



FIRMS Steering Committee Meeting
Sixth Session
Hobart, Australia 24-26 February 2010
FINAL REPORT
Author: FIRMS Secretariat with input from SC members

1. OPENING OF THE SESSION AND WELCOME (Agenda item 1)

1. The Sixth Session of the FIRMS Steering Committee (FSC6) was held at CCAMLR headquarters in Hobart, Australia from 24-26 February 2010. The meeting was opened by the Chairperson, Mr. David Ramm, at 0900 hours on Wednesday 24 February 2010. Mr. Ramm welcomed the participating FIRMS representatives from the current Partner agencies:

- Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)
- Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)
- Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat)
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)
- International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)
- Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) and
- Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC)

SPC, as a FIRMS observer agency, was also represented. NACA were in attendance to listen and contribute to the discussions.

Participant list is in Appendix 1.

2. Partners not present were from:
 - General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)
 - International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT)
 - Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)
 - Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and
 - South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization (SEAFO)

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 2)

3. Mr. David Ramm acted as Chairperson and Ms. Pouchamarn Wongsanga acted as Vice-Chairperson. The Chairperson, presented the agenda which was adopted. Mr. Marc Taconet (FIRMS Secretary) stressed the point that NatFIRMS would be a substantial discussion for Thursday morning, (background paper FIRMS FSC 6/2010/4).

3. FIRMS MEMBERSHIP (Agenda item 3)

Agenda item 3.1: Progress on the Development of FIRMS partnerships

4. There are no new members. A map was presented of the FIRMS RFBs geographic coverage. The data manager of Benguela Current Commission (BCC) has visited FAO and is interested to join FIRMS. The matter is likely to be considered at the next BCC meeting. NAMMCO and NASCO were to be approached, but this has not yet occurred.

5. Eurostat spoke on their attempts to resolve the role of FIRMS in DG-MARE and Eurostat. It is expected that a decision will be made in a forthcoming meeting planned in March.

6. Promotional activities in the intersessional period have concentrated on RFBs and related bodies: Eurostat / DG-MARE, CECAF, RSN2, BCC, WCPFC, and SEAFDEC.

7. There have been no promotional activities concerning donors, conferences or events, e-bulletins or press releases.

Agenda item 3.2: Review of new perspective Partners

8. The status of WCPFC which is a FIRMS observer was discussed.

9. SEAFDEC noted that they promote FIRMS visibility in Southeast Asia, in particular in support to management.

10. The Steering Committee rejected a suggestion that FIRMS be a direct provider of scientific evidence to CITES. It was noted that the objective of FIRMS is to meet the need of FAO to provide information to its users. More generally, it was stressed that FAO governing bodies should be enlightened on FIRMS potentials and consulted regarding future directions.

12. Another suggestion was made to increase the geographic coverage by approaching some South American bodies (Joint Technical Commission for the Argentina/Uruguay Maritime Front, OLDEPESCA, COPESCAL), and widen the scope of FIRMS, such as the inclusion of inland fisheries, through bodies such as the Mekong River Commission and the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization. A final suggestion was to give an increased collaborative role to recognised and respected NGOs. In reply, there was agreement that RFMOs are recognised as being the primary target members.

14. SPC spoke on the need to deal with coastal small scale fisheries (particularly artisanal and subsistence fishers), from small island developing states.

15. The question was then asked of what are the benefits that membership of FIRMS will provide to its members. It was noted that this is elaborated in more detail in the next Agenda item, and decided to share such understanding in annex 4 of this report.

16. Decisions:

- The Secretariat will write to SPC, NASCO and NAMMCO to suggest that they become full member.
- ICES have agreed to back the Secretariat's effort to approach NASCO, and the same for IATTC regarding the Pacific Salmon Commission and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.
- SPC and IATTC have been asked to approach WCPFC.
- FIRMS Secretariat will approach the South American RFBs and examine the potential involvement of Inland Capture bodies.
- COFI is an appropriate forum for outreach.

4. REVIEW OF ANNEX 2 OF NEW PARTNERS (Agenda item 4)

17. Any new Partner will present the content of its Annex 2 in order to raise common awareness on the contributions that it intends to make to FIRMS and on important aspects that could have been addressed with respect to contribution specifications.

Current Partners willing to start contributions on the new Fisheries module might also wish to take this opportunity to revise / specify the content of the annex 2.

Observers may indicate their intended contributions.

18. NAFO commenced discussion with a concern that as they are now contributing to Fisheries Modules, should NAFO update Annex 2 of the Partnership agreement? The participants advised that it did not need to do this, especially since NAFO's annex 2 already covers possible contributions on fisheries. It was recalled that the function of Annex 2 is to indicate the scope of the agency's information contribution commitment and to deal with conflicts of overlapping mandates. The provision is being reviewed in case there is ever a potential conflict between mandates or a substantial change in the type of information that is supplied.

19. A presentation was given on the evolution of the FIRMS inventory since its inception, and on the Status and Trends Reporting activity. There was a concern expressed that updates in more recent years were poor. Mr. Taconet noted that the FIRMS website was released to the public at the 2006 UN Conference, and was already established with data. Since this time, it has taken a while for members to achieve processes for training, data accumulation and transmission. It was noted, based on Partner's experiences, that once the initial processes are developed, it will be a speedier process for members to submit data. Finally the meeting agreed that socio-economic fact sheets such as prototyped from the FAO BNP project are eligible for presentation in FIRMS.

5. REVIEW OF FIRMS ACTIVITIES DURING THE INTERSESSIONAL PERIOD (Agenda item 5)

Agenda item 5.1: Report on intersessional activities

20. Nine Members have submitted reports and these have been collated by FIRMS Secretariat. A summary was presented by Mr. Taconet. It was noted that some items on this summary are more appropriately discussed with other relevant items on the Agenda.

