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NEWS FROM FAO HQ

THE FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department has agreed to establish six new Task Forces that will deal with important contemporary subjects of international fisheries management. One of these Task Forces deals with Regional Fisheries Bodies, and I am delighted to tell the RSN community that I have been asked to lead the RFB Task Force!

The RFB Task Force has a support team comprised of staff from all areas of FI and AQ with expertise covering all geographic areas. Our aim is to be of assistance to all RFBs , and we are already active in establishing a programme of work. I hope that the new RFB Task Force will develop stronger links between the RFBs and FAO, and between RFBs cooperating and collaborating together. I am really looking forward to working (even closer) with you all.

And, on another note, I am worried that you might stop reading before you get to the end of this newsletter, and the newsletter finishes with a most important item: WE NEED YOUR MEETING DATES AND VENUES FOR 2013! Please! Why not hit the "REPLY" key right now?

And, also before you stop reading, can I thank all the RSN for the excellent material that you have been sending to me throughout 2012. Just look at this newsletter, six pages long and our most inclusive newsletter to date! If you want to contribute to the first newsletter of 2013, send your news or stories to me as soon as possible. Especially the bodies we haven't heard from in a while: Bruce, Milton, Ben, Ale, Hachim, Mike, Peter, Pio, Kengo, Vladimir where are you and what's happening?

Finally, can I wish all the RSN my very best wishes for the holiday season and the new year.

The Organization for the Fishing and Aquaculture Sector of the Central American Isthmus - OSPESCA

The Margarita Lizárraga Medal is awarded biennially by the FAO Conference to a person or organization that has served with distinction in the application of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. The Medal pays tribute to the late Dr. Margarita Saucedo Lizárraga, Senior Fishery Liaison Officer at FAO for her decisive role in promoting the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and for her strong commitment towards fostering the promotion of the fisheries sector, especially in developing countries. In 2012-2013, the Council has endorsed the nomination of La Organización del Sector Pesquero y Acuícola del Istmo Centroamericano (OSPESCA) and has proposed that the Medal be presented to OSPESCA by the Director-General during the proceedings of the 38th Session of the FAO Conference in June 2013. Very well done OSPESCA!

Lake Tanganyika Authority

The Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA) conducted a lake-wide frame survey in the period March –April 2011 on Lake Tanganyika. The frame survey was conducted simultaneously in the four Lake Tanganyika riparian countries of Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Zambia through the Project to Support the Lake Tanganyika Regional Integrated Development Programme (PRODAP) supported by the African Development Bank and co-financed by the four riparian Governments. Results of the frame survey indicate that there are almost 95,000 fishers (an increase of 9% per year from the 1995 survey); 25,000 fishing units (an increase of 12% per year from the 1995 survey) and an estimated 160,000 people employed in the fishing sector. Not surprisingly the numbers of fishermen and canoes are on the high side, but it was quite a surprise that these numbers had doubled since the first regional frame survey in 1995.

In the late 1990s, FAO warned against too high a fishing effort on Lake Tanganyika and the presence of numerous illegal beach seines and monofilament gillnets.

The LTA is currently in the process of curbing the increasing fishing effort trend through harmonized legislation, updated fisheries management plans and, with FAO assistance, the establishment of a Regional Plan of Action to manage the fishing capacity on Lake Tanganyika (LTRPOA).

The LTA has simplified and improved the basic fisheries data collection with assistance from FAO Technical Assistance project. The LTRPOA should eventually lead to a reduced fishing effort on the lake, which is currently heavily exploited. The fishing capacity has doubled and the initial fish production estimations indicate that the total fish harvest is less than 50% of the level of the mid 1990s, and of which a large portion consists of undersized and immature fish. Just bluntly reducing the fishing effort does not make sense, particularly in the light of a growing riparian population, and therefore special attention needs to be given to the funding of already identified alternative income generating activities. Numerous fishermen are willing and ready to leave the fishery provided there are alternatives. The LTRPOA under preparation will not only focus on capacity reduction but also on finding funds to offer fishermen and fish processing women alternative sources of income.

