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COORDINATING WORKING PARTY ON FISHERY STATISTICS

**Intersessional Meetings of Aquaculture
and Fisheries Subject Groups –
Joint Session**

**Seventh Meeting of the Aquaculture Subject Group (AS)
and
Twenty-eighth meeting of the Fisheries Subject Group (FS)**

2 – 5 November 2021

**Terms of Reference of the CWP ad-hoc Task Group
on best practices for streamlining statistical data workflow with
a focus on confidentiality issues (TG-workflow)**

CWP ad-hoc Task Group on best practices for streamlining statistical data workflow with a focus on confidentiality issues (TG-workflow)

Terms of Reference Version 1.0

1. Background/Context

In response to SDG goals including SDG 14: Life below water, FAO is developing initiatives which promote good governance, participatory decision-making processes and best practices in fisheries. These initiatives include improving the quality and utility of capture fishery data such as streamlining of arrangements for improving consistency, reducing discrepancies among published global and regional datasets and reducing the reporting burden for countries (e.g. FAO, 2018). This work builds on previous arrangements such as the use of the STATLANT¹ standardized questionnaires (since the 1970s) and formal agreements between FAO and other CWP parties such as EUROSTAT (since the 1980s), tuna RFMOs (since the late 1990s) and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) (since 2007). FAO is seeking to establish similar agreements with other institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (for employment and fleet data) and other RFBs such as the Regional Fisheries Committee for the Gulf of Guinea (COREP), Fishery Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC), Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) and the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC). While the work is initially focused on capture fishery data, many of the issues and solutions discussed also apply to aquaculture data (e.g. data quality, data processing, capacity building, policy needs).

These FAO initiatives were presented at the 26th session of the CWP (FAO, 2019). CWP-26 noted that these initiatives focus on best practices and guidelines which aim to minimize discrepancies and replications in statistical data and reduce the overall data reporting burden on member countries. Such initiatives may also lead to new or improved data sharing agreements among CWP parties or between member countries and CWP parties. CWP identified various actions which, if implemented, may assist in further streamlining the reporting mechanisms and workflow for capture fishery and aquaculture statistics. These actions include:

- Aligning annual data calls and reporting calendars in order to facilitate data sharing
- Implementing consistent statistical concepts, standards and definitions
- Developing mainstream data provisions which can serve multiple reporting requirements of member countries
- Improving accessibility of data through the use of harmonized and accessible formats
- Identifying and resolving data gaps and discrepancies through collaborative analysis
- Improving transparency through systematic processing and documentation of data sources.

¹ STATLANT system of questionnaires is a long-standing standardized statistical inquiry developed by the CWP for the submission of national catch and effort data to international organizations by national statistical offices (<http://www.fao.org/cwp-on-fishery-statistics/handbook/introduction/data-collection-systems/en/>).

These actions may be communicated and developed, *inter alia*, through the establishment of focal points within CWP parties. CWP also agreed that the reporting of national statistics may be further streamlined by:

- Improving collaboration and exchange of data among CWP parties through the use of CWP and other international standard classifications as promoted through the CWP standard for reference harmonization
- Developing comprehensive and accessible data validation, metadata and documentation
- Providing data users with timely and transparent information on data validation rules, metadata and associated documentation
- Encouraging parties to identify and share statistical data and reporting issues such as interpretation and application of standard concepts
- Developing and using comprehensive and accessible Data Collection Reference Frameworks
- Using joint questionnaires, where possible, to reduce the number of different focal points and thus reduce the reporting burden for the national statistical offices
- Developing and implementing FAIR data principles for making data findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable.

CWP recognized that the alignment of annual data calls and calendars may potentially result in a synchronous submission of large amounts of data that may result in pressure points within organizations and thus may not necessarily improve specific workflows.

CWP also discussed data confidentiality issues which may hamper the dissemination and exchange of statistical data among CWP parties, e.g. between FAO and EUROSTAT regarding aquaculture statistics where some data (e.g. production by species and FAO area) from EU member countries cannot be published because the aggregated data represent less than three enterprises. In capture fisheries, a specific example is the reporting of gridded (5 x 5 degree) catch and effort statistics in the FAO Atlas of Tuna and Billfish Catches. In some grids, aggregated data (e.g. by flag, gear and month) may represent less than three fishing vessels and may not be able to be released by an RFMO due to its data confidentiality rules.

In general, statistical data confidentiality requirements seek to protect individual identities including, *inter alia*, aquaculture producers. Statistical data confidentiality requirements differ from those of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and CWP parties use various rules and procedures to deal with statistical data confidentiality (e.g. Annex 1 in Appendix 4, CWP, 2019). The responsibility for decisions on the dissemination of statistical data are generally well defined in RFMOs, and CWP highlighted the following points for consideration in further developing statistical data confidentiality requirements. These requirements should:

- allow metadata from masked data to be published (i.e. flag the existence of masked data in order to facilitate the possible use of such data under specific conditions)
- consider temporal limitations on data confidentiality
- identify aggregation dimensions and levels, whereby individual entities can be no longer identified
- provide clear rules of use for each dataset through published data access and sharing policies
- consider exceptions to data confidentiality rules which may be needed if, for example, the dissemination of data from endangered species is limited by requirements for confidentiality.