21. Beginning with Marine Resource – trends in Reporting Activities (as of February 2010), a presentation was given which aimed to reflect the level of knowledge of FIRMS by examining Marine Resources in the Inventory, Reference Objects loaded, and comparing this to the number of fact sheets published. It was suggested that for some stocks, so little data is known, that fact sheets are not appropriate. Eg. IATTC have not done a sail fish assessment and so there is no fact sheet to be published. The misleading "yearly rate of updates" indicator should be corrected in order to reflect this fact.

22. The members were asked to speak on their intersessional activities which aimed to further the FIRMS Steering Committee Meeting from the 5th session.

23. Mr. Yimin Ye of FAO began by noting FAO has been monitoring the state of world fishery resources through assessing the stock status of 540 fish species/stocks

around the world since the 1950s and will update the assessment by July 2010. The results will be reported to SOFIA and published as a Review of the State of World Fishery Resources in FAO's Fisheries Technical Paper series, as well as in FIRMS.

24. Mr. Ricardo Federizon, Fisheries Commission Coordinator of NAFO provided a comprehensive report (FSC6/2010/2i). It was first noted that NAFO continues to use the Summary Sheets as a basis of the Marine Resource Inventory. NAFO submissions are up-to-date. Last year NAFO developed an overview of NAFO Fisheries and this has since been uploaded. In 2009 the NAFO Scientific Council revised the classification matrix used for reporting status and trends. They continued to have difficulty assigning stocks to a small number of qualitatively defined classes. However, there was a greater recognition of the knowledge of stock status available, even if partial, which resulted in greatly shortening the list of "Unknown-Unknown" stocks. Some stocks were also moved out from the "Depleted-High" box due to the recognition that recent catch records indicate fishing mortalities that are lower than those that have guided previous entries in this classification scheme (FSC6/2010/3).

25. In addition, a training workshop for IATTC and NAFO was held during 20-25 July 2009 at the NAFO Secretariat, led by Aureliano Gentile from the FIRMS Secretariat, FAO. The training showed how to use the on-line editing tool to prepare FIRMS submissions in an XML compliant format. This will allow the Secretariat to submit the stock information in a more timely manner than has been done previously. Shortly after the training, the six Fact Sheets (Summary Sheets) from 2009 were published. During the training, insight was obtained on how to structure documents for possible future applications within the Secretariat. Finally, in accordance with FIRMS outreach, the FIRMS website has been linked from the NAFO website.

26. Ms. Pouchamarn Wongsanga provided the SEAFDEC report (FSC6/2010/2f). This included development of the Resources and Fisheries Inventories. Malaysia presented its progress in the development of an Inventory for the Malacca Straits. The information is envisaged to support fisheries management particularly in adopting the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF). Regarding the status/trends of Marine resources, and of fisheries; development/review of standards; there has been increased reporting, development of applications and development of case studies/prototypes. SEAFDEC has also provided information to the Fisheries Inventory of FIRMS based on the one-year Study on Shark Production, Utilization and Management in the ASEAN Region (2003-2004). Based on the information provided, eight Fisheries Fact Sheets were developed as follows: 1) Shark Fisheries in Brunei Darussalam, 2) Shark Fisheries in Cambodia, 3) Shark Fisheries in Indonesia, 4) Shark Fisheries in Malaysia, 5) Shark Fisheries in Myanmar, 6) Shark Fisheries in the Philippines, 7) Shark Fisheries in Thailand, and 8) Shark Fisheries in Vietnam. In early 2010, these Fact Sheets were verified and published. Finally, SEAFDEC plans to continue providing information as input to the Fisheries Inventory of FIRMS based on its available information. For 2010, it is planned that SEAFDEC would provide comprehensive information on sea cucumber fisheries collected from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar,

Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam through a one-year regional data collection framework (2007-2008).

27. Mr. Michael Hinton, Senior Scientist at IATTC noted:

- Development of inventories of marine resources and of fisheries; The current status of IATTC's fisheries inventories was reviewed, but further development on this module is not anticipated until reports on status and trends of marine resources which have been assessed are completed.
- Reporting on status and trends of marine resources and of fisheries: updates for principal tuna species (bigeye, Pacific bluefin, skipjack, and yellowfin) have been completed, and most (if not all) have been published on FIRMS. Initial reports for striped marlin and swordfish are in the edit mode with publishing expected within the next 2-3 weeks.
- Development and review of standards: there has been no actions to further develop or review standards developed by the 2nd FIRMS Technical Working Group, which are used, with reference to information on assessment results, in reporting status and trends.
- Development of applications: a new IATTC website (www.iattc.org) is being developed, and a number of standards and applications developed in FIGIS are being incorporated.
- Training and skills development: two staff members of the IATTC Secretariat attended training in 2009 on applications and on document preparation/upload to FIRMS.
- Promotional activities: the IATTC website maintains a link to FIRMS, but we have no counter on the link to indicate the number of times it has been used. To date promotional activities have not been actively pursued, due to the fact that the site has not been populated. As information is posted, our responses to data requests will include links to information on the IATTC site as well as to factsheets on FIRMS.

28. Mr. Simon Morgan, Database Manager at CCSBT (FSC6/2010/2c) noted that activities carried out during the intersessional period, included provision of agreed data and updating of fact sheets for the Global southern bluefin tuna stock status for both 2007 and 2008. During this process a number of FIRMS systems were tested and in conjunction with the FIRMS secretariat a number of issues were identified and resolved. CCSBT advised that a link to FIRMS has been added to the CCSBT website, and noted that in future agreed data and fact sheets would continue to be updated annually, and that ongoing feedback would be provided on an *ad-hoc* basis.