North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization

NASCO has moved quickly to implement the findings of their first Performance review (called the 'Next Steps' for NASCO), particularly with regard to further increasing transparency and inclusivity, developing and implementing a major programme of research on salmon at sea, and in improving commitment to NASCO's agreements. With regard to the latter, the first cycle of reporting under the Implementation Plans developed in 2007 was completed this year and a new cycle of plans and reporting will commence in 2013 with greater focus on clearly identifiable actions, measurable outcomes and assessment of effectiveness of the measures. In the light of our External Performance Review we are holding an inter-sessional meeting of the Parties in February 2013 to decide how best to take forward the recommendations. Peter will keep us informed of future developments.

Asia Pacific Fisheries Commission

The Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) has called for more effective management of the trawl sector in Asia, which balances the need to sustain marine fishery ecosystems with the demand for feeds for aquaculture. APFIC members have recognized the challenges facing the region's fisheries including overfishing in coastal areas particularly from trawling and the use of non-selective fishing gears. At the same time the need to sustain the livelihoods of large numbers of small-scale fishers as well as to meet the demand for low value fish/trash fish for feeds in marine/coastal aquaculture was noted. APFIC members agreed to work towards better management of the region's trawl fisheries including the development of enhanced risk-based assessment methods, the availability of best practice advice for trawl management and the reduction of trawl bycatch. The APFIC members furthermore recognized the considerable contribution the region's aquaculture industry makes to food security and export income.

And more news from Bangkok: FAO, APFIC and the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA) have jointly convened a regional consultation for national officials, and international experts on sustainable intensification of aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific region. The consultative workshop concluded that intensified aquaculture requires an increasingly robust regulatory framework to limit the potential impacts of overcrowding, environmental pollution, unregulated movements, biosecurity, food safety and the need for quality assurance on inputs. (Gail: It's great to see a FAO and non-FAO RFB collaborating together!)

Simon notes that for the past three decades Asia has contributed the major part of aquaculture growth, now 90 percent of world aquaculture production. Fish make up about 17 percent of people's animal protein intake and the aquaculture sector currently provides more than 50 percent of fish and aquatic products for direct human consumption in Asia.

The consultation framework agreed on a range of recommendations, including intensifying aquaculture production by improving the performance of the cultured species. For example, there are considerable performance gains possible with selective breeding since most aquaculture stocks are not highly domesticated or remain essentially wild. The framework calls for the establishment of national and regional domestication and breeding programmes for commodity species, and establishing private collaboration initiatives in domestication and brood stock programs so that Asia can benefit from the domestication of several other commodity species.

The framework further calls on countries to improve the efficient utilization of feeds and feed ingredients and to review and strengthen national feed standards. Aquaculture is increasingly challenged for space and water in the region and so innovations will include the use of new areas for aquaculture and increased water efficiency. The agreed framework recognizes that there is an increasing role for certification when it comes to driving demand for sustainability. It recommends that this be achieved through a range of mechanisms such as public certification, third party certification, and responsible sourcing arrangements by buyers.

News from the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission

Those of you who were present at RSN4 this year in July, may recall Stefán Ásmundsson from NEAFC telling us that NEAFC were winning the fight against IUU fishing. Following the 31st Annual Meeting of NEAFC in November, the Commission has introduced further measures to prioritise its fight against IUU. Accordingly, NEAFC has agreed to improve its Port State Control system by using only digital forms from 15 January 2013, and by expanding the scope of the system to include fresh fish and thereby implement the 2009 FAO Port State Measures Agreement through NEAFC. Currently the system only applies to landings of frozen fish, but work will be done to finalise technical issues that must be addressed before the scope will be formally expanded to include landings of fresh fish at the Annual Meeting next year. NEAFC also continues to maintain its list of vessels that have been confirmed as engaging in IUU fishing. Such vessels are not authorised to enter a port in any of the Contracting Parties. Also interesting is that NEAFC has adopted terms of reference for a second performance review to be conducted in 2013. Well Done NEAFC, you continue to set a very high standard.

News from the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas

The 18th Special Meeting of ICCAT was held in Agadir, Morocco and held a record attendance of over 500 participants. The Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) announced a possible improvement in the east Atlantic and Mediterranean stocks of bluefin tuna, but the Commission agreed to abide by the advice of the SCRS and maintain bluefin tuna quotas at levels which would allow sustainable growth and recovery of the stock.

A second important development from the meeting came in the work of the ICCAT Compliance Committee and its measures to ensure compliance with ICCAT measures. The Compliance Committee works through every Contracting Party and reviews CPC levels of support with ICCAT measures. Those CPCs which have one or more infringements are to receive an identification letter which is a step towards a sanction for non-compliance.

