

**Report of the**

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**THIRD SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES**

**Doha, Qatar, 9–11 May 2005**



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## PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is the final version of the report as adopted in Doha, Qatar, by the third session of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) on 11 May 2005. The report was prepared by the FAO Regional Office for the Near East.

FAO Regional Office for the Near East.

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### ABSTRACT

The third session of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) was held in Doha, State of Qatar, from 9 to 11 May 2005. All eight member countries were represented in this session as well as observers from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the WorldFish Center.

The Commission reviewed the activities that have taken place during the intersessional period, in particular those related to the implementation of the recommendations of the second session as well as meetings of the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) and the Working Group on Fisheries Statistics (WGFS). The Commission adopted its programme of work and budget as well as a number of decisions and recommendations on several issues, including those related to aquaculture in the RECOFI area and issues on capture fishery statistics.

### Distribution:

Participants in the session  
RECOFI Mailing List  
FAO Fisheries Department  
FAO Regional and Subregional Fisheries Officers



## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
OPENING OF THE SESSION .....	1
ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SESSION .....	1
INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (2003–2004).....	1
CAPTURE FISHERY STATISTICS IN THE RECOFI AREA.....	2
AQUACULTURE IN THE RECOFI AREA.....	4
GENERAL DISCUSSION ON REGIONAL ISSUES OF CONCERN .....	6
PROGRAMME OF WORK AND BUDGET.....	7
ANY OTHER MATTERS .....	8
DATE AND PLACE OF THE FOURTH SESSION.....	9
ADOPTION OF THE REPORT .....	9
 <b>APPENDIXES</b>	
A. AGENDA .....	11
B. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS .....	12
C. LIST OF DOCUMENTS.....	16
D. DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	17



## **OPENING OF THE SESSION**

1. The third session of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) was called to order by the outgoing Chairperson, Dr Younis Al-Akhzamy (Sultanate of Oman).
2. The outgoing Chairperson called for the host country representative to open the session.
3. His Excellency, Mr Mohamad bin Fahad Al-Faihani, Assistant Under-Secretary for Agricultural affairs, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture (State of Qatar), welcomed the delegates and stressed on the importance of the activities of RECOFI and their benefit for promoting sustainable fisheries in the Region. He wished all the success for this session.
4. The Head of the FAO delegation delivered a speech on behalf of Dr Jacques Diouf, Director-General of FAO, and conveyed his wishes for a successful meeting. He also transmitted the greetings of the Assistant Director-General Mr Ichiro Nomura, Head of the Fisheries Department at FAO. He referred to the outcome of the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) held from 7 to 11 March 2005 and highlighted the main areas of concern for the RECOFI area. He also referred to the activities which RECOFI had implemented in the past.
5. The head of FAO delegation expressed his gratitude to the Government of Qatar for their hospitality and welcomed all participants and observers to the meeting underlining the importance of their contribution to the success of RECOFI activities.
6. Mr Mohamed Al-Sulaiti (Qatar) was unanimously elected as Chairperson of RECOFI. Mr Nabil I. Fita (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) was elected as the Vice-chairperson and Ms Zahra Al-Wazzan (State of Kuwait) as the Rapporteur.

## **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SESSION**

7. The Agenda of the session (RECOFI/2005/1) was adopted with one alteration of the title of Agenda Item 5 which reads now (Aquaculture in the RECOFI Area).

## **INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (2003–2004)**

8. The Secretariat introduced document RECOFI/2005/2. During the period between the second session of RECOFI which was held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, from 18 to 21 May 2003 and the third session held in Doha, Qatar, two major technical meetings were convened by the subsidiary bodies of RECOFI. The first meeting of the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA), in Manama, Bahrain, from 18 to 20 April 2004 and the first meeting of the Working Group on Fisheries Statistics (WGFS), in Shiraz, Islamic Republic of Iran, from 24 to 26 May 2004.
9. Other relevant activities organized during the intersessional period included a training course on Shrimp By-Catch Reduction on Dhows in Manama, Bahrain from 3 to 7 October 2004 as well as the Kuwait Symposium on Fish Supply and Demand in the Near East Region in Kuwait City, Kuwait, from 13 to 15 December 2004.

