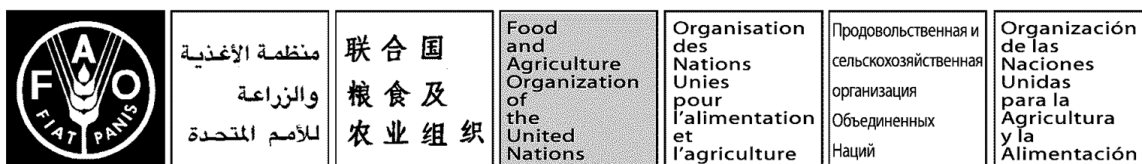


April 2022

**E**

|  |
|--|
| <b>WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)</b>  |
| <b>ELEVENTH (VIRTUAL) SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY GROUP (SAG)</b>   |
| <b>25-27 April 2022</b>  |
| <b>Intersessional report by Working Groups, to include draft Recommendations to WECAFC18, tailored Terms of Reference and 2022-2024 Workplan</b> |

## Table of Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch .....   | 2   |
| WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish of the North Brazil-Guianas Shelf .....  | 21  |
| WECAFC/CITES/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Shark Conservation and Management (Sharks WG) .....   | 29  |
| Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing .....   | 47  |
| CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM-Working Group on Spawning Aggregations .....   | 85  |
| Fishery Data and Statistics Working Group (FDS-WG).....   | 103 |
| Report of the OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Caribbean Spiny Lobster Working Group on the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries..... | 139 |
| WECAFC/CRFM/JICA/IFREMER Working Group on Fisheries using Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)   | 160 |

**CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch  
Convener - Maren Headley**

## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. Introduction and Background .....  | 2  |
| 2. Main Accomplishments during the Inter-sessional Period by the QCWG (2019-2021) .....     | 2  |
| 2. Objectives.....  | 4  |
| 3. Challenges and issues faced during Intersession Period and steps taken to mitigate ..... | 4  |
| 4. Conclusion.....  | 5  |
| Appendix 1: Draft Work Plan 2022-2024.....  | 6  |
| Appendix 2: Recommendation .....  | 9  |
| Appendix 3: Updated TOR.....  | 13 |

### **1. Introduction and Background**

The CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch (QCWG) was established in 2012 by WECAFC 14. This document outlines intersessional activities accomplished by the QCWG since the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC (WECAFC17) held 15-18<sup>th</sup> July 2019 in Miami, USA. WECAFC 17 adopted Recommendations WECAFC/17/2019/12 on improved compliance with trade measures for Queen Conch and WECAFC/17/2019/13 on Queen Conch conversion factor. Following WECAFC 17, the Fourth and Fifth meetings of the QCWG were held during 16-17 December, 2019 and 13-14 December 2021 respectively.

### **2. Main Accomplishments during the Inter-sessional Period by the QCWG (2019-2021)**

A summary of the meetings and recommendations of the fourth and fifth meeting of the QCWAG are provided below.

The Fourth meeting of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico from 16 to 17 December 2019. Discussions focused on strengthening national, regional and international efforts and uplifting responsibilities and commitments for the management and conservation and trade in queen conch and related or interacting species or fisheries in the Western Central Atlantic. Participants also considered how to strengthen the livelihoods of the people depending on these resources by following the Code of

Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and in accordance with management goals agreed in the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan, which remains a matter of priority.

The meeting adopted five recommendations on:

1. Improving Data Collection/Transparency;
2. Improving Diver safety;
3. Study on Domestic consumption of queen conch;
4. Updating the Queen Conch Stock Assessment Manual;
5. Preparation of a CITES Resolution on queen conch for consideration at the next meeting of the CITES Animals Committee and next meeting of WECAFC.

Additionally, the Scientific, Statistical and Technical Advisory Group of the Queen Conch Working Group (QCWG/SSTAG) offered several priority recommendations that were endorsed by the group including:

1. Increasing efforts that would result in better country QC landings reports using the new Conversion Factor (CF) (dirty weight) by processing grades.
2. A proposal to determine the genomic connectivity across the Caribbean using the SNPs technique that will be developed, capitalizing on the significant support already received from University of Rhode Island.
3. Two sub-groups will continue addressing recommendations needed for simplifying the process of generating NDFs, integrating the 2012 QC Working Group recommendations. One will work with the update of the NDF flow chart, while the other group will develop and assess the merits of potential scientific criteria that could be used, with respect to developing simplified NDFs.
4. QC socio-economic and reproductive aspects are among the priority research areas recommended to be developed in the short term.

The Fifth meeting of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch (QCWG) was held using a hybrid format in San Juan, Puerto Rico and online during 13-14 December, 2021. Discussions focused on the progress made towards implementation of the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan and recommendations adopted at the 17th meeting of the Commission in 2019. Participants learned about collaborative work on queen conch, especially at the regional level, and an overview of the intersessional activities undertaken. These include development of training modules for estimating population densities and annual catch quotas of queen conch, FAO's initiatives towards decent work in the fisheries sector, an FAO study on the health and safety of dive fisheries for key species in the region, a genetic project to identify stocks and design and implement a protocol to trace illegally harvested queen conch in trade, a collaborative Blue BioTrade project aimed at improving sustainability and traceability for queen conch in several WECAFC member countries, and development of a user manual and educational materials for queen conch aquaculture in the Caribbean.

The meeting adopted several recommendations, including the following key recommendations:

1. Genetic Toolkit to Trace Illegal Queen Conch in Trade;
2. Prioritize Genetic Identification of Queen Conch - Establish a Task Force – comprised of members from the QCWG and Regional Working Group on IUU fishing – to intersessionally draft a recommendation prioritizing genetic identification of queen conch to improve traceability and

combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing of queen conch in the region for potential endorsement by the Commission at its 18th meeting.

