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REPORT ON THE WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT (WGFM)

INTRODUCTION

1. This document is a summary of the discussions and main outcomes of the ninth and tenth meetings of the Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) and its relevant implications for the future of the work of RECOFI.

NINTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

2. The ninth meeting of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) was held in Kuwait City, State of Kuwait, from 24 to 26 November 2015. The meeting was convened by RECOFI and FAO, and attended by 16 delegates from five RECOFI member countries: Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Work on priority species

3. The meeting was provided with updates on the work on RECOFI priority species, recognizing the importance in ensuring that the knowledge base of RECOFI is preserved and to reduce fragmented studies being conducted by individual RECOFI member countries. It was proposed that two species be added to the list of RECOFI priority species.

Joint appraisal of the kingfish stock in the RECOFI Area

4. The WGFM reaffirmed the importance of this workshop and its commitment to providing all the necessary information for the assessment. The organization of the Kingfish stock assessment workshop in the first half of 2016 was seen as important.

Socio-economics survey questionnaire

5. The WGFM agreed that the continuation of this socio-economic work is a key activity in the intersessional period, noting the important role of the Task Group. It was also noted that information could continue to be collected, expanding on what was already available from the survey results to

ensure that as much of the socio-economic information available at the national level as possible was shared at the RECOFI level.

RECOFI Recommendation on minimum data reporting

6. The meeting was briefed on the status of data submission by Member States with regard to RECOFI Recommendation on minimum data reporting (RECOFI/6/2011/1). It was highlighted again that the data reported under that Recommendation would provide an adequate basis for monitoring the status of fishing operations and resources as well as taking management decisions. The meeting reviewed the standard classifications and terminologies and agreed on a set of RECOFI standards to cover the minimum data reporting component.

7. The meeting noted that RECOFI lacks identified fisheries management objectives of regional relevance, including the associated multidisciplinary indicators and related reference points and reference limits. This was seen as a significant constraint that could affect progress towards the formulation of regional fisheries management plans.

8. After some discussions, the WGFM agreed on the standard classifications and terminologies of the minimum data reporting component of RECOFI Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1. There was a common understanding that this information would provide the basis for a regional database on integrated catch and effort. Member countries were kindly requested to insert supplementary categories under these standard classifications when necessary. The WGFM also agreed that the data component corresponding to Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1, would be disseminated to the public while any additional information (either supplementary or that which provided new details) would be kept for use within the Commission only.

9. The WGFM agreed to move toward one integrated formal RECOFI website for the integration of the current RECOFI regional data set and that Kuwait and FAO would further clarify and detail the tasks, activities and budget required in the transitional period and integrate them into a FAO/Kuwait cooperation agreement.

GCC kingfish and shrimp fisheries management plans

10. A presentation was given on the status of the length frequency survey of narrow barred Spanish mackerel (*Scomberomorus commerson*) in Kuwait fisheries, which was carried out in the framework of the GCC's survey of countries, dating back to 2004–2006. The results showed high variation in the determined asymptotic length (L_{∞}), indicating that these results depended mainly on the sample size and length range.

FAO regional workshop on the 2009 Port State Measures Agreement for the North West Indian Ocean

11. The WGFM took note of the information provided about the outcomes of the FAO regional workshop on the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing.

Integration of RECOFI regional data set into RAIS

12. The WGFM was reminded that the Commission had recently endorsed its second binding Recommendation RECOFI/8/2015/1 on minimum reporting on aquaculture data and information, in addition to the existing binding Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 on minimum data reporting in the RECOFI area. It was stressed the new recommendation would imply mandatory data collection and submission by member countries.

13. The WGFM was informed of the minimum requirements for adapting the existing RAIS to make it suitable for communicating and handling data and information originating from the

implementation of RECOFI Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 and linked activities.

14. The meeting agreed to move towards a single integrated RECOFI website with the possible name of RECOFIS (the RECOFI Information System), RIS (the Regional Information System) or RAFIS (the Regional Aquaculture and Fishery Information System), to be decided at a later stage.

15. The WGFM generally agreed with the roadmap proposed by Secretariat following a review, on the understanding that the current RAIS regional centre would have adequate capacity and resources to cover the required tasks. Kuwait confirmed its commitment to collaborating with FAO during this transition period towards the launch of a new official RECOFI website. Kuwait and FAO would further clarify and specify the tasks, activities and budget required for the transition period and integrate these needs into a FAO/Kuwait cooperation agreement.