10. The Commission noted with satisfaction the participation of delegates from the Republic of Iraq to its intersessional activities. The Commission also expressed its hope that Iraq will actively participate in RECOFI sessions in the future.

### **CAPTURE FISHERY STATISTICS IN THE RECOFI AREA**

11. The Secretariat introduced the paper “Report on the First RECOFI Working Group on Fishery Statistics” held in Shiraz, Islamic Republic of Iran from 24 to 26 May 2004 (RECOFI/2005/Inf.4). He noted that the Working Group (WG) had addressed the issue of improving the methods used for fisheries data collection in the RECOFI area and the nature of the relationship between the Working Group and the Commission. This report reviewed the objectives of the meeting and the results of the discussions.

12. A second issue was the timing of annual Working Group meetings, which should be held annually as soon as national data are available from the preceding year. In the case of the Shiraz meeting, which was held in May 2004, only Bahrain and the Sultanate of Oman were able to provide complete landings data for 2003. The issue of the timing of WG meetings remains to be resolved.

13. A wide range of national competencies and standards in the collection and reporting of fisheries data was noted for the Commission area. Several countries have data reporting systems that have practices approaching best international practices. Most concern at the WG was expressed about those countries that were still deriving their fisheries data from data on market sales. However, it was noted that two of these countries were about to implement programmes to address problems in their data collection systems.

14. Countries reported using a variety of software for their respective information systems, but modern software facilitates the exchange of data in different formats and the variety of national software systems is no longer a concern. This also facilitated national practices as they developed the systems with which they were most familiar with.

15. The Working Group addressed the need for improving the disaggregation of species data in reported landings as this detail would be needed to enable future regional resource management initiatives. The meeting also addressed the need for geographical disaggregation of reported landings so that the data sets referred, as much as possible, to discrete fish populations and stocks. The major geographical areas of note were the northern RECOFI area waters, the Gulf of Oman and the NW Arabian Sea off southeast coast of Oman.

16. Some countries will need to change their data reporting practices to accommodate this requirement, notably the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman.

17. The Commission stressed on the need of continuous technical assistance from FAO for developing criteria for fishery statistics collection and report preparation in the RECOFI area. Accordingly, the Member countries agreed on the necessity of sending one or more consultants by FAO to review methods of data collection, entry, analysis and preparation of fishery statistics in order to unify these methods and also to be used for the evaluation of fishery stock available in the region. However, it was noted that ad hoc funds should be secured for this activity as it could not be accommodated in the FAO Regular Programme.

18. The Secretariat reported on the document RECOFI/2005/Inf.8. The Secretariat noted that only two statistical divisions were established (i.e. areas 51.2.0 and 51.3.1) as a third division requested by the WG on Statistics could not be implemented because of lack of data for this region. Catch data by RECOFI countries from 1986 to 2003 are now available for consultation through the FISHSTAT+ software, copies of which were distributed to the delegates. Member countries were requested to verify the data included in the draft release of the database and to provide possible corrections to the Fishery Information, Data and Statistics Unit (FIDI) within three months time (deadline 10 August 2005) when the database will be made public as a dataset downloadable from the FISHSTAT+ web page (<http://www.fao.org/fi/statist/fisoft/FISHPLUS.asp>).

19. It was noted that FIDI makes available the updated global capture database in March each year; they then work on producing the regional datasets. In terms of timeliness, it was noted that the deadline to submit the calendar year data is the end of August of the subsequent year but, as many countries do not meet it, the closure, compilation and dissemination of the database has to be postponed.

20. FIDI promotes the improvement of the species breakdown in the reported catch statistics. Some countries in the region are making statistics available for a major number of species, although it may result in some disruption of the data series and in their analysis. Note was made of the new species identification guide for sharks that had been prepared for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden and the possibility, if funds would be identified, to produce a similar one for the RECOFI area. Improved identification of shark catches would allow a wider range of shark species to be included in the reported catch statistics.