3. Simplified Guidance for Making Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs)
4. Training on Queen Conch Stock Assessment Modules –
5. Promotion of Decent Work and Health and Safety in the Fisheries Sector

The QCWG also endorsed the following recommendations for the Working Group members, QCWG/SSTAG, sub-regional partners, and other organizations as appropriate:

1. Continue monitoring implementation of the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan and provide advice as needed to address any identified gaps.
2. Report on progress on implementation of relevant CITES and WECAFC decisions and outcomes of the QCWG at relevant CITES and WECAFC meetings.
3. Continue review and consideration of options for the development of a transparent “chain of custody” procedure to track catches from their harvest location to their eventual destination.
4. Support fishers and fisheries administrations in addressing the decent work, employment, and safety-at-sea problems in the queen conch fisheries, with the engagement of fisher organizations to the greatest extent possible.
5. Support publication of FAO’s study on the health and safety for key species in fisheries using scuba diving in the WECAFC region and its proposed project.
6. Elaborate a series of technical documents on conversion factors that need to be applied and updated when Members report queen conch production and trade data across the region.
7. Conduct two pilot studies for determination of fishery production as the basis for further analysis of the long-term sustainability of queen conch and its associated fisheries.
8. Expand the collection of socio-economic information to analyze the contribution of queen conch fisheries to income, livelihoods, and trade.
9. Investigate and consider the impacts of climate change on the queen conch resources and the fishery.
10. Investigate the ecological and biological impacts of pollution on queen conch resources.
11. Determine priority next steps to implement education and outreach as stated in the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan.
12. Consult with the Blue BioTrade Project on [joint] activities to improve the sustainability and value chain of queen conch.

## **2. Objectives**

The objectives of this report are to provide a summary of the two working group reports which are outputs from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> QCWG meetings including recommendations and intersessional workplan.

## **3. Challenges and issues faced during Intersession Period and steps taken to mitigate**

Some challenges included a lack of financial resources for fisheries data collection, field research, and enforcement programs related to queen conch at the national level. The COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters also resulted in a disruption of activities related to the conservation and management of queen conch. Countries also continued to experience difficulties in completing NDFs as required for the export of queen conch under CITES. In terms of mitigation, the QCWG Task Force met a number of times during the 2019-2021 period to support the implementation of activities as set out in 2019-2021 workplan.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The QCWG continued to actively implement the 2019-2021 workplan through the successful completion of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Meetings, inter-sessional meetings of the QCWG Task Force and two meetings of the Scientific, Statistical and Technical and Advisory Sub-group (SSTAG) which developed a number of recommendations which were endorsed during the 5<sup>th</sup> QCWG meeting. These recommendations cover a wide range of areas including: Continued monitoring the implementation of the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan; relevant CITES and WECAFC decisions; traceability; decent work; safety-at-sea; expansion of collection of socio-economic information; investigating the impacts of climate change and pollution on queen conch resources and the fishery; and collaboration with the Blue BioTrade Project.

## Appendix 1: Draft Work Plan 2022-2024

The QCWG will carry out the following activities in the 2022–2024 period:

| Activity   | Timetable                                      | Responsible Entity  | Group/Theme                                 |
|--|--|---|---|
| 1. Address any gaps in implementation of the management measures in the <i>Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan</i> (endorsed by WECAFC 17, CRFM, OSPESCA and CFMC), and continue to monitor implementation of the plan.  | January 2022 onwards                           | CFMC, WECAFC, and CRFM, OSPESCA and the WG members  | Technical/Scientific Advisory/Collaboration |
| 2. Finalize, publish and disseminate the report of the hybrid WG meeting hosted in Puerto Rico (in hard copies and on-line on <a href="http://www.strombusgigas.com/index.htm">http://www.strombusgigas.com/index.htm</a> and at <a href="http://www.WECAFC.org">www.WECAFC.org</a> ; including the national summary reports).   | March 2022                                     | CFMC and FAO with inputs from meeting participants  | Communication/Dissemination                 |
| 3. Provide technical and scientific advice to national governments, and support national consultations as needed in the region, to advance implementation of the <i>Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan</i> and relevant decisions and recommendations adopted by CITES and WECAFC.  | January 2022 onwards                           | WG members (national fisheries and CITES authorities), CRFM, OSPESCA, CITES, CFMC, FAO/WECAFC, SSTAG                    | Technical/Scientific Advisory/Collaboration |
| 4. Report on progress with the implementation of relevant CITES and WECAFC decisions, and the outcomes of the Working Group – at the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 18th session of WECAFC, July 2022;</li> <li>● 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES, November 2022; and consider the possibility of organizing a side-event</li> <li>● 32<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Animals Committee, 2023</li> </ul> | In advance of deadlines for reporting required | CITES/Fisheries authorities of QC range States attending these meetings (as appropriate); CITES and WECAFC Secretariats | Communication/Dissemination/Collaboration   |
| 5. Support fishers and fisheries administrations in addressing the decent work, employment, and safety-at-sea problems in the queen conch fisheries, in particular; fisher organizations should be engaged as much as possible for these activities.   | January 2022 onwards                           | NOAA Fisheries/<br><br>CFMC and FAO with the fisheries authorities in the region  | Capacity Building                           |