29. Mr. Franco Zampogna of Eurostat (European Commission) informed the participants that the handing over the actual involvement in providing updates and new contributions of the EC to FIRMS activities is still ongoing. Indeed, deep internal reorganisations of the directorate general MARE of the European Commission, in charge, amongst other, of the EU Fleet register or information about socio-economic indicators at EU-27 level, took place last year. Therefore the conditions of how the

FIRMS partnership agreement could be addressed in the most efficient way by the most appropriate services of the EC are still pending.

30. Ms. Mette Bertelsen, Professional Officer in Advisory Programme at ICES noted the following report (FSC6/2010/2g).

- First, that the ICES inventory in FIRMS has been analysed and revised during January-February 2010.
- Secondly, a 4 day course was held in January 2010 in ICES to train two persons to use the Word to XML converter tool. Approximately 30 fact sheets have, at this stage, been updated based on assessments and advice given in 2009. The aim is to finish the outstanding updates for the remaining 150 stocks during spring 2010.
- Thirdly, small updates on descriptors were made during the communications at the January meeting. As ICES will provide advice in future based on an MSY framework, the ICES stock status results corresponding to the FIRMS standard descriptors will need to be updated in 2011. This will mean an update to the ICES Marine Resources Word templates for the automatic conversion and revision of mapping ICES headers to FIRMS headers. In producing the updated fact sheets some problems were identified and feedback was communicated to the FIRMS team. Many of the issues have now been resolved by the FIRMS team.
- The ICES web page will be updated with a permanent link to the FIRMS web site.

31. Mr Ben Ponia representing SPC which is a FIRMS observer was invited to give a report on SPC activities. He noted that the SPC program on oceanic fisheries continues to maintain its ongoing programs with some new initiatives coming on board such as shark assessments. There is renewed interest in the sport fishery within the coastal fisheries program. Greater emphasis on trade has also required more collaboration with the CITES Secretariat. Emphasis on the ecosystems approach has meant a reconsideration of the single species approach.

32. Mr. David Ramm representing CCAMLR noted (FSC6/2010/2d) that in 2009, CCAMLR updated seven toothfish fishery fact sheets which were uploaded to the FIRMS website. Further work is planned to complete the remaining fishery fact sheets, and develop the fishery resource fact sheets. This work will proceed subject to work priorities and the availability of resources in the CCAMLR Secretariat.

33. Mr. Taconet presented a summary on FAO – RFB developments (FSC6/2010/2a and FSC6/2010/2h). It was noted that CECAF conducted a 2009 workshop on FIRMS. This workshop had good attendance and participation and members were motivated to contribute inventory data. A lot of positive statements came from attendees. The workshop proved to be more than a promotion of FIRMS as it became a valuable capacity-building programme.

34. SWIOFC is focusing on an inventory of fish resources.

36. GFCM (FSC6/2010/2h) has added more inventory stocks. They are currently focusing on TaskOne which is to collect operational unit activities data from their member countries.

37. In summary, a lot of ground work has been done with the FAO RFBs, and further work is underway to enhance visibility of this effort.

Agenda item 5.2: Key topics regarding status of the FIRMS website

38. Mr. Francesco Calderini from FAO gave a presentation on streamlined information contributions by using a word to XML convertor tool. The objective of the tool is streamlining the FIRMS factsheets uploading by hiding the underlying XML details and converting partners report documents directly into XML factsheets.

39. The WordToXML Converter is a web based tool supporting Word 2007 (docx) and OpenOffice (odt) input document formats. It is based on the document headings hierarchical structure and relies on agreed partner-specific document templates. By using this tool, the FIRMS factsheets upload workflow can be accomplished in 4 simple steps:

- I Developing a report document complying with the template using the preferred word processor
- II Uploading the document via the [Converter Tool](#) web interface
- III. Downloading a zip file with the conversion result (XML + images)
- IV. Uploading the XML+images via the [FIRMS](#) workflow module.

40. The Web-services offered by FIRMS were demonstrated. FIRMS outputs can easily be integrated and embedded within partners websites. Any factsheet or search result web page could be stripped of the FIRMS banner and menu for integration in third-party websites. In particular, pre-defined searches can be customised in order, for example, to show the list of factsheets published by a given organisation. The integration can be technically achieved by means of the <iframe> HTML element, including the FIRMS output URL.

41. Mr. Taconet gave a presentation on the Development of Applications for:

- Marine resources modules – now updated with implementation of new FIRMS standard stocks status descriptors.
- Fisheries module – fine tuning of module while elaborating / publishing fishery fact sheets with partners.
- Development of mapping applications eg. Antarctic and Pacific projection, species distribution maps added in stocks maps, regional fishery bodies competence areas.

42. A presentation was given of a background mapping module that will serve a number of needs.

43. The question of the friendliness and usability of the site was raised. It was suggested that a full text search box be added at home page level in order to encourage users to search fact sheets.

44. A comment was made that the data is heavily modulated by FAO and does not allow for user / contributor access to the website. For example, SPC would be a registered user, but unable to post directly on to the site. It was explained that as Partner SPC could access and contribute to the site. Mr. Calderini explained how the system works. Members noted that they would feel uncomfortable having non Partners make comment on Partners data.

45. Concerns were expressed that the products presented do not cater well for users such as Policy makers who are only interested by Status and Trends information. A discussion followed regarding the opportunity of adding information corners that could be added to the site and owned by a Partner or a group of Partners, in order to address specific regions (eg Antarctic, Mediterranean), specific topics (eg state of world Tuna resources, Redfish fisheries).

46. Mr. Taconet demonstrated the first public version of the Fisheries module, populated with 17 fact sheets contributed by 8 Partners reporting from different thematic approaches, including Fishery resources (FAO, SEAFDEC), Fishing activity (CECAF), Management Unit (CCAMLR, NEAFC, IATTC), Jurisdiction (NEAFC, NAFO), or Production systems (ie the ability of the module to cover socio-economic assessments, such as employment, fishing capacity, production, utilization and economic performance). A few discrepancies in the reporting structure from different partners were noted and the participants agreed that further comparison of reporting styles among partners will contribute to enhance FIRMS standard reporting information structure.