Collaboration between RECOFI and ROPME

16. The WGFM explained its support for the establishment of collaboration between RECOFI and the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) taking into consideration the respective mandates and objectives of the two organizations. Such collaboration was found beneficial for both regional organizations and their members.

TENTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

17. The tenth meeting of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) was held in Doha, State of Qatar from 6 to 8 December 2016. The meeting was convened by RECOFI and FAO and attended by 11 participants from five RECOFI member countries (Iraq, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)) in addition to the FAO Secretariat. Bahrain, Iran (I.R.) and Kuwait did not attend.

RECOFI priority species

18. An update on the work on RECOFI priority species was provided by the representatives of countries to the meeting. The meeting discussed the challenges and benefits of various types of reporting and sourcing data, including logbooks, ports and landings and self-reporting. The importance of including boat and gear type was noted. The challenges in working with fishers and skippers to obtain accurate data were highlighted. Additionally, the value of using Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and Automatic Identification System (AIS) data was acknowledged, provided that there was a legal framework and adequate enforcement mechanisms to properly ensure their implementation. The importance of collecting quality and abundant scientific and biological information was emphasized.

Socio-economics of RECOFI fisheries

19. The meeting noted with concern that no progress had been made regarding RECOFI questionnaire in the inter-sessional period, and that a decision should be taken to avoid this inaction in the upcoming inter-sessional period. The meeting discussed and agreed upon the merit to continue this work. It was agreed that the information collected in the questionnaire provided a good baseline and therefore the same questionnaire would be recirculated and completed by RECOFI members with updated data so that some historical data could begin to be compiled. It was agreed that the questionnaire should be translated into Arabic and the bilingual version would be circulated to RECOFI members. The meeting agreed that they would send the updated names of Task Group members to the Secretariat before the ninth session of the Commission, noting that this work would not be completed until this Task Group was updated.

20. The meeting acknowledged the opportunity to include the socio-economic data being collected into the new regional data and information center that was being established. The meeting agreed that guidelines on the potential use of socio-economic data could be made available to the Task Group; the Secretariat highlighted in particular that the FAO Guidelines for the routine collection of capture

fishery data could also be shared with the Task Group.

Update on the implementation of the RECOFI Recommendation on minimum data reporting (RECOFI/6/2011/1)

21. The meeting was informed that only Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq and Qatar had submitted the 2016 data required under the RECOFI Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1. The WGFM took note that with Iraq's submission, the general situation regarding the capacity of RECOFI members to report catch and provide information as defined in the Recommendation had slightly improved. Further, in that Bahrain, Iran (I.R.), Iraq, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia have fully proven their capacity for reporting the catch and effort information as defined in the Recommendation.

22. The meeting discussed the possible causes of the limited progress for the current year on the data submission according to the minimum data requirements. The WGFM emphasized the key role of good communication with and between the focal points when handling calls for minimum data requirements: poor communication or not updating focal points, or updating those who are no longer in the focal point role could explain the limited progress. It was agreed that no further needs were identified on data support. It was noted that the standard terminologies and classifications for RECOFI could be more detailed when dealing with stock assessment needs, but more advanced classifications should only be considered once the minimum data requirements had been fulfilled.

23. The meeting considered the proposal to split FAO subarea 51.3 into divisions 51.3.1 and 51.3.2, noting this decision should be taken by the Commission. The meeting highlighted the need for careful attention as to whether this split might require modification to the convention area in the RECOFI Agreement.

24. The WGFM acknowledged the interest to use iMarine (<http://www.i-marine.eu>) as a potential supporting infrastructure for RAIS and deferred this matter to Kuwait for further consideration and decision.

Integration of RECOFI regional data set into RAIS

The meeting was briefed about the progress in the integration of current RECOFI regional data set into RAIS. It was confirmed by Kuwait that the activity and its components as outlined would be integrated into the Kuwait/FAO cooperation framework. The WGFM also noted that the socio-economic work should be included in this information system to be developed by Kuwait.