21. A demonstration of the FISHSTAT+ system was provided. A short presentation on catch trends was made noting that total regional catches had been increasing by about 3.5 percent per year though there had been fluctuations in the trend between some years. Different level of species breakdown throughout the years is complicating the interpretation of long-term trends of fish complicating the interpretation of long-term trends of fish species or groups of species. Particular note was made of trends in the landing statistics of valuable species groups like tuna, crustaceans and molluscs, for which the catch trends by the two divisions were shown.

22. The Strategy for Improving Information on Status and Trends of Capture Fisheries (Strategy-STF) was introduced. The request by the Commission of a comparative survey of the fisheries data collection systems in the region would fit under Component 1 of the Strategy-STF. Several delegates requested FAO to help in improving the quality of fisheries data that are collected through development of harmonized methods.

23. Particular concern was expressed about the state of groupers and other demersal resources in the Commission area. Trends for national catches were shown; however, it was noted that demonstration of CPUEs (Catch per unit efforts) was not possible through data in FISHSTAT+ alone as it does not include data on effort. The collection of fishing effort data on a regular basis was progressively stopped by other Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) due to low returns and difficulties in standardizing units of measurement; presently, only one Commission (Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization – NAFO) continues to collect this type of data.

## AQUACULTURE IN THE RECOFI AREA

24. The Secretariat presented a summary on the status of aquaculture in the RECOFI Member countries based on a made available document entitled “Summary of aquaculture statistics in the RECOFI countries”. The expansion of the aquaculture sector was highlighted with most of the RECOFI countries reporting increased outputs since the last session of the Commission.

25. The total aquaculture output in 2003 was estimated at around 108 000 tonnes representing an increase exceeding 28 percent from the 1999 total of approximately 40 000 tonnes. Such growth was also visible in terms of a steady increase in the production share coming from aquaculture in relation to the total annual output of the whole industry. It was noted that total production from capture fisheries had grown at a much lower rate over the last decade.

26. The presentation indicated the importance of inland aquaculture currently accounting for over 80 percent of the total aquaculture production with four carp species accounting for 58 percent of the total production in 2003. However, mariculture was the fastest growing sector making up for nearly 20 percent of the aquaculture production in 2003. The majority of this production consisted of Indian white shrimp (*Penaeus indicus*) with Saudi Arabia (9 160 tonnes) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (7 462 tonnes) as the major producers. It was also noted that commercial-scale production of the exotic Gilthead seabream (*Sparus aurata*) and the native Sobaity seabream (*Sparidentex hasta*) had increased in recent years with more countries in the Region reporting production.

27. The Secretariat presented a document on the progress made for the establishment of the RECOFI Aquaculture Information System (RAIS). The development of a regional information system had been requested by the Member countries during the second session of the Commission in response to the rapid development of aquaculture in the region and, accordingly, the Commission identified this as a priority activity for the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA). During its first meeting (Manama, Bahrain, 18–20 April 2004), the WGA discussed how the system could be established and maintained. Subsequently, a project proposal was drafted which includes all technical issues, time schedule and budget implications related to the development of the system.

28. The discussion that followed focused on the need to take decisions on (i) whether the Commission intended to proceed with the development of the information system; (ii) which country would host the Regional Centre; (iii) budget implications; (iv) identification of National Centres and nomination of National Coordinators; and (v) whether the Commission required FAO’s technical assistance to develop the system.

29. The Commission expressed its appreciation on the proposed structure of the regional information system and strongly recommended to go ahead with this project.

30. It was agreed by the Commission that the RECOFI Country hosting the Regional Centre would provide the estimated funds required for the development of the system. The delegate of Kuwait confirmed their strong interest in hosting the Centre and informed that they would take a final decision not later than the end of July 2005. In case of a negative decision it was agreed that the Islamic Republic of Iran would host and fund the system.

Furthermore, it was agreed that the system should be developed by FAO as soon as the necessary funds would be made available by the hosting country.