|  |                              |   |  |
|--|------------------------------|---|--|
| 6. Prepare a recommendation on the promotion of decent work, health, and safety in the fisheries sector for potential endorsement by the Commission at WECAFC18.   | January 2022 – February 2022 | WECAFC/FAO with CRFM and OSPESCA  | Technical/Scientific Advisory/Collaboration                    |
| 7. Support publication of the health and safety study and proposed project.  | January – September 2022     |   | Communication/Dissemination                                    |
| 8. Continue the review and consideration of options for the development of a transparent “chain of custody” procedure to track catches from their harvest location to their eventual destination.  | January 2022 onwards         | OSPESCA, CRFM, NOAA Fisheries/CFMC with CITES, WECAFC/FAO and the fisheries authorities in the region | Technical/Scientific Advisory/Collaboration                    |
| 9. Advance research to determine genetic connectivity of queen conch across the Caribbean, identify stocks, and design/implement a protocol to trace illegally harvested queen conch in trade. Engage countries to identify points of contact to assist with sample collection and participation in this research.                                     | January 2022 onwards         | SSTAG with support of WECAFC/FAO and CITES  | Technical/Scientific Advisory/Collaboration                    |
| 10. Create a Task Force – comprised of members from the QCWG and Regional Working Group on IUU fishing – to intersessionally draft a recommendation prioritizing genetic identification of queen conch to improve traceability and combat IUU fishing in the region for the QCWG to consider for potential endorsement by the Commission at WECAFC 18. | January 2022 – February 2022 | SSTAG, WECAFC, CFMC, CRFM, OSPESCA  | Technical/Scientific Advisory/Collaboration                    |
| 11. Expand the collection of socio-economic information to analyze contribution of queen conch fisheries to income, livelihoods, and trade.  | January 2022 onwards         | CFMC, WECAFC, and CRFM, OSPESCA and the WG members  | Technical/Scientific Advisory/Collaboration                    |
| 12. Provide training on the use of modules for the assessment of queen conch stocks through a regional conference.   | January 2022 onwards         | SSTAG with support from CFMC, WECAFC/FAO  | Technical/Scientific Advisory/Collaboration /Capacity Building |
| 13. Conduct two pilot studies for determination of fishery production as the basis for further analysis of the long-term sustainability of the species and its associated fisheries.   | January 2022                 | SSTAG with support from CFMC, WECAFC/FAO  | Technical/Scientific Advisory/Collaboration                    |
| 14. Investigate and consider the impacts of climate  | January 2022                 | WG members with   | Technical/Scientific   |

|  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| change on the queen conch resources and the fishery.   | onwards   | support from CFMC, WECAFC/FAO   | Advisory/Collaboration   |
| 15. Investigate the ecological and biological impacts of pollution on queen conch resources.   | January 2022 onwards  | WG members with support from CFMC, WECAFC/FAO   | Technical/Scientific Advisory/Collaboration                    |
| 16. Continue / expand the scientific support to apply updated conversion factors by all countries with a queen conch fishery. For this purpose, the Scientific and Statistical Sub-Group (SST Sub-group) has:<br><br>Elaborated a series of technical documents that on conversion factors that need to be apply and updated when reporting conch production / trade data across the region.                   | Work in progress initiated in 2019 and will continue over the next two years. | CFMC/WECAFC, SST Sub-group membership, CITES  | Technical/Scientific Advisory/Collaboration                    |
| 17. Continue review of existing queen conch NDFs and guidance in order to develop a simplified template for making non-detriment findings for queen conch, in consultation with the CITES Animals Committee, dissemination of the template to the Working Group membership for their consideration, and supporting selected countries in applying the templates and sharing the results at the regional level. | Work in progress initiated in 2019 and will continue over the next two years. | CFMC/WECAFC, SST Sub-group membership, CITES  | Technical/Scientific Advisory/Collaboration /Capacity Building |
| 18. Determine priority next steps to implement education and outreach as stated in the <i>Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan</i> .  | January 2022 onwards  | CFMC/WECAFC Secretariat and the Working Group   | Communication/Collaboration/Education and Outreach             |
| 19. Consult with the PROCARIBE+ project to identify potential areas for improving the sustainability of the queen conch fishery including contributions to the State of the Marine Environment and Associated Economies (SOME) reporting mechanism, habitat impacts/restoration and an updated Strategic Action Program Monitoring and Evaluation framework.   | January 2022 onwards  | CFMC, the WECAFC Secretariat too and/or the relevant sub-regional partners (CRFM, OSPESCA, Coordination Mechanism for Integrated Ocean Governance in the Wider Caribbean) | Monitoring/Evaluation /Collaboration                           |



|   |                            |   |               |
|---|----------------------------|---|---------------|
| 20. Collaborate with the Blue BioTrade Project regarding improved trade and value-chain activities. | January 2022 onwards       | CFMC/WECAFC Secretariat and the Working Group | Collaboration |
| 21. Continue support to the development of the WECAFC Strategic Plan 2021-2027                      | January 2022-February 2022 | CFMC/WECAFC Secretariat and the Working Group | Collaboration |
| 22. Review and finalize the new TORs for the QCWG   | January 2022-February 2022 | CFMC/WECAFC Secretariat and the Working Group | Collaboration |

## Appendix 2: Recommendation

### **(draft) Recommendation WECAFC/XVIII/2022/XX on increased efforts in the implementation of the Regional Queen Conch Fishery Management and Conservation Plan in the WECAFC region**

“Managing queen conch fisheries presents a broad range of challenges, including the complex biology of the species, uncertainty of catch and effort data, illegal trade, weak surveillance and enforcement mechanisms, unsustainable fishing practices, and even the frequency of severe dive accidents impacting on the quality of life and living conditions of entire towns. Problems in the fishery are dynamic, adding to the complexity of the issues which fishery sector managers have to face and for which they typically do not have enough human, technical and/or financial resources.<sup>1</sup>”

“Queen conch fisheries are believed to be fully developed in most areas, and that the alleged increase in levels of illegal fishing often occurs due to a lack of knowledge, awareness and enforcement.<sup>2</sup>”

The need for coordinated management of the queen conch has long been recognized by fisheries scientists and managers in the Wider Caribbean region. The Regional Queen Conch Fishery Management and Conservation Plan provides a set of management measures that can be applied at the regional or sub-regional level for the sustainability of queen conch populations, the maintenance of a healthy fishery and the sustenance of fishers and fishers’ communities. As the Plan is progressively implemented, improvement in the long-term governance of queen conch fisheries across the Caribbean is expected, as stated in strategy 4B of the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) of the “Sustainable Management of the Shared Marine Resources of the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) and Adjacent Regions.”