A third important development from the meeting was the ICCAT programme for assistance to developing States for capacity-building activities. In 2012, ICCAT spent approximately €222,000. These funds have been used to facilitate participation in meetings, training workshops, observer programmes and to recover historical logbook data. In addition to existing funds, a further €150,000 has been pledged for 2013 from the Working Capital Fund, which combined with voluntary contributions will sustain the ICCAT policy of inclusiveness.

It was an amazing and massive meeting. Well Done Driss, Pilar and ICCAT Secretariat staff.

News from the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission

An operational guide on port state measures that will facilitate participating countries to implement the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures has been developed and the document has been validated by all seven member countries of the CSRP plus Ghana and Liberia. The final document which is in both French and English has been sent to the programme countries so that relevant stakeholders can be made aware of the initiative.

Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources

The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) met for its 31st regular meeting in Hobart in late October. The main item on the agenda was consideration of several proposals for the establishment of marine protected areas around the Antarctic continent. One proposal would have established MPAs in areas of ice shelf collapse, ice tongues and glacial retreat to protect benthic habitats subsequently exposed. A second proposal was tabled for the establishment of an MPA covering just over 2 million square kilometres in the Ross Sea and a third proposal focused on the establishment of 7 MPAs covering just under 2 million square kilometres in East Antarctica. The Commission was unable to adopt any of these proposals at its 2012 meeting and, for only the second time in its 31 year history, the Commission agreed to a special session dedicated to MPAs to be held in Germany in July 2013.

Also at its 2012 meeting the Commission adopted a compliance evaluation procedure to be implemented in 2013, extended its port inspection scheme to vessels carrying all species of fish not simply tooth fish, agreed to a review of the Commission's vessel monitoring system and catch document scheme and established an inter-sessional group to examine options for the sustainable financing of the organisation. This latter point is a subject that may be of particular interest to other RFBs and I will ask Drew to tell us more about it in 2013.

FAO, GEF, ABNJ and TRFMOs – a sailing analogy

What a mass of acronyms! What does it all mean? Well, FAO with the support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) are developing an exciting global tuna project in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ). The project will inject millions of dollars into management of global tuna fisheries and accordingly, the primary stakeholders are the Tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (TRFMOs). As an end of 2012 treat, we have decided to present you with an update on the ABNJ project which is written (poetically), as a sailing analogy. (It is because I am Australian and we are coming up to the Sydney to Hobart Yacht race.)

The journey begins with COFI where significant progress was made to plan the voyage (Project Results matrix). A few squalls in project formulation were encountered post-COFI, but thanks to some fine Brazilian weather from the COFI Vice Chair Dr. Fabio Hazin, the voyage plans progressed and the charts (the prodoc) were finally distributed to the crew (the Tuna RFMOs). Gale force winds hit the first TRFMO meeting in Morocco, and the crew were forced to shelter in Agadir. But the tranquil currents and soft trade winds of the Pacific Ocean have led two crew members to board the vessel in preparation for the voyage: **Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)** and **Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)**. We are expecting a decision soon on the participation of the remaining TRFMOs, and the mood is very positive! So in summary, the plans are laid, the vessel and crew are in great shape, and despite some choppy seas, the forecast is looking good. With favourable winds and tides we are hoping to get the journey underway during the first half of 2012 with a fully crewed and well-founded ship.

Below is a DRAFT 2013 Meetings Calendar. Please note, dates are subject to change. I desperately need ALL RFBs to add their own details to this list.

28 Jan – 1 Feb	Inaugural meeting of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) New Zealand
04—08 Feb	FAO - Fishery Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) and Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics (CWP)
04 -07 June	30 th Annual North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) in Ireland
15-16 July	CCAMLR Second Special Meeting (Marine Protected Area meeting discussed above), Bremerhaven, Germany
23-27 Sep	Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) Annual Meeting
30 Sep–4 Oct	FAO - COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation
11—20 Oct	North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada
14-17 Oct	20 th Annual Meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) in Adelaide, Australia
23Oct —1 Nov	32 nd meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) Hobart, Australia.
TBD Oct/Nov	North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) Reykjavik, Iceland?
11—15 Nov	North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) Annual Meeting
TBD Nov/Dec	South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization (SEAFO) Annual Meeting