47. Participants raised the importance of the subject of socio-economic assessment. A question was asked on the identity of the economists who are working in this area. Eurostat expressed concern that there may be some duplicity of work with regard to the development of socio-economic assessment approaches being done by FAO and the EU. Eurostat encouraged collaboration between the two bodies.

48. The meeting considered the subject of the socio economic implications of fisheries, including Inland Capture Fisheries. There are funding implications for this extended area of work. It was noted that there are many similarities between marine capture and inland capture. It was suggested that an agenda item in future FSC would review this subject. The matter may be revisited under Item 7.

Agenda Item 5.3: WebTrends

49. A presentation was given on WebTrends statistics, providing information on the usage of the FIRMS website. In 2007-8 the number of visits has increased by about

60% and the number of pages viewed increased by about 100%. In 2008-9 traffic has stabilized.

50. Traffic sources research tells that 80% of visits access FIRMS directly, 12% of the visitors access the system through search engines, and the remaining 8% arrive through other sites such as: FAO, Wikipedia, Friends of the Sea, GFCM. This shows that specialists are using it, but not the broader potential audience.

51. The conclusions are that the most important clients are scientists involved in the development of FIRMS and their close contacts. Also, the narrow range of audience is quite normal at this stage of development of a growing system.

Agenda Item 5.4: Secretariat Resources

52. A presentation was given on Secretariat resources stressing that Secretariat activities were relying on increasing Regular Programme resources during the last 3 years, and that extra-budgetary/trust fund resources had been reduced. This was noted by the participants, and it was suggested to raise donor support through a multi-donors programme.

53. Decisions:

- All partners should draw links from their site to FIRMS site, and should promote FIRMS within their internal mechanisms, including inviting their member countries to draw links from their national websites
- Efforts will be made to improve the usability of the FIRMS website, eg by introducing a full text search in the home page;
- Efforts will be made to improve the audience of the FIRMS website: thematic or geographic information corners will be developed in close consultation with Partners and Partners will be invited to author these pages;
- It was agreed that socio-economic fact sheets such as BNP examples are eligible for presentation in FIRMS;
- The technical working group will further review the first set of Fishery fact sheets with the objective to enhance and further harmonise the reporting information structure.

6. REPORT OF VIRTUAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (Agenda Item 6)

Agenda Item 6.1: Categorisation of management measures

54. At FSC5, partners were asked if they would participate in a virtual technical working group dealing with Management Measures. The categories discussed at FSC5 were:

- Compliance Measures
- Trade Measures
- Environmental Measures

- Fishery Measures

Mr. Ramm who led the working group, delivered a presentation on the results of this activity. A number of responses were provided.

55. CCSBT expressed that the FSC5 measures were adequate.

56. Eurostat noted that there should be a distinction between “binding” measures and “non-binding” decisions. Eurostat described their own categories as including control and quotas monitoring, common organisation of the markets, stock management, and conservation, plus data collection.

57. GFCM informed that their categories of management include conservation and management; monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS); data and information reporting; Resolutions; other decisions.

58. NAFO informed that they use conservation and management, control measures, monitoring of fisheries, inspection and surveillance.

59. NEAFC noted that the FSC5 categories were generally adequate.

60. As a proposed synthesis, the responses would be most effectively categorised primarily into binding / non-binding headings, and secondarily into Compliance / Conservation and Management headings, and then by Partners’ defined sub-categories. (all bullet points above)

61. The structure of these categories was debated, bearing in mind user-friendliness, search engine links, clarity of the structure, etc. The participants agreed that the following model was the preferred structure:

COMPLIANCE MEASURES:	Partner defined sub categories For example:
• Binding	Licensing
	Port State Controls
	At Sea Inspections
	VMS
• Non-Binding	Trade Measures
CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES:	
• Binding	Fishery Management
• Non-Binding	Ecosystem Management

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62. The way forward in implementing the above model was finally discussed: the Secretariat will elaborate the most appropriate Metadata structure and consult partners if necessary; a registry of Partners' Management measure categories. This will allow development of FIRMS standard terms for management measures by clustering similar terms among different Partners' sources; the FIRMS standard vocabulary will be used for searching purpose in ways similar to stock status descriptors.

63. Decision:

- The proposed concept and further developments for Management measures have been endorsed by the meeting

Agenda Item 6.2: Handling of stocks including multiple sub-components – impact on status and trends reporting

64. A description of the evolution of this problem earmarked since TWG2 was presented by Mr. Taconet, with reference to document FSC6/2010/3c. Examples from ICES, CECAF, FAO, CCAMLR were provided to illustrate the issue related to a consistent use of the FIRMS Marine resources database when it comes to i) listing the number of current stocks, and distinguishing stocks from higher level marine resources, ii) extracting accurately status for all relevant stocks, iii) tracking the historical evolution of the inventory. It was noted that descriptors should be attached to what management is based on. If bodies do not want to split data, they should be allowed to not do so and solutions should be sought at software level. The participants agreed that this is a design issue and it was proposed to consider the life cycle of a stock, with two items to be included: "end date" and "ancestor". It was noted that there are no easy solutions, that as far as possible the additional field "end date" should be left unfilled as default, but the existing system has a great deal of flexibility which can be utilized. Another highlighted issue was that nothing would prevent a search engine such as Google to return a fact sheet for a stock not anymore considered, in which case it would be desirable to highlight that the data is outdated and to drive the user to the newer page.

65. Decisions:

- The "ancestor" and "end date" will be added to Marine resource Metadata;
- The Secretariat will work out a technical proposal that best takes into account the points made in paragraph 64 and make it available to technical working group for approval.