<sup>1</sup> Prada, M. C.; Appeldoorn, R. S.; Van Eijs, S. & Pérez, M. M. 2017. Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper No. 610. Rome, FAO. 70 pp.

<sup>2</sup> Theile, S. 2005. Status of the queen conch, *Strombus gigas* stocks, management and trade in the Caribbean: A CITES review. Proc. Annu. Gulf Caribb. Fish. Inst., 56: 675–694.

The 14 management measures recommended in this Regional Queen Conch Fishery Management and Conservation Plan were analyzed by experts participating in the Second Meeting of the WECAFC/CFMC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group, held in Panama from 18 to 20 November 2014. Implementation status of the 14 management measures have been discussed at the Third and Fourth meetings of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch respectively held in 2018 and 2019. In general, Member States have made improvements in the management of their fisheries at the national levels through implementation of the measures. However, given the differences in scales, gears, products, markets and geographic locations of Member States, harmonization of management measures at the regional level has not occurred yet. The degree of implementation of the Regional Queen Conch Regional Management and Conservation Plan was preliminarily evaluated using quantitative values collected in 2019-2020, and the Working Group found that some progress was made.

To help address the issue of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, it is important to note the management measure for traceability of queen conch throughout the value chain identified in the Regional Queen Conch Management and Conservation Plan. Traceability can be advantageous by helping to ensure that seafood caught by legal versus illegal fishing practices can be distinguished, allowing legally harvested products to fetch higher prices<sup>3</sup>. This management measure is also aligned with the objectives of the Regional Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing in WECAFC Member Countries (RPOA-IUU) (2019-2029) which are to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing in the area of competence of the WECAFC through effective information-sharing and regional cooperation; and contribute to promoting the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources in the WECAFC area, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

The Fifth meeting of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch was held during 13-14 December 2021 in Puerto Rico and online. The purposes of the meeting were to continue monitoring implementation of the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan, and to discuss implementation of the Recommendations developed by the Working Group and the Scientific, Statistical and Technical Advisory Group (SSTAG), as well as other items for collaboration called for in the Terms of Reference for the Working Group. Meeting participants also discussed the progress of activities as called for in the Work Plan for 2019 – 2021 and the implementation of Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/12 on Improved Compliance with Trade Measures for Queen Conch and Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/13 on Queen Conch Conversion Factor adopted at WECAFC17. An updated Work Plan for 2021-2024 was also developed. The Fifth Meeting of the Working Group agreed that any gaps in implementation of the management measures in the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan should be addressed and continued monitoring of the implementation status was required. There was also discussion about the ongoing issue of IUU fishing and the possibility of using genetic techniques to determine the origin of queen conch products. The Fifth meeting agreed that the

---

<sup>3</sup> Prada, M. C.; Appeldoorn, R. S.; Van Eijs, S. & Pérez, M. M. 2017. Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper No. 610. Rome, FAO. 70 pp.

QCWG should liaise with the IUU Working Group to develop a joint recommendation to address IUU fishing in queen conch fisheries in the region.

It is expected that additional human, technical and financial resources will be required by the Member States and the WECAFC Secretariat in order to continue supporting the implementation of the management measures outlined in the Regional Queen Conch Fishery Management and Conservation Plan.

Failing to approve this recommendation will undermine the sustainable management and conservation of the queen conch resource and hinder the development of genetic tools to help combat IUU fishing in the queen conch fishery.

## **1. Continued support for implementation of the QC regional management and conservation plan**

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

RECALLING the establishment of the WECAFC Working Group on Queen Conch by WECAFC 14 in 2012;

REAFFIRMING the commitments made by Queen Conch range States at the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP16, Bangkok, 3–14 March 2013) to implement the Decisions on “Regional cooperation on the management of and trade in the Queen Conch (*Strombus gigas*)” agreed at CoP16;

FURTHER REAFFIRMING Recommendation WECAFC/16/2016/1 and the Decisions 17.285–17.290 related to queen conch adopted at 17th Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP17, Johannesburg, 24 September–4 October 2016) (see FAO Technical Paper No. 610), calling upon WECAFC members to implement the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan;

COGNIZANT of the fact that National CITES Management Authorities are required to make a “Legal Acquisition Finding” before issuing an export permit for queen conch and noting that a resolution on guidance to CITES Parties for making Legal Acquisition Findings was adopted at CoP18 (Geneva, Switzerland 17–28 August 2019).

RECALLING the outcomes of the Third and Fourth meetings of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch, respectively held in Panama, 30th October– 1st November 2018 with support from the European Union, NOAA Fisheries and FAO; and in San Juan, Puerto Rico, from 16 to 17 December 2019 with support from NOAA Fisheries and FAO.

RECALLING that the Commission adopted Recommendation WECAFC/16/2016/1 “on the regional plan for the management and conservation of Queen conch in the WECAFC area – addendum to recommendation WECAFC/15/2014/3 on the management and conservation of queen conch in the WECAFC area; and Recommendations WECAFC/17/2019/12 on improved compliance with trade measures for Queen Conch and WECAFC/17/2019/13 on Queen Conch conversion factor.

NOTING the Regional Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in WECAFC Member Countries (2019-2029) which was developed by the Joint WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA Regional Working Group on IUU (RWG-IUU) Fishing and endorsed at the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission;

RECALLING that the RPOA-IUU Fishing sets out 28 measures and actions to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing in the Wider Caribbean Region and to fulfill the WECAFC Member States’ obligations in the capacities as port, flag, coastal and market State under the aspects of Policy and legal framework, MCS and operations, Regional information-sharing and cooperation Capacity development;

*ADOPTS* in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the RECOMMENDATION that:

Given the importance of evaluating the degree of implementation of the Regional Queen Conch Management and Conservation Plan, the quantitative values collected in 2019-2020 should be updated with additional data from all countries in the Wider Caribbean participating in the queen conch fishery using the information presented at the 2021 Working Group meeting.