31. The FAO Legal Consultant presented a regional project proposal to strengthen the legal and policy framework for aquaculture in the RECOFI Member countries. During its second session (Muscat, Oman, 18–21 May 2003), the Commission established the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) and identified the evaluation of existing aquaculture legislation and the adoption of common regulations at a regional level as a priority activity of the WGA. During its first meeting (Manama, Bahrain, 18–20 April 2004), the WGA further discussed the level of development of legislation among the Member countries and recommended the Secretariat to seek assistance from FAO through a preparatory mission to develop a regional project proposal. At the same meeting, it was stated that a preparatory mission would not guarantee FAO's financial support to the project and the Countries were invited to explore other funding possibilities.

32. The preparatory mission took place from 13 to 26 March 2005 to Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia. Following the recommendations of the WGA, a comprehensive approach was taken and the mission consisted of a Legal Expert, an Aquaculture Expert and an Aquaculture Policy Expert. A mission report was subsequently prepared and submitted to FAO. The report included the findings on the policy, institutional and legal framework of the visited countries as well as conclusions and recommendations including a draft project proposal prepared according to the TCP format. The draft project proposal was distributed at the session.

33. The background and justification for the project were summarized. First, it was stressed that in some instances the sustainable development of the sector is hindered by a lack of policy and planning to provide a reference point for management and development of the sector and by institutional constraints due to a lack of technical capacity and/or weak institutional arrangements. Second, the legislative arrangements for the management and development of aquaculture are generally uncertain and inappropriate. In particular, there is a need to streamline authorization processes, address environmental impacts of aquaculture, introduce and harmonize legislation on aquatic animal health certification, quarantine measures and the quality and safety of aquaculture products. Finally, monitoring and enforcement provisions can be improved.

34. The objective of the project is therefore to strengthen the policy, institutional and legal framework for aquaculture in the RECOFI Member countries in order to increase the contribution of the sector to the economy and food security, and to develop and manage the sector in a sustainable manner. A regional approach is opportune since it will lead to harmonization of laws and regulations and thus facilitate regional trade of aquatic animals and aquaculture products. In addition, not all the countries have similar access to specialised advice that is required to update national legal frameworks.

35. The expected outputs of the project were presented. They include a systematic and comparative review and analysis of existing aquaculture legislation; a basic set of model aquaculture legislation, laying down the required minimum elements for sound aquaculture management and building upon the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and other relevant international instruments; drafting guidelines to assist in the implementation of the legislation at the national level; recommendations towards enhancing aquaculture policy and management; capacity building; and publication of the legislation and guidelines for wider distribution and use.

36. The work plan of the project proposal was outlined, including the organization of a one-week regional workshop. The workshop should be attended by at least three participants of each participating country with expertise in aquaculture policy, management and/or legislation. In addition, other international organizations, the private sector, NGOs and other stakeholders may attend the workshop. Invitations to attend the workshop should also be sent to a number of relevant regional organizations as identified during the preparatory mission. Finally, the tentative budget was briefly addressed as well as the government contributions to be provided under the project.

37. The Commission agreed that all Countries will submit their comments and suggestions to FAO through the Secretariat within one month following the session, after which FAO will finalize the project proposal. The Commission acknowledged the offer made by Oman to host the regional workshop. Finally, the Secretariat noted that funding of the project by FAO during the current biennium was highly unlikely due to existing budget restraints. However, this would not prevent the Member countries to submit a request for TCP funding for the following biennium, starting January 2006. The Member countries were again invited to explore other possibilities of funding the project.

38. Several Member countries expressed their concern over the introduction of exotic species by individual countries, which could impact the entire region. The Commission decided to refer the issue to the WGA for further study and discussion.

#### **GENERAL DISCUSSION ON REGIONAL ISSUES OF CONCERN**

39. The delegate from the Islamic Republic of Iran presented an outline of the country's fisheries sector. Southern fishery production in 2003 was 299 000 tonnes while total aquaculture production was 110 000 tonnes of which 30 000 tonnes was of rainbow trout. Shrimp production of *Penaeus indicus*, in 2004 was about 9 000 tonnes and, though production had been constrained by marketing, culture output has surpassed capture production. As a response to this decline a vessel buy-back programme had been introduced to reduce the fleet to around 30 trawlers from an original fleet of 165 shrimp trawlers. Declines in demersal fisheries had been noted while the country's share of tuna catches in the Indian Ocean has been increasing. The delegate stressed that country reports should be presented at RECOFI session and asked for them to be prepared highlighting regional concerns. Other delegates supported this request.