CWP-26 established five ad-hoc task groups (TGs) to develop its work during the 2019-2022 intersessional period (FAO, 2019), including a TG on best practices for streamlining statistical data workflow with a focus on confidentiality issues (TG-workflow). The membership of the TGs is open to all CWP parties.

CWP-26 identified FAO as the lead organization for TG-workflow and FAO has subsequently advised that Stefania Savoré and Adrienne Egger are available to co-convene TG-workflow with support from the CWP Secretariat. Draft terms of reference (ToRs) for TG-workflow were developed in consultation with the TG Co-conveners and are elaborated below (Section 2. Objectives, tasks and timeframe and Section 3. Organization of work).

2. Objectives, tasks and timeframe

The objectives of TG- workflow are to:

- Review the statistical data workflow of CWP parties and observers and other relevant cases involved in capture fisheries and aquaculture, and identify general issues and constraints which may lead to discrepancies and replications in statistical data and undue data reporting burden on member countries
- Review statistical data confidentiality requirements and rules of CWP parties and other relevant organizations
- Develop best practice guidelines for streamlining the reporting mechanisms and workflow for capture fishery and aquaculture statistics and for reducing the overall data reporting burden on member countries
- Develop best practice guidelines for the implementation of statistical data confidentiality requirements which protect data confidentiality and promote comprehensive, transparent and timely dissemination and exchange of statistical data.

The scope of this work concerns domains covered by the CWP Handbook. Where cases of specific interest to CWP Members are identified, this scope may also include the review of the data workflow of CWP observers and other relevant cases which involve countries' multiple reporting requirements to different organizations. In addition, the review of the statistical data workflow may be split into two streams of work to: (1) Review established streamlining processes (e.g. as described in FAO, 2018, p.94) and identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities arising from these processes, (2) Review other relevant workflows and identify new requirements for streamlining processes including the use of the CWP Standard for Reference Harmonization. The work of TG-workflow may be facilitated through the use of questionnaires and specific work cases.

It is anticipated that the work of TG-workflow will be reviewed and further developed during an intersessional meeting of the CWP Fishery and Aquaculture Subject Groups and subsequently presented to CWP-27 in 2022 for consideration. Some outputs of TG-workflow may be implemented in the CWP Handbook. Proposed tasks and timeframe for the work of TG-workflow are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed tasks and timeframe for the work of TG-workflow

	Task	Timeframe
0.	Develop draft ToRs and work plan in consultation with TG Co-conveners and circulate to members for validation. Call for TG participations and their contact details.	March 2021
1.	Finalize ToRs and establish TG membership	April 2021
2.	Review the statistical data workflows (according to the two workstreams indicated above) and identify general issues and constraints which may lead to discrepancies and replications in statistical data and undue data reporting burden on member countries.	July 2021
Concurrently with 2		
3	Review statistical data confidentiality requirements and rules (examples in Appendix 1)	July 2021
4.	Identify best practices for streamlining the reporting mechanisms and workflow for statistical data and reducing the overall data reporting burden on member countries	Sept 2021
5.	Identify best practices for statistical data confidentiality requirements which protect data confidentiality and promote comprehensive, transparent and timely dissemination and exchange of statistical data.	Sept 2021
6.	Draft best practice guidelines for streamlining statistical data workflows, and statistical data confidentiality requirements	Prior to intersessional meeting (IS)
7.	Present review findings and draft guidelines at the intersessional meeting (IS)	IS Sept/Oct 2021
8.	Further develop guidelines, incorporating intersessional meeting feedback and extend the scope of contributions to CWP parties which may not have had the opportunity to contribute to the TG or IS.	Post IS
9.	Present final version of best practice guidelines for streamlining statistical data workflows, and statistical data confidentiality requirements to CWP-27 for consideration and, if possible, adoption	By mid-2022

3. Organization of work

3.1. Convener

CWP-26 identified FAO as the lead organization for TG-workflow and FAO has subsequently advised that Stefania Savoré and Adrienne Egger are available to co-convene TG-workflow with support from the CWP Secretariat; Stefania Savoré will lead the work on streamlining best practices and Adrienne Egger will lead the work on confidentiality issues. Meetings will be called by the Co-conveners and supported by the CWP Secretariat which will also ensure the progress of work and development of outputs, as stipulated by the CWP work plan and these ToRs.

3.2. Membership

TG-workflow is open to all CWP parties and those interested in this work are encouraged to actively contribute including Observer organizations which CWP parties would like to invite to contribute. At

CWP-26, the following parties indicated initial interest in participating in the TG: European Commission, FAO, ICCAT and IOTC.