Monitoring the plan’s implementation should be done to increase communication, coordination, and planning towards the application of ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries of this valuable resource.

Genetic work utilizing the Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs) technique or other similarly advanced genetic techniques should be considered in order to develop appropriate and validated genetic markers. This technique has the potential to identify spatial distribution of the species, and thus would provide useful information for queen conch connectivity and traceability. This would also support the development of Legal Acquisition Findings. The SNPs technique also has the potential to map the genes and provide information about population genetic structure and thus allow for identification of spatial variability (or distribution) of the species as required under CITES.

Member States will participate in the development of this genetic work and in order to be statistically robust, at least 15 countries would be required to provide genetic samples of queen conch.

The QC Scientific, Statistical and Technical and Advisory Sub-group (SSTAG) should liaise with the Regional Working Group on IUU Fishing to further strengthen activities to counteract IUU fishing of queen conch and advance implementation of the 28 measures and actions identified in the RPOA-IUU fishing.

## **Appendix 3: Updated TOR**

### **WORKING GROUPS TERMS OF REFERENCE DRAFT TEMPLATE**

**[CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen conch]**

**[insert date of endorsement of ToRs by Commission]**

#### **CONTENTS**

|       |   |    |
|-------|---|----|
| I.    | Background and justification  | 14 |
| II.   | Role of the Working Group   | 15 |
|       | a) Scope of the Work  | 15 |
|       | b) Goal   | 15 |
|       | c) Tasks/ functions   | 15 |
|       | d) Membership   | 16 |
| III.  | Mode of Operation:  | 16 |
|       | a) Role of Countries  | 16 |
|       | b) Role of Convener   | 16 |
|       | c) Election and role of Convener of the Working Group   | 17 |
|       | d) Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat  | 17 |
|       | e) Roles of other Subregional organizations (e.g. CFMC, CRFM, ICCAT, OSPESCA, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECS, etc.) | 18 |
| IV.   | Outputs   | 18 |
| V.    | Communication   | 18 |
| VI.   | Working Group meetings and cost   | 18 |
| VII.  | Amendments to the Terms of Reference  | 19 |
| VIII. | Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions   | 19 |

## I. Background and justification

Fishery management advice and recommendations, based on the best available scientific information, are provided to WECAFC member countries for their implementation by dedicated Working Groups, established by the Commission.

The Working Groups that were established or confirmed in the subsequent sessions since the 14th session of the Commission in 2012 are the following:

1. [OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Caribbean Spiny Lobster](#)
2. [CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch](#)
3. [WECAFC Working Group on the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries](#)
4. [WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries](#)
5. [CRFM/WECAFC/JICA/IFREMER Working Group on Fisheries Using fish aggregating devices \(FADS\)](#)
6. [CRFM/WECAFC Working Group on Flyingfish in the Eastern Caribbean \(established since the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC as the flyingfish- Dolphinfish WG\)](#)
7. [WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Northern Brazil-Guianas Shelf](#)
8. [CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations](#)
9. [Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing \(RWG-IUU\)](#)
10. [WECAFC Working Group for the Conservation and Management of Sharks in the Wider Caribbean Region](#)
11. [WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group \(FDS-WG\)](#)

Most Working Groups are joint working groups with other regional partner institutions, such as the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), the Organization of Fisheries for the Central American Isthmus (OSPESCA), the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC), the French Research Institute for Exploration of the Sea (IFREMER), etc. Fishery scientists, experts, managers and decision-makers of member countries, Regional partner organizations including academia and NGOs participate in the Working Groups, which have specific terms of reference that are time bound. The data used by the Working Groups to assess the status of fish stocks, to conduct fishery assessments and to generate fishery management advice and recommendations to the Commission are collected by the participating countries and NGOs.

The key drivers behind the establishment of these working groups are the need to collaborate and cooperate in the assessment and management of shared resources; need to standardize data collection and reporting systems to enable assessment of stock status using data and information from a range of countries that target the stock/species/resources throughout their distribution range; need to standardize conservation and management measures for effective management, need for training and capacity building to improve data collection and assessment of the status of fisheries/fish stocks; etc.

In undertaking its work, the Working Group will pay due attention to the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its related guidelines, including the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries especially in regards to livelihoods and food security of communities and value chain stakeholders dependent on sustainable management of these natural

resources, as well as their contribution to achieving the targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, namely SDG 1 and 2; 5, 8; 12, 13 and 14, as well as any other agreed international or regional instruments for the conservation and management of fisheries, and the principles of precautionary, participatory and ecosystem approaches to fisheries management. The activities of the WG are also guided by any specific regional or international fisheries management or related obligations and initiatives or instruments of relevance to the respective resources associated with the specific WG – e.g. any FMPs, Declarations, agreed CMMS, regional strategies, regulations, etc.

## **II. Role of the Working Group**

### **a) Scope of the Work**

The scope of each Working Group is to provide scientific and management advice for the sustainable management, conservation and development of living marine resources in the area of competence of WECAFC. This includes the development and support to national and regional plans of action in order to regulate target and bycatch fisheries, as well as manage existing populations within the region. Using a multidisciplinary approach, the working group will contribute to the sustainable management by providing management advice to Members of WECAFC based on the best available scientific knowledge/evidence and traditional/local ecological knowledge

In pursuing this goal, the Working Group will contribute to the fulfilment of national and regional responsibilities for the marine environment and for the management of [queen conch] and related or interacting species or fisheries in the WECAFC Region.