RECOFI Review

25. The WGFM was briefed, among others, on the activities of the Commission over the last 10 years, particularly focusing on those relevant to the WGFM. It was highlighted that, despite some activities of the WGFM in the period between 2007 and 2012, in the last two biennia the WGFM had not implemented any inter-sessional activities aside from the annual meetings of the WGFM. Ways forward for RECOFI were proposed for the consideration of the WGFM. The WGFM took note and considered the content and conclusions of the draft RECOFI review. The WGFM acknowledged that, given RECOFI's reliance on funds carried forward from previous years as well as FAO Regular Programme funds, if RECOFI chose to maintain its current budget with reduced FAO support, in the near future the activities RECOFI would have to be reduced.

Regional joint assessment of kingfish stock

26. The WGFM was provided with an update on the joint appraisal of the kingfish stock in the RECOFI area and the preparatory work for the assessment workshop. The meeting agreed that this remained a priority activity, despite the fact that it had not been possible to implement it in the previous four years, and that for the last two years it had been the only activity to be implemented by the WGFM. It was also noted that the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) was

also implementing work on this. The meeting agreed that Oman, as the host country, should provide the Secretariat with final dates to hold the workshop, possibly in 2017 or early 2018.

Update of RECOFI fisheries inventories in FIRMS

27. An update on RECOFI fisheries inventories in FIRMS was provided. The WGFM acknowledged the benefits of developing FIRMS Marine Resources of regional relevance for the RECOFI region and recommended the initiation of the process focusing on the Spanish mackerel and shrimps as priority species. The WGFM acknowledged the need for a regional focal point for FIRMS resources and recommended the development of a Terms of Reference for the regional focal points, which would be proposed for consideration to the WGFM, along with the request for regional focal point nominations. The WGFM agreed that the RECOFI Secretariat would liaise with FIRMS to have the FIRMS template circulated to the national focal points for data submission.

RECOFI/ROPME cooperation

28. The WGFM was briefed on the progress to establish an effective cooperation framework between RECOFI, a Regional Fishery Management Organization, and ROPME, a Regional Sea Organization. The meeting supported the efforts pursuing cooperation with ROPME, in particular considering the potential for mutual benefits of this cooperation for both organizations and their members.

Collaboration offer made by Cefas

29. The WGFM was informed about a letter received in November 2016 from the Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), offering support to RECOFI and bilateral support to RECOFI member countries. The meeting acknowledged with appreciation the offer, but decided that, given current priorities and available resources, collaboration with Cefas would not be pursued at this stage.

WGFM programme of work for 2017-18 intersessional period

30. Details on the WGFM work programme for the next intersessional period are presented separately under agenda item RECOFI/IX/2017/8.

APPENDIX 1

Reviewed list of species of common interest

FAO name	ASFIS code	Common name	Scientific name
Green Tiger Prawn	TIP	Green Tiger Prawn	<i>Penaeus semisulcatus</i>
Blue swimming crabs	SCD	Blue swimming crab	<i>Portunus pelagicus</i>
Pharaoh cuttlefish	IAH	Cuttlefish	<i>Sepia pharaonis</i>
Stolephorus anchovies	STO	Anchovies	<i>Stolephorus</i> spp.
Indian oil sardine	IOS	Indian oil sardine	<i>Sardinella longiceps</i>
Bludger	NGY	Jacks	<i>Carangoide gymnostethus</i>
Golden trevally	GLT	Golden trevally	<i>Gnathanodon speciosus</i>
Indian mackerel	RAG	Indian mackerel	<i>Rastrelliger Kanagurta</i>
Snubnose emperor	LBW	Orange finned emperor	<i>Lethrinus borbonicus</i>
Pink ear emperor	LTS	Redspot emperor	<i>Lethrinus lentjan</i>
Spangled emperor	LHN	Spangled emperor	<i>Lethrinus nebulosus</i>
Coral hind	CFI	Coral grouper/Bluespotted grouper	<i>Cephalopholis miniata</i>
Orange-spotted grouper	ENI	Orange-spotted grouper	<i>Epinephelus coioides</i>
White-spotted spinefoot	SCN	Rabbitfish	<i>Siganus canaliculatus</i>
Narrow-barred Spanish mackerel	COM	King mackerel/Narrow-barred Spanish mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus commerson</i>
Longtail tuna	LOT	Longtail tuna	<i>Thunnus tonggol</i>
Kawakawa	KAW	Kawakawa	<i>Euthynnus affinis</i>
Requiem sharks nei	RSK	Sharks	Carcharhinidae
Silver pomfret	SIP	Silver pomfret	<i>Pampus argenteus</i>
Hilsa shad	HIL	Indian shad	<i>Tenualosa ilisha</i>

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