All interested CWP parties are requested to provide the name of the person(s) who will be actively involved in the work of TG-workflow. To the extent practicable, if a member of the TG is unable to attend a meeting, a substitute will be nominated to participate in the meeting, and inform the convener of this substitution prior to the scheduled meeting.

3.3. Role of group members

TG-workflow will make decisions in the spirit of consensus and cooperation. TG members will decide on the detailed work plan and may propose revisions of the ToRs for approval by the Coordinator(s) of the CWP Fishery Subject Group and/or Aquaculture Subject Group and the CWP Secretariat.

Each TG participant is encouraged to engage actively in the work of the TG, including by:

- Attending all web calls and meetings
- Sharing knowledge and practical examples to illustrate CWP needs
- Reviewing working documents co-prepared by the TG.

As a whole, the TG will develop the documents fulfilling its objectives including recommendations for presentation, discussion and decision at the CWP intersessional and session meetings.

3.4. Meeting agenda items

Meeting agendas, with attached meeting material, will be distributed at least five working days prior to a scheduled meeting, in coordination with the CWP Secretariat. At the end of each meeting, the TG will consider requirements for any follow-up meeting and, if required, will identify draft agenda items to be addressed at that meeting together with a proposed meeting schedule (date, time, duration).

3.5. Minutes and meeting papers

The minutes of each meeting will be prepared by the convener with support from the CWP Secretariat, or any other member on a voluntary basis, and shared with the TG members no later than ten working days following each meeting.

3.6. Working conditions

Most TG activities will be conducted through email exchange and online meetings; however, face-to-face meetings may be held as appropriate if deemed necessary and upon available resources. The frequency of the meetings will be determined by the TG work and progress.

References

CWP. CWP Handbook. [Cited 1 January 2021, under revision]. <http://www.fao.org/cwp-on-fishery-statistics/handbook/introduction/en/>

FAO. *Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water*. [Cited 1 March 2021]. <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/goals/goal-14/en/>

FAO. Atlas of Tuna and Billfish Catches. [Cited 1 March 2021]. <http://www.fao.org/fishery/statistics/tuna-atlas/en>

FAO. 2018. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018 - Meeting the sustainable development goals*. Rome, FAO. 210 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/I9540EN/i9540en.pdf>).

FAO. 2019. *Report of the twenty-sixth session of the Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics. Rome, Italy, 15–18 May 2019*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No. 1293. Rome, FAO. 51 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca6684en/ca6684en.pdf>).

Appendix 1: Information on data confidentiality rules from CWP Members

(Annex 1 in Appendix 4, CWP, 2019)

1- International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)

ICCAT has in place a data dissemination policy, which must have priority over any other confidentiality rules. Under this policy, data with aggregation levels such as required for the FIRMS Tuna Atlas is publicly available.

Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)

Excerpts from IOTC Resolution 12/02:

https://iotc.org/sites/default/files/documents/compliance/cmm/iotc_cmm_12-02_en.pdf

The following policy and procedures on confidentiality of data will apply:

DATA SUBMITTED TO THE IOTC SECRETARIAT

The policy for releasing catch-and-effort, length-frequency and observer data will be as follows:

Standard stratification

a. Catch-and-effort and length-frequency data grouped by 5° longitude by 5° latitude by month for longline and 1° longitude by 1° latitude by month for surface fisheries stratified by fishing nation are considered to be in the public domain, provided that the catch of no individual vessel can be identified within a time/area stratum. In cases when an individual vessel can be identified, the data will be aggregated by time, area or flag to preclude such identification, and will then be in the public domain.

Finer level stratification

b. Catch-and-effort and length-frequency data grouped at a finer level of time-area stratification will only be released with written authorization from the sources of the data. Each data release will require the specific permission of the IOTC Executive Secretary;

c. Observer data grouped by 1° longitude by 1° latitude for surface fisheries and by 5° longitude by 5° latitude for longline, stratified by month and by fishing nation are considered to be in the public domain, provided that the activities /catch of no individual vessel can be identified within a time/area stratum;

d. A Working Party will specify the reasons, for which the data are required;

e. Individuals requesting the data are required to provide a description of the research project, including the objectives, methodology and intentions for publication. Prior to publication, the manuscript should be cleared by the IOTC Executive Secretary. The data are released only for use in the specified research project and the data must be destroyed upon completion of the project. However, with authorization from the sources of the data, catch-and-effort and length-frequency data may be released for long-term usage for research purposes, and in such cases the data need not be destroyed;

f. The identity of individual vessels will be hidden in fine-level data unless the individual requesting this information can justify its necessity;

g. Both IOTC Working Parties and individuals requesting data shall provide a report of the results of the research project to the IOTC for subsequent forwarding to the sources of the data.

The policy for releasing tagging data will be as follows:

a. Detailed tagging and recovery data are considered to be in the public domain, with the exception of any vessel names or identifiers and detailed information about the person who recovered the tag (name and address), however, requests for tagging data should be made to the IOTC Executive Secretary through the application form provided at Annex I.