### **b) Goal**

The goal of each Working Group is to inform and provide guidance for the management of living marine resources in WECAFC members in such a manner as to promote transformation to responsible fisheries that provide economic opportunities, food security and human nutrition, secure social wellbeing while ensuring the conservation of living marine resources and the protection of marine biodiversity.

### **c) Tasks/ functions**

The Working Group will:

- Collect, review and share the existing (past and present) data and information on the fishery in the WECAFC area, involving the fishers and private sector, especially women and youth, in addition to identifying the potential for sustainable management and development of such fisheries in the region.
- Analyze the data and information collected from capture fisheries and aquaculture production and make recommendations for the sustainability of the fisheries in the WECAFC region.
- Monitor changes in distribution and abundance of [queen conch] in the WECAFC region.
- Develop common and feasible methodologies for assessment and monitoring of the fish stock especially in data poor fisheries.
- Seek partnerships with other institutions that could provide assistance in the monitoring, evaluation, and recommendations for management for sustainable use, protection and conservation of the resources.

- Monitor and provide advice on the management and implementation of regional strategies, regulations and management plans to protect the fish resources.
- Establish communication between the members of the Working Group, other Working Groups and relevant parties on issues of common interest in order to strengthen regional collaboration in the assessment and management of living marine resources.
- Report to the Commission and contribute to communication and visibility of the deliverables of the Working Group as may be needed.
- Identify needs of communities dependent on the fishery resources and investigate alternative livelihoods from fisheries and aquaculture (recreational fishing, hospitality and tourism, etc.)
- Continue to assess the implementation status of the 14 management measures in the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan.
- Progressively advance in developing priority research at the regional level identified by the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen conch (i.e. genetic connectivity, reproductive success and update of population dynamics parameters) that serve as a basis for better fisheries management.
- Expand the collection of socio-economic information to analyze how current a decline in the queen conch stock may decline impacts income, livelihoods, trade, and determine the need for innovative management strategies.

#### **d) Membership**

Membership of the Working Group shall consist of all Member States of CRFM and WECAFC, OSPESCA, including overseas territories and Departments.

### **III. Mode of Operation:**

#### **a) Role of Countries**

The members of the Working Group will play a leading role in its activities through the following activities and commitments:

- Participate in agreed activities of the Working Group, and ensure the participation of appropriate experts;
- Implement, at the National level, the work identified in the WECAFC endorsed work plan (as appropriate);
- Report on implementation of agreed conservation and management measures
- Assist with mobilization of resources for the activities of the Working Group;
- Facilitate the organization of Working Group meetings in the languages of the Commission
- Host Working Group meetings on a rotational basis;
- Facilitate the identification of the Convener of the Working Group.

#### **b) Role of Convener**

The Convener of the Working Group will play a leading role during the organization of the meetings and subsequent follow up with the Secretariat of WECAFC by coordinating the inputs of the members of the Working Group. The Convener should:



- Seek experts from among the WECAFC Members, contact potential partner organizations, and solicit their interest to join in the Working Group;
- Call for meetings as appropriate;
- Ensure that technical contributions are received in a timely manner and in the appropriate format;
- Ensure that outputs are delivered as agreed during each meeting;
- Collaborate closely with FAO-WECAFC and other sub-regional and regional organizations as appropriate;
- Assist in the preparation and publication process of the proceedings of the Working Group meeting;
- Participate (in person or virtually) at the SAG meetings to present the draft working documents and provide any clarifications as required;
- Facilitate the review by the Working Group membership within a reasonable period of time (max. 15 days) on suggested edits or modifications as considered necessary to address the comments of the SAG and the return of the revised document to the WECAFC Secretariat for distribution and consideration by the Commission;
- Participate in the Commission's sessions (physically or virtually) if required, to support the Secretariat in clarifying or substantiating some points of the draft working documents;
- Assist in the relevant processes to gather information in support of seeking funds to implement priority activities of the Working Group.

### **c) Election and role of Convener of the Working Group**

- The Working Group shall elect a Convener from among its Members to serve over a two-year period. The term of office of the Convener may be extended as determined appropriate. In the case where another qualified Convener is not available, the Convener's term may be renewed for an additional two-year term until another Convener is selected.

### **d) Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat**

The FAO/WECAFC Secretariat will play a supporting role in the activities of the Working Group by assisting in:

- Coordinating activities of the Working Group, among WECAFC and Non-WECAFC Members, at the wider regional level (including facilitate procurement of funding);
- Assisting with logistical arrangements for the convening of meetings of the Working Group;
- Providing technical assistance, such as a technical secretary or research support, if needed and as resources permit;
- Liaising with other Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) active in the Wider Caribbean Region and neighboring areas for their engagement as much as possible in the work of the Working Group; these RFBs include amongst others OSPESCA, CRFM, CFMC, ICCAT, NAFO, NEAFC, CECAF, COPPESAALC, etc;
- Liaising with other relevant regional organizations as appropriate, such as the Sargasso Sea Commission, SPAW Protocol, etc;
- Coordinating the formulation and adoption of recommendations and/or resolutions and reports/documents by the Working Group so as to facilitate the decision-making process by the Commission;

- Ensuring the strategic linkage between the work of the Working Group and programmes and projects hosted to support the fisheries and healthy ecosystems framework of the CLME+ and any future phase of this project;
- Facilitating training and collaboration of WECAFC Member States and sub-regional training institutions as appropriate and based on available resources.

**e) Roles of other Subregional organizations (e.g. CFMC, CRFM, ICCAT, OSPESCA, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECS, etc.)**

Sub-regional organizations have an important role to play in assisting their member countries to participate fully in the activities of the Working Group. Therefore, they may be invited to:

- Provide expertise, technical assistance and support;
- Facilitate procurement of funding when possible;
- Collaborate in implementing the activities of the Working Group;
- Collaborate with the WECAFC Secretariat and sub-regional organizations in coordinating the activities of the Working Group;
- Facilitate the decision-making process at the Sub-regional level.