Agenda item 6.3: Review of Marine resources bio-eco controlled terms

66. This item was led by SEAFDEC who had conducted the review. It was noted that there is currently no room for mangroves to be incorporated into any of the existing classifications and that it should be added to the "Bottom-type" classification. Similarly, the classifications for "Horizontal distribution" needed to be amended to include "inland waters".

67. Discussion then focused on the classifications of “Spatial scale” where a category exists for the “local” zone. It was suggested that the definition of “local” is unclear and it might be more appropriately replaced with the [former] term: “sub-national”. An explanation was then provided as to the meaning of the terms: global, regional, sub-regional, national and local. It was noted that there is considerable legal / political / jurisdictional overlap within the Spatial scale category. Another suggestion was made to replace “national” with “continental”. It was further noted that on advice from FAO lawyers, “jurisdictional area” is a term only suitable for national situation – not regional. Therefore, “jurisdictional area” will now be amended to become “areas of competence” for what regards RFBs.

68. Decisions:

- “Mangrove” will be added to Bottom-type classification and “inland waters” to “Horizontal distribution classification.
- The spatial scale category and jurisdictional area will be further reviewed by the virtual technical working group during the intersessional period.

7. NatFIRMS AND IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL FIRMS USERS (Agenda item 7)

69. A comprehensive presentation was given by Mr. Marc Taconet on the subject of national membership of FIRMS. The discussion was based on document FSC 6/2010/4. Mr. Taconet specified that a second version of the paper containing amendments on the basis of the feedback received by ICCAT and FAO will be dispatched to the Partners for further comments

70. From its inception, FIRMS was conceived as aiming to have global fishery coverage. The regional partnership falls short of that original aim. NatFIRMS was therefore submitted at FSC4 and FSC5 in order to open FIRMS management to States at the national level.

71. It has been noted from the above discussion on WebTrends that the actual FIRMS audience is narrow and limited and it is desirable to increase the audience.. One way of doing this is by widening the membership. Extending membership to nation States is one way of doing this.

72. At FSC5, it was suggested that NatFIRMS may result in potential duplication of data and work. To refute this suggestion, the FSC6 presentation noted that there are very few dedicated national websites and they are all in the developed world. Also, conventional reports can sometimes be found online, but most remain in the grey literature. Additionally, no dedicated database seems to be accessible to outside users.

73. The risk of potential regional overload is a problem and the exact risk will be assessed on a case by case basis.

74. The potential synergies of NatFIRMS are important benefits for the process which should be noted. There would be:

- Improved national monitoring, communication and transparency;
- Improved visibility and preservation of national information;
- Improved quality of national data submitted to regional systems;
- Potential synergy with the FAO National Fishery Country Profiles; and
- Capacity-building in monitoring, assessment and reporting, assisting countries in fulfilling their obligations.

75. EAF is an extension of conventional management and NatFIRMS would contribute to a more comprehensive picture of EAF.

76. NatFIRMS requires a co-development strategy including:

- Priority to the ongoing process
- Governance to be adapted to new membership
- Coordination between regional bodies and FAO
- Operational areas with regions jointly defined
- Resources as extra-budgetary support would be needed
- Approach should be stepwise with adaptive growth
- Updating rate should be adapted to capacity and need
- Data quality would strengthen the present scheme

77. Suggested action was for the participants to consider:

- The timeliness of the development of a NatFIRMS initiative within FIRMS, taking into account the potential benefits and constraints implied by the initiative;
- The necessary characteristics that such initiative should have to ensure a harmonious development of both NatFIRMS and FIRMS; and
- The steps foreseen for such a development.

78. Discussion on NatFIRMS began by participants expressing concern that there would be duplication of data between Regional mandates and national inputs. Many questions were asked: Would individual countries send their fisheries data to NatFIRMS or their relevant RFB? When, and how often, would the NatFIRMS data be updated? What kind of control mechanism will exist? Is it possible to only approach States which have stocks that are not covered by existing RFBs? Is it possible to only approach member States in geographic regions which lack a RFB? Is it possible to extend NatFIRMS only to developing States who would clearly need and benefit from the concept?

79. It was noted that in the case of FAO Article VI RFBs, if any of these bodies start to be active in channelling national data, the member States may like to be represented. It is unclear how this would be worked out legally.

80. The participants were asked to bear in mind the problem of the gap geographic areas. It was noted that big continental countries (such as India with an estimated 1,000

stocks), plus also small States, such as those under SPC's mandate, are the most likely primary beneficiaries of NatFIRMS. It was suggested that a separate body from FIRMS could be established for NatFIRMS data collection which is contributed by States which would like to participate in the programme.

81. The next question to be considered is how do we move forward? It was noted that NatFIRMS will require flexibility, particularly in terms of its relationship with FIRMS. This relationship will need to be constructed first. In addition, non-present members should be notified of the NatFIRMS developments.

82. Based on all the above considerations, the Chairperson and Secretariat proposed a scenario which was tested by the meeting on a number of examples., Agreement was reached on the concept as a way forward, and the following principles would constitute a basis for the development of NatFIRMS

- NatFIRMS is understood to be a separate entity, while obviously many interactions with FIRMS have to be catered for in its implementation.
- The meeting agreed that developing NatFIRMS will provide an opportunity to strengthen collection and dissemination of fishery information and data at the national level, which is expected to lead to an increase in the geographical and thematic scopes such as social and economic data. This would lead to a strengthening of capacities for enhanced information sharing and fisheries management in developing countries.
- In recognizing the potential value of NatFIRMS, the Steering Committee noted that nations may contribute information to FIRMS via RFBs, and it reiterated the overarching principles under which FIRMS was constituted and exists, including the principles of primary competences and of information ownership enjoyed by Regional Fishery Bodies. "Competences" are here understood to derive from institutional mandates. The many such mandates may be described in terms of geographic areas; assessment and/or management of living resources; and considerations of socio economic concerns.