40. The delegate also emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation with regards to aquaculture development in the region. He encouraged RECOFI to be proactive in relation to stock enhancement of marine species in the region and mentioned of plans to introduce shrimp post-larvae and fish fingerlings into Iranian marine waters given the success of enhancement programmes in the Caspian Sea. The issue of genetic dilution from restocking was raised. Declines in shrimp catch were attributed to (i) over fishing due to excessive fleet capacity, (ii) illegal fishing outside of the 40 to 45-day fishing season, and (iii), oil pollution that has damaged nursery grounds. Catch had declined from 15 000 to 5 000 tonnes.

41. Private hatcheries in the country can produce more than 1.5 billion shrimp post larvae while fingerling production of grouper, silver pomfret, cobia and "shanak" was beginning. In the case of cobia (*Rachycentron canadus*), participants noted its suitability for aquaculture. Other hatcheries were being converted for production of marine species. The Iranian

delegation offered access to the country's experience in shrimp and fish breeding to other Members of the Commission.

42. A description of the status of aquaculture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was provided by the delegate. Fish farming on the Red Sea started in 1982 while shrimp aquaculture started in 1994. Three commercial shrimp farms have been established and cultured shrimp are exported to the European Union, Japan and the United States of America (USA). Yearly production is around 9 000 tonnes. It was reported that many coastal areas in the country are particularly suitable for shrimp culture and there are plans to expand the culture area. The Marbled spinefoot (*Siganus rivulatus*) and four species of grouper are fish species that have been researched for "farming". Growth rates for grouper were reported as 800 g in 7–8 months. The import of breeding stock, eggs and larvae is banned. Saudi Arabia encourages sustainable aquaculture in all its activities whether shrimp or fish farms.

43. The delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran reported on the national ongoing activities with regards to the artificial reefs in the country and supported the proposal of Saudi Arabia to investigate on this issue at the regional level. The delegate of Bahrain proposed that an ad hoc meeting of the WGA should be organized to examine issues related to marine enhancement of fish stocks and the potential role of artificial reefs. The Secretariat noted that the use of artificial reefs may have impact on capture fishery resources and stressed the importance of studying and monitoring such marine habitat interventions. Studies may take up to five years to provide tangible results.

44. The Commission agreed that the issues related to marine stock enhancement and artificial reefs should be further discussed within the terms of references of the WGA. The delegate of Bahrain proposed to host an ad hoc meeting of the WGA on these issues. It was noted that the presence of international experts would be appropriate.

45. The delegate of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) noted the overlap of the issues addressed by RECOFI with those of other Regional/International Organizations (UNEP, Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment [ROPME], Regional Organization for Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden [PERSGA]) and recommended the coordination of efforts in this regard, including the development of a "Regional Action Programme", or enhancing/utilizing existing ones, on the protection of marine environment/ecosystems and the sustainable management of marine resources.

## **PROGRAMME OF WORK AND BUDGET**

46. Secretariat introduced the working document RECOFI/2005/3.

47. The Programme of Work indicated the organization of a statutory meeting of the Commission and two intersessional meetings of the Working Group on Aquaculture and Fisheries Statistics. The Programme of Work outlined also three activities envisaged (Establishment of RECOFI Aquaculture Information System [RAIS], Study on restocking of depleted stock and, the publication of the Periodical Bulletin).

48. The cost for the implementation of all proposed activities is estimated to US\$122 700. The Commission was informed that the funding of the Programme of Work is available. FAO will cover 60 percent of this amount representing part of the salaries of the Secretariat staff

and technical support from its Headquarter. The Commission was also informed that some countries have paid fully their contribution.

49. Several questions were raised regarding the frequency of the meetings of Working Groups, the participation of the chairpersons of Working Groups to the sessions of RECOFI, the recruitment of consultants for the meetings of Working Groups, the period covered by the budget presented, etc.