#### **IV. Outputs**

In discharging its duties, the Working Group will deliver the following outputs:

- Biennial Work Plans;
- Reports on assessment of the status of fish stocks;
- Draft Fisheries Management Plans;
- Draft Regional Plans of Actions;
- Proposed Recommendations and Resolutions to the Commission,
- Revised TORs as needed

#### **V. Communication**

A mechanism for on-going communication among Working Group members (video conference, Skype, zoom meeting and email), is essential to ensure that the work of the group is sustained between meetings. It must include all Working Group members and the communication tools must be accessible to all Working Group members.

The successful functioning of the Working Group also requires that each member country and organization/ agency identify a national node or focal point who will be contacted through the WECAFC National Focal Point and technically coordinate at national level all matters pertinent to the WG. The outputs of the Working Group will be communicated through working group reports to WECAFC, OSPESCA, CFMC, CRFM, CITES, UNEP-CEP, ICCAT, IFREMER, and national fishery administrations via the WECAFC Secretariat.

#### **VI. Working Group meetings and cost**

The Working Group should meet physically or virtually on a regular basis, the timing of which is decided by the members, but at a minimum once every two years. The meetings should be of 2-5 days' duration. The meetings should use cost effective accommodations and institutional facilities

and where possible take advantage of other meetings in the region. Meetings shall be chaired by the Convener of the Working Group. The reports of the meetings will be formally submitted to OSPESCA, WECAFC, CFMC and CRFM, ICCAT, CITES, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Network, etc.

## **VII. Amendments to the Terms of Reference**

Amendment of these terms of reference may be done at each biennial meeting of the Commission for implementation by the working groups in the subsequent intersessional period.

## **VIII. Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions**

[Standardized templates will ensure a common understanding of what should be included in draft recommendations and resolutions, ease the reporting of deliverables as well as facilitate their review by other WECAFC bodies, as appropriate. Working Groups should include the following elements when preparing draft recommendations and resolutions to be presented to the WECAFC membership or other WECAFC bodies (e.g. the Scientific Advisory Group or other WECAFC Working Groups).

### **Recommendations and Resolutions**

Draft recommendations and resolutions for review by other WECAFC bodies and the WECAFC membership should include the following elements:

- **Cover Note**: A brief cover note for draft recommendations and/or resolutions should be provided to assist reviewers. The cover note should include a clear, candid, and transparent explanation of:
  - a. why the action was developed;
  - b. at which Working Group meeting it was discussed;
  - c. a brief overview of how the Working Group arrived at its decision to put the action forward;
  - d. how the action will impact future WECAFC activities, including, where relevant any possible changes in resource or workload requirements for Members or the WECAFC Secretariat;
  - e. the ramifications of \*not\* approving the recommended action;
  - f. the full picture of the context for the recommended action.
- **Preambular Text**: This should provide essential elements to highlight the context and intent of the proposed action in a concise bulleted format. The preambular text should include only the core historical elements and should include references to related decisions or measures.
- **Action Text**: This should indicate clearly what action(s) the Working Group is taking, or is asking the WECAFC Membership to take, at a national, subregional, and/or regional level, including specific timelines to which the action(s) will adhere.

Considering that each Working Group can have more than one meeting, and more than one issue to address during each intersessional period, the Working Groups can produce several reports/documents or draft resolutions/recommendations. In order to facilitate analysis by the

Commission, each Working Group shall prepare a single set of recommendations and/or resolutions organized by fishery or by theme, including all the topics addressed in the intersessional meetings. In this regard, the Commission would consider a single set of draft recommendations and/or resolutions for spiny lobster, queen conch, flying fish and dolphinfish, FADs, FDS, etc.

The Working Groups shall refer relevant recommendations and resolutions of a scientific nature to the SAG for scientific review at least one month before the meeting of SAG, in order to provide adequate time to the Secretariat and SAG members to review them before the meeting. This will improve the efficiency of the reviews during the SAG sessions.

**WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish of the  
North Brazil-Guianas Shelf**

**Convener – Fabian Blanchard**

**Table of Contents**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. Background .....   | 22 |
| 2. Scope and goal .....   | 22 |
| 3. Third meeting, Paramaribo, Suriname 26-27 November 2019 .....  | 23 |
| a. Objectives.....  | 23 |
| b. Main accomplishments .....   | 23 |
| 4. Fourth meeting Virtual, 18-19 November 2020 .....  | 24 |
| a. Objectives.....  | 24 |
| b. Main accomplishments .....   | 24 |
| 5. Recommendations from the shrimp and groundfish working group for the 18th Session of the<br>Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) ..... | 25 |
| 6. Work plan.....   | 27 |
| 7. Participants .....   | 28 |

## **1. Background**

The current version of the working group met for the first time in September 2015 in response to the recommendation of the 15th Session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission to reactivate the working group. During this first session of the reactivated Working Group held on the 7-8th of September 2015, members discussed the status of the shrimp and groundfish stocks, investment options for shrimp and groundfish fisheries in the sub-region and opportunities to harmonize fisheries management measures that would increase financial and environmental sustainability of the sector. Among others, recommendations were made to increase collaboration between the countries on stock assessments of the shrimp and groundfish resources, to build capacity to carry out the necessary analyses in support of fisheries management decision making, to develop a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing as well as a sub-regional shrimp and groundfish fishery management plan for the Northern Brazil-Guianas Shelf countries.

During the first meeting participants also agreed to terms of reference for the working group., which were endorsed at the 16th Session of WECAFC, called upon WECAFC, CRFM and IFREMER to ensure regular meetings of the working group, given the crucial social and economic impact of these fisheries and called upon all partners and projects in the region to work together to implement the CLME+ Strategic Action Programme (SAP).