83. The meeting agreed that the operational context of NatFIRMS will require close coordination and interoperability with FIRMS and will include the following:

- NatFIRMS would be expected to facilitate the collation and furnishing of information relevant to FIRMS activities from nations that are not a part of a RFB;
- Recognising that RFB partners already interact with national members, with regard to information exchange on resources and fisheries, and that NatFIRMS may contribute to information sharing mechanisms while strengthening member country capacities;
- RFB partners that collaborate with partners of NatFIRMS should convey to the FIRMS Steering Committee the guidelines or requirements for publishing information that originates from these collaborations;
- In the case of a new RFB partner to FIRMS, responsibility for the publishing of information formerly posted in NatFIRMS for which competency is now held by the RFB will be handled under the overarching principles recalled above;

- Recognition that the maximum benefit of NatFIRMS would likely be realized by developing high flexibility to respond to the needs of NatFIRMS partners, and under the following priorities: by maintaining high levels of support for FIRMS; and by focusing capacity building in developing regions, which would be expected to strengthen national and regional information-dependent processes, particularly in regard to the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF).

84. Decisions

- Members not present at this meeting will be notified of this proposal regarding NatFIRMS.
- The meeting agreed that under the principles and operational context outlined in paragraphs 64-72, and providing that this proposal is adopted by consensus of all the partners, further steps to NatFIRMS development can be initiated. This would include considering modifications to Rules of Procedures as needed, developing a Map of Operational areas, and developing guidelines for Partners.
- COFI is the appropriate forum to present both FIRMS progress and the NatFIRMS concept, in order to gain further insight regarding State interest and to receive their guidance.

8. OTHER TECHNICAL TOPICS (Agenda item 8)

Agenda Item 8.1: Enhancing communication through a FIRMS Collaborative Wiki Tool

85. FAO Fishery Systems Developer, Mr. Francesco Calderini gave a presentation on the new collaborative Wiki tool. A [wiki](#) is a website that allows the easy creation and editing of any number of interlinked web pages via a web browser using a simplified [markup language](#) or a [WYSIWYG](#) text editor.

86. Wikis are typically powered by [wiki software](#) and are often used to create collaborative websites, to power community or project websites, for personal note taking, in corporate intranets, and in knowledge management systems. Wikis generally offer common functionalities, such as version control, discussion pages, automatic change notification, files upload, etc.

87. In this scope, the FAO-FIGIS wiki has been introduced. It is available at <http://km.fao.org/FIGISwiki> and accessible via a common authentication, username and password are to be requested from the FIRMS Secretariat . It is already configured to include 2 main [page categories](#) for FIRMS and CWP partners who will have personal authoring accounts for editing the content falling within these categories.

88. Decision:

- It has been agreed that the FIRMS partners will utilise the FIGIS wiki as a collaborative tool for project related documentation, discussions and single point of access for project related resources.

Agenda Item 8.2: Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries in FIRMS

89. Mr. Taconet presented a diagram on how FIRMS information architecture can be used to promote an EAF. The vision is that an amount of data overlap among the various concerned information domains and the web of relationships among these domains can be used to promote an EAF and provide a more comprehensive EAF. The complete data to achieve this EAF will be developed based on FIRMS / NatFirms growth and project opportunities. A question was asked as to whether the interactive links will need to be created or whether they are already there? The participants were advised that the system itself (through fuzzy logic) will be able to establish the links. This is an ongoing development.

90. Decision:

- The participants agreed that the architecture and vision delivered would be suitable as an information management framework in support of the EAF.

Agenda Item 8.3: Practical session on technical advice and support

91. This agenda item was included if time was permitting. The Chair noted that time was not permitting. However, the participants acknowledged the valuable and informative presentations given by Mr. Calderini in previous agenda items.

9. FIRMS INFORMATION MANAGEMENT POLICY (Agenda item 9)

92. This is a standard agenda item. Modifications were brought to the new version 2.3 of the IMP in accordance with decisions of FSC5. These include, in particular, the Fishery Data Dictionary which was added. While revising the IMP and during the intersessional work, new needs have been identified for consideration in the IMP. These needs have been introduced by Mr. Taconet with reference to document FIRMS/FSC6/2010/Inf8. The list includes “geographic reference”; “fishery naming Conventions”, “FIRMS Stock Status Standard descriptors”; work on Fishery indicators, management measures, stock life cycle, Fact Sheet citation, missing definitions for a number of fishery topics, and suggestions for enhancement of the Fisheries modules made by the FIRMS CECAF working group.

93. There was concern that these terms may already be elaborated in some pre-existing FAO materials. The participants agreed to the revised definitions as working definitions and FIRMS will keep the definitions under review.

94. Decision:

- The meeting agreed for the following proposals to be integrated in the next version of the IMP: working definitions for Fishery, FIRMS standard descriptors;

change in citation taking into account Reporting year; conservation measures; terms under Bottom type and Horizontal distribution.

- the other proposals will be reviewed first by the technical working group before being integrated.

