitution. As per FIRMS agreement, CECAF with its Scientific Sub-Committee (SSC) has a primary responsibility for reporting on the status of Marine resources, and a corporate responsibility for the overall consistency of the marine resources and fisheries inventory, as well as overview of strategic and policy aspects. In the FIRMS context, FCWC can strengthen the capacity to provide information on the status and trends of the fishery sector for the West Central of the Gulf of Guinea and the underlying Member Countries, by fulfilling a key role regarding the provision of updated quantitative and qualitative information on inventoried fisheries and ensuring and coordinating capacity building activities".

FSC11 noted the request by CECAF and FCWC for capacity building and assistance in implementing FIRMS procedures and standards.

Required for an efficient FIRMS dissemination on status and trends, FCWC requested assistance from FAO to develop methods to collect and manage data from small-scale artisanal fisheries and

large-scale industrial fisheries, which operate in FCWC's area of competence. Data, including socio-economic data, are current inputs for a central regional database. FCWC recognized the importance of these data in monitoring status and trends and that of FIRMS in streamlining their dissemination, and the role that FIRMS may provide to catalyze this work. CECAF expressed the will to improve the CECAF data sharing with FCWC.

In this regard, FIRMS Secretariat is organizing a training session for CECAF SSC Chair in FAO headquarters, which would include practical hands-on sessions with real data provided by FCWC; and a Data Workshop to be held in FCWC headquarters for the collation, harmonization and submission of fishery data, with the aim to enhance capacities at the national and sub-regional levels for fisheries data and statistics collection and for stocks and fisheries status/trends monitoring. It will also contribute to improve the provision of data to FAO-CECAF.

FIRMS FSC11 noted January-March as preferred timing for CECAF and FCWC (to-be-confirmed) data calls.

ACTIONS REQUESTED FROM THE COMMITTEE

The committee is invited to consider the:

- urge action for countries to validate fishery status reports already submitted to FIRMS, and/or run a new round of updates due to obsolete data;
- note that the FCWC-FIRMS partnership arrangement is expected to contribute to the timely provision of fishery status and trends reports under the umbrella of FCWC, coordinated and in line with the protocol for fisheries inventories adopted by CECAF;
- endorse and support the proposals of designing easy-to-understand/easily accessible web-based information products, including:
 - CECAF-FIRMS fact sheets;
 - A regional CECAF-FIRMS page disseminating regional stock status summary based on dynamic and visually attractive charts.