50. Considering that the budget presented was as estimation, the Commission agreed to adopt it. However, the Secretary is requested to update it continuously (every three month) and inform all Members countries on any changes.

51. The Commission agreed that the Secretary should prepare a full and comprehensive financial report including statement of the previous and current biennium breakdowns. This statement is to be sent regularly to the Member countries in the future.

### **ANY OTHER MATTERS**

52. Under this Agenda Item the meeting was informed by the Secretariat on the developments of the National Aquaculture Sector Overviews (NASOs) and the Prospective Analysis of Future Aquaculture Development (PAFADs). The latter was recommended by the COFI Sub-Committee of Aquaculture and aims to the preparation of a global overview of the aquaculture sector to be presented at its next session (India, September 2006). This activity is funded through the FAO Regular Programme.

53. The RECOFI Members supported the initiative and agreed to submit by the 31 July 2005 information on the national aquaculture sector according to the distributed Terms of Reference. This information will then reviewed by an expert to be identified by FAO and subsequently discussed in a regional workshop. The Commission agreed that the workshop be held back-to-back with the next meeting of the Working Group on Aquaculture.

54. The Commission agreed that Working Groups may meet more during the intersessional period. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was requested to confirm on hosting the next WGA meeting as expressed at the previous meeting. In case a positive confirmation is not received by the Secretariat within the end of May 2005, the meeting will be hosted by Oman. It was agreed that the next WGA meeting will be held at the end of November 2005.

55. The Chairperson of the WGA requested all Members to confirm the WGA Focal Point and to nominate an alternate to replace the Focal Point when absent. He stressed the importance of full commitment and coordination from the officers nominated.

56. Member States requested the Secretariat to prepare summary of Decisions and Recommendations to be sent to the Countries and be added as an Appendix to the final report (see Appendix D).

**DATE AND PLACE OF THE FOURTH SESSION**

57. The Commission agreed to hold the fourth session of RECOFI in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the second week of May 2007. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will confirm the place of the next session in due time.

**ADOPTION OF THE REPORT**

58. The report was adopted on Wednesday 11 May 2005.



**AGENDA**

1. Opening of the Session
2. Adoption of the Agenda and arrangements for the Session
3. Review of the intersessional activities recommended by the Second Session of RECOFI
4. Capture fishery statistics in the RECOFI Area
5. Status of aquaculture in the RECOFI Area
6. General discussion on regional issues of concern
7. Program of Work and Budget for the Biennium 2005–2006
8. Any other matters.
9. Date and place of the Fourth Session
10. Adoption of the Report.

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## LIST OF DOCUMENTS

RECOFI/2005/1	Annotated Agenda
RECOFI/2005/2	List of Documents
RECOFI/2005/3	Review of Intersessional Activities 2003–2005
RECOFI/2005/4	Programme of Work and Budget: 2005–2006
RECOFI/2005/Inf.1	List of Participants
RECOFI/2005/Inf.2	Report of RECOFI Second Session
RECOFI/2005/Inf.3	Report on the First Meeting of the RECOFI Working Group on Fisheries. Shiraz, Islamic Republic of Iran, 24–26 May 2005
RECOFI/2005/Inf.4	Report on the First Meeting of the RECOFI Working Group on Aquaculture. Manama, Bahrain, 18–20 April 2004
RECOFI/2005/Inf.5	Report of the Kuwait Symposium on Fish Supply and Demand in the Near East Region. Kuwait City, Kuwait, 13–15 December 2004
RECOFI/2005/Inf.6	Introduction of By-Catch Reduction Technologies in the RECOFI Region
RECOFI/2005/Inf.7	Review of the National Reports
RECOFI/2005/Inf.8	Strategy for Improving Information on Status and Trends of Capture Fisheries

**APPENDIX D****DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS****CAPTURE FISHERY STATISTICS IN THE RECOFI AREA**

1. The Commission stressed the need for *continuing improvement of the disaggregation by species* of capture reported data.
2. The Commission stressed the need for *continuing technical assistance from FAO* to enable standards of data collection and reporting within the Commission region to be raised.
3. The Commission recalled that the *deadline to submit the calendar year data* is the end of August of the subsequent year.
4. Several delegates requested *FAO to help in improving the quality of fisheries data* that are collected through development of harmonized methods.