The Working Group successive meetings, 2018, 2019 and 2020, were organised with support from the FAO CLME+ Sub-project on Shrimp and Groundfish of the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (NBSLME) and the Project on Sustainable Management of Bycatch in Latin America and Caribbean Trawl Fisheries (REBYC-II LAC).

## **2. Scope and goal**

Provide scientific and management advice for the sustainable management of the shrimp and groundfish resources of the Northern Brazil-Guianas shelf in the WECAFC Region. In undertaking its work, the Working Group will pay due attention to the Code of Conduct's Article 6.4 of the general principles and the principles of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries.

Using a multidisciplinary approach, the Working Group will contribute to the sustainable management of the shrimp and groundfish resources of the Brazil-Guianas shelf by providing management advice to Members of WECAFC based on the best available knowledge. In pursuing this goal, the Working Group will contribute to the fulfilment of national and regional responsibilities for the marine environment and for the management of the shrimp and groundfish resources and related or interacting species or fisheries in the WECAFC Region under the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, in line with the principles of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and in accordance with agreed management goals.

### **3. Third meeting, Paramaribo, Suriname 26-27 November 2019**

#### **a. Objectives**

For this session, the main objectives of the meeting were:

- To present and discuss updated information on status of shrimp and groundfish stocks.
- To assess the status of National Inter-Sectoral Committees on fisheries
- Review and discuss a draft sub-regional management plan for the shrimp and groundfish resources and the related national implementation plans and agree on next steps towards finalization of these plans.
- Review regional strategy for by-catch management in bottom trawl fisheries and provide recommendations for next steps in its development.
- Review Monitoring and Evaluation indicators for the shrimp and groundfish fisheries in the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem.
- Provide recommendations on assessment and management of shrimp and groundfish fisheries of the North Brazil-Guianas Shelf.

#### **b. Main accomplishments**

The Third Meeting of the WG was held in Paramaribo, Suriname, 26-27 November 2019. An update on stock status of shrimp and groundfish species for each country in the Northern Brazil-Guianas shelf was presented and showed decreasing trends in apparent abundance. The assessed stocks appeared to be fully exploited or overexploited. An update on genetic studies of shrimp populations in the region showed that no cryptic species were present and only the southern brown shrimp (*Farfantepenaeus subtilis*) was found in samples from Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. Regarding the Atlantic seabob (*Xiphopenaeus kroyeri*) a genetic analysis revealed a common population structure in samples obtained from French Guiana, Guyana and Suriname. Furthermore, an update was presented on the status of the WECAFC-FIRMS stocks and fisheries inventories and the related published and draft fact sheets. The need to complete draft records for the shrimp and groundfish fisheries of the North Brazil-Guianas shelf was underlined. The member countries representatives also presented an update on the status and development of their national fisheries management plans, followed by a discussion about the status and necessary steps to develop a sub-regional EAF management plan for shrimp and groundfish. Additionally, advances in a gender analysis along the small-scale fisheries value chain in Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago was presented, as well as an update regarding progress with the development of the sub-regional Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Indicators to inform policy making on governance effectiveness.

Working Group participants reviewed and discussed the draft regional strategy for bycatch management in the WECAFC Area developed by the REBYC II LAC project. Finally, they also discussed the needs and priorities to combat IUU fishing in the Northern Brazil-Guianas-shelf.

## **4. Fourth meeting (virtual), 18-19 November 2020**

### **a. Objectives**

For this session, the main objectives of the meeting are:

- To present and review the final draft of the sub-regional fisheries strategy and management plan.
- To present an update on status of National fisheries management plans
- To provide feedback on outcomes of the 2nd FDS WG meeting
- Present update on FIRMS inventories and vessel mapping
- Review Monitoring and Evaluation indicators for the shrimp and groundfish fisheries in the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem.

### **b. Main accomplishments**

The final draft of the Sub-regional EAF Strategy and Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) for the shrimp and groundfish fisheries of the North Brazil-Guianas Shelf was reviewed. Among the issues discussed were options for the institutional mechanisms, including a technical and a decision-making body, required for implementation of the strategy and FMP. Representatives of Brazil, Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago presented an overview of the current status and outlook of their respective fisheries and national FMPs. While progress has been made toward management of the shrimp and groundfish fisheries, several challenges were encountered and some stocks continued to be overexploited.

Results were presented of the pilot application of the Governance Effectiveness Assessment Framework in fisheries, pollution, and habitats and biodiversity on the North Brazil Shelf. The need for improvement in data collection was highlighted. In addition, the key findings of a decent work assessment of the shrimp and groundfish fisheries in Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago as well as at the regional level were discussed and recommendations presented. A major concern is IUU fishing in the context of human and labour rights violations and undocumented migrant workers. An update of the FIRMS inventories indicated that 29 resource fact sheets and 35 fisheries fact sheets for the WECAFC region have been produced for the reporting period 2016–2020. A call was made for Member States to submit fishery inventory updates. The proposed revised structure of the list of main species for WECAFC as well as the preliminary boundary proposals regarding FAO Fishing area 31 were discussed by participants.

An update on vessel mapping for the WECAFC-proposed regional classification of fleet segments was presented. This is based on classifying fishing vessels according to the predominant gear used, to match the diversity of artisanal vessels and gear types that exist in the WECAFC region. The proposed modified structure of the interim Data Collection Reference Framework (iDCRF) and data policy were discussed. Participants reviewed and validated the WECAFC decision support system, which will support decision making in ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF)-ecosystem based management (EBM) in the region. The current status of a concept for a follow-up Global Environment Facility (GEF) project was presented. Its aim is to strengthen capacity for implementing national and sub-regional shrimp and groundfish EAF management plans in Brazil, Guyana,



Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Participants were also introduced to the ongoing FAO process to improve the methodology used in the FAO State of