10. INTERSESSIONAL WORK PLAN (Agenda item 10)

95. The Secretariat has identified several important tasks that will need to be pursued as part of an intersessional workplan, as elaborated in document FSC6/2010/3a. The list was presented and further elaborated as reported below:

- I. Enhancement to Fisheries and Marine Resources module
 - Metadata modifications
 - Maps – species, RFB competence areas
 - Workflow management: Excel based information, maintenance life cycle
 - Interactive mapping to access fishery records
 - Ontology driven navigation among records (fuzzy logic)
- II. Training / Assistance to Partners
 - Routine remote assistance to established partners
 - Outreach efforts to Observers (WCPFC, IWC, SPC)
 - Minimum one and up to three regional workshops (SWIOFC, SEAFDEC, RECOFI)
- III. Pages and Products aiming at diversified audience
 - Spatial and temporal representation of FIRMS database
 - Geographical representations of synoptic views of stocks' status and trends
 - Maps visually showing facts and trends based on standard indicators
 - Specific Site sub-section: a global entry point with regional corners eg. tunas, or the Mediterranean.
 - Services to information providers: fact sheets can be retrieved and displayed on Parties websites
 - Increasing coverage geographic.
- IV. Promotion of FIRMS
 - Seek participation of more RFBs including those bodies / organisations associated with Inland Capture Fisheries
 - Adopt a communication plan shared by FIRMS partners
 - Promote links to the FIRMS website from national agencies websites
 - Disseminate FIRMS fact sheet from Partners website
 - Communicate broadly on FIRMS synoptic views on status and trends
 - Communicate on FIRMS progress and NatFIRMS at Partners' meetings

- Report on FIRMS progress at next COFI meeting and seek COFI members' opinions regarding NatFIRMS
- Organise a side event during COFI on NatFIRMS in order to foster donor support.

96. It was also noted that a number of these topics can be adequately addressed through virtual collaborative work of the Technical Working Group. A suggestion was made that this e-group should be active and regularly discuss topics that would be posted on the FIGIS Wiki. It was further suggested that the Secretariat in consultation with the Chair, will organise a steady workplan. Some of these topics might require the Technical Working Group to physically meet, such as for tackling further design of the socio-economic thematic approach in FIRMS. Decisions on such a physical meeting can be made at any moment during the intersession in consultation with the Partners.

97. Decisions:

- The developments identified in the paragraph 95 were endorsed in principle. These will require review, inputs and contributions from FIRMS partners as part of the technical working group. The Chair and Secretariat will determine the pace of virtual working sessions.
- The Chair and Secretariat will identify opportunity for an eventual meeting of the TWG.

11. PLANNING FOR THE SEVENTH SESSION OF FSC (Agenda item 11)

98. The FIRMS Steering Committee agreed to hold its next meeting in conjunction with the intersessional meeting of the CWP Fishery Group which is scheduled around July 2011 in La Jolla.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item 12)

99. There was no other business.

13. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSON (Agenda Item 13)

100. Mr. Michael Hinton was voted to be Chairperson. Ms Pouchamarn Wongsanga was voted as Vice Chairperson.

14. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT AND CLOSE OF SESSION (Agenda Item 14)

101. The report was adopted on 26 February 2010 at 18:00 hours. The Meeting was closed..The participants expressed their thanks to CCAMLR for their hospitality and a well-resourced meeting.

Annex 1
List of Participants

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Annex 2

Meeting annotated Agenda**Wednesday, 24 February 2010**

all day: 09:00 hours to 18:00 hours

1. **Opening of session and Welcome address** (standard item)
2. **Adoption of agenda** (standard item)
3. **FIRMS membership** (standard item)
 - Progress on the development of FIRMS Partnership
Modifications in partnership (perhaps Eurostat), interest expressed by other organizations (BCC), efforts made by the Secretariat and the FIRMS partners to involve/contact additional RFBs.
 - Review of new perspective Partners
This item will also consider status for other foreseen partners, and ways to approach them.
4. **Review of Annex 2 of new Partners** (standard item)

Any new Partner will present the content of its Annex 2 in order to raise common awareness on the contributions that it intends to make to FIRMS and on important aspects that could have been addressed with respect to contribution specifications.

Current Partners willing to start contributions on the new Fisheries module might also wish to take this opportunity to revise / specify the content of their annex 2.

Observers may indicate their intended contributions (eg IWC).
5. **Review of FIRMS activities during the intersession** (cf Doc. FIRMS FSC6/2010/2x)
(standard item)
 - **Report on intersessional activities**
With reference to the work plan agreed at FSC5, and on the basis of one-page summary activities sent by Partners to the Secretariat prior to the meeting (see template in annex), collated with Secretariat'ones into one FIRMS activity report, the Secretariat will present a consolidated report of the activities carried out during the intersession with highlights on key topics, including the contributions processed and major difficulties encountered, if any.
 - **Key topics regarding status of the FIRMS website**
FSC6 will be presented new published features, consider outstanding issues, and will make decisions thereof
 - streamlined information contributions: word to XML convertor tool
 - Marine resources module:
 - o progress on populating the site
 - o implementation of the status and trends summary search
 - o implementation of Reference Year / Reporting Year modification
 - published Fisheries module: progress and outstanding issues

- management information in FIRMS – CCAMLR, IATTC, NAFO, NEAFC, contributions
- socio-economic information in FIRMS – FAO/BNP¹ contribution
- discards information in FIRMS – IWC pilot studies

6. Report of virtual technical working group

The TWG didn't hold face to face meeting, but FSC5 requested FIRMS members to work during the intersession on the following technical topics, under the leadership of a designated person.

- categorization of management measures (lead = CCAMLR)
- handling of stocks including multiple sub-components – impact on status and trends reporting (lead = ICES and FAO)
- review of Marine resources bio-eco controlled terms - IMP Annex 1.2² (lead = SEAFDEC)

Thursday, 25 February 2010

all day: 09:00 hours to 18:00 hours

7. NatFIRMS and identification of potential FIRMS users (cf Doc. FIRMS FSC6/2010/4)

FSC5 requested that the topic of NatFIRMS be once again addressed at FSC6. During FSC's NatFIRMS discussions, the need to identify the FIRMS target audience has emerged, and any decision on future strategic development is tightly related to this key question. The debate will be articulated from the document "FIRMS target audience and perspective on the development of national membership" which the Secretariat will present.

This debate might open the way towards a business plan, including pilot cases, communication strategy, website re-structuring, etc... :

8. Other technical topics

- enhancing communication through of a FIRMS Collaborative Wiki tool
An enhanced sense of dynamic network and live community of practice could be achieved through set-up of a dedicated FIRMS Wiki tool. FSC6 should decide whether this would be a valuable move.
- Ecosystem approach to fisheries in FIRMS
This topic was addressed for the first time at TWG2, and briefly discussed at FSC6. FSC6 recognized that this matter deserves further discussion. FSC6 should decide how to tackle it.
- Practical session on technical advice and support
Some time will be allocated for a practical session to address specific technical aspects, on request of Partners.

9. FIRMS Information Management Policy (IMP) – FSC5 version (cf Doc. FIRMS FSC6/2010/Inf3) (standard item)

¹ Big Numbers Project: comparison of socio-economic performance between Large scale and Small scale fisheries

² ftp://ftp.fao.org/fi/DOCUMENT/FIGIS_FIRMS/2007/inf3e.pdf

The FIRMS IMP is a living document, updated after FSC5, providing the framework for the continuing development of FIRMS standards, through the addition of chapters. The feedback from Partners on above discussed issues and on document FSC5/2010/2x will be considered in terms of inclusion in the IMP.

10. **Intersessional work plan** (standard item)
The various discussions held under the previous agenda item should pinpoint forthcoming activities and result in the development of an agreed workplan.
11. **Planning for the seventh session of FSC (FSC7)** (standard item)
12. **Any other business** (standard item)
13. **Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson** (standard item)

Friday, 26 February 2010

afternoon: 14:00 hours to 18:00 hours

14. **Adoption of the Report and Close of Session** (standard item)
The draft report will be finalised during the CWP meeting, and formally revised and adopted during a specific 2 / 3 hours session at the end of the week.

Annex 3
List of documents

FIRMS FSC6/2010/1	Provisional Annotated Agenda and Timetable
FIRMS FSC6/2010/2	Review of the FIRMS activities during the intersessional period
2a	Secretariat report on Progress and Issues
2b	Partners reports
2c	ICCAT report,
2d	CCSBT report
2e	CCAMLR report
2f	IOTC report
2g	SEAFDEC report
2h	ICES report
2i	GFCM report
2i	NAFO report
FIRMS FSC6/2010/3	Report of the <u>virtual</u> Technical Working Group
3a	Categorization of management measures
3b	Handling of stocks including multiple sub-components – impact on status and trends reporting
3c	Review of Marine resources bio-eco controlled terms - IMP Annex 1.2
FIRMS FSC6/2010/4	FIRMS target audience and perspective on the development of national membership

INFORMATION DOCUMENTS	
FIRMS FSC6/2010/Inf.1	Provisional List of Documents
FIRMS FSC6/2010/Inf.2	Provisional List of Participants
FIRMS FSC6/2010/Inf.3	FIRMS Information Management Policy (IMP) – FSC5 version
FIRMS FSC6/2010/Inf.4	FIRMS Partnership Arrangement
FIRMS FSC6/2010/Inf.5	Standard template for reporting on FIRMS activities
FIRMS FSC6/2010/Inf.6	Report of the fifth Session of the FIRMS Steering Committee Meeting. Halifax, Canada, 7 - 9 July, 2008
FIRMS FSC6/2010/Inf.7	FIRMS web trends statistics over the period 2007-2009
FIRMS FSC6/2010/Inf.8	Proposals and Issues concerning the updates of the FIRMS Information Management Policy
FIRMS FSC6/2010/Inf.9	FIRMS Steering Committee Rules of Procedures

Annex 4

Benefits that FIRMS membership will provide to its members

at a political level:

FAO member countries through COFI, and UN members through the UN General Assembly, have made commitments to the Strategy-STF³ and their willingness to adhere to principles of good fisheries governance based on the best scientific knowledge available. Reporting status and trends of resources and fisheries demonstrates countries' compliance with such commitment, and FIRMS offers an enabling framework.

As well, the 2006 UN Review Conference on Straddling and highly migratory Fish Stocks recommended that States individually or collectively through RFMOs should cooperate with FAO in the implementation and further development of the Fisheries Resources Monitoring System (par. 18(j))”

at a strategic level:

In FIRMS, a regional Partner can be part of a subject group and contribute together with other interested partners knowledge or status and trends on target species. As example, the five Tuna agencies together can provide comprehensive information on state of world Tuna resources and fisheries.

Such comprehensive information can be recycled recycling this information in the Tuna network context.

FIRMS RFB partners have understood the benefits of FIRMS reporting mechanisms. Fact sheets are communication products which:

- provide essential information, while for full details link to electronic sources;
- allow better searchability on the internet including through full text and controlled terms; a presence in FIRMS increases the profile of RFB reports, as well as the visibility of their work on the internet;
- can be merged and enriched with other sources of information such as catch statistics, or multidisciplinary maps;
- constitute a dynamic reporting featuring ability to maintain time series of reports as information becomes available;
- enable the development of new products, such as maps, statistics, or synoptic views (eg Status and Trends summaries)

With NatFIRMS process, there is also a golden opportunity for a number of regional partners with “national burden” to improve their data, increase their influence and eventually strengthen their role, thus largely compensating the burden.

³ FAO Strategy-STF: FAO strategy for improving information on status and trends of capture fisheries

NatFIRMS would also be a golden opportunity to improve their members' responsible involvement, fostering an improvement of national systems and of their participation in a regional mechanism.

At a technical level, a number of FIRMS RFB partners have understood that their accession to FIRMS enable leveraging their own information management capacities. The FIRMS technology opens perspectives of recycling information products contributed to FIRMS within RFB's branded products, thus serving primarily data owners interests.