**AQUACULTURE IN THE RECOFI AREA**

5. The *RECOFI Aquaculture Information System (RAIS) format* was accepted and the Commission strongly recommended going *ahead with this project*.
6. The *Country hosting the RAIS Regional Centre* would provide the budget required for the development of the system.
7. Regarding hosting, *Kuwait is requested to take a final decision not later than the end of July 2005*. In case of a negative decision it was agreed that the Islamic Republic of Iran would host and fund the system.
8. The Commission agreed that *RECOFI RAIS should be developed by FAO* as soon as the necessary funds would be made available by the country hosting the Regional Centre.
9. Regarding the project proposal to *strengthen the legal and policy framework for aquaculture* in the RECOFI area, it was agreed that *all RECOFI Members will submit their comments and suggestions to FAO* through the Secretariat within one month following the session, after which FAO will finalize the project proposal.
10. The Commission acknowledged the offer made by Oman to host the regional workshop referred to in the project proposal.
11. The *Member countries* were invited to explore other possibilities of funding the project.
12. The Commission decided to *refer the issue of the introduction of exotic species by individual countries to the WGA* for further study and discussion.

## REGIONAL ISSUES OF CONCERN

13. The Commission agreed on the *need to strengthen cooperation with regards to aquaculture development* in the region. The Commission agreed that *the issues related to marine stock enhancement and artificial reefs should be further discussed within the terms of references of the WGA*.

13. The Commission welcomed the proposal of Bahrain to host an ad hoc meeting of WGA. The Commission noted that the presence of international experts should be appropriated.

14. The delegate of UNEP noted the concerns of his organization with regard to the health of the marine habitats and ecosystems and stated that UNEP is ready to assist with any regional action programme to be developed.

15. The Commission agreed to have country reports prepared with concepts relating to regional issues and to be presented at the sessions of RECOFI.

## PROGRAMME OF WORK AND BUDGET

16. The Commission agreed to *adopt the estimated budget of Programme of Work*.

17. The *Secretary is requested to update the budget continuously* (each three month) *and inform* all Member countries on any changes.

18. The Commission agreed that, for future, the *Secretary should prepare a full and comprehensive financial report including statement* from the previous biennium.

## ANY OTHER MATTERS

19. The Commission *supported the initiative for the developments of* the National Aquaculture Sector Overviews (NASOs) and the Prospective Analysis of Future Aquaculture Development (PAFADs).

20. Member countries agreed to *submit by the 31 July 2005 information on the national aquaculture sector* according to the distributed Terms of Reference.

21. The Commission *welcomed the proposal of organizing a regional workshop* to review and discuss this information. The workshop should be held *back-to-back with the next meeting of the Working Group on Aquaculture*.

22. The Commission agreed that *Working Groups could meet more* during the intersessional period.

23. The Commission agreed that the *next WGA meeting will be held at the end of November 2005*.

24. The Commission requested the *Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to confirm* its interest on hosting the next WGA meeting *before the end of May 2005*. In case a positive confirmation is not received the meeting will be hosted by Oman.

25. *All Members are requested to confirm the WGA Focal Point and to nominate an alternate to replace the Focal Point when absent.*

**DATE AND VENUE OF THE FOURTH SESSION**

26. *The Commission agreed to hold the fourth session of RECOFI in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the second week of May 2007.*

The Third session of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) was held in Doha Qatar during the period from 09 to 11 May 2005. All eight members were represented in this session as well as observers from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the WorldFish Center.

The Commission reviewed the activities that have taken place during the intersessional period, in particular those related to the implementation of the recommendations of the second session as well as meetings of the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) and the Working Group on Fisheries Statistics (WGFS). The Commission adopted its programme of work and budget as well as a number of decisions and recommendations on several issues, including those related to aquaculture in the RECOFI area as well as the question of capture fishery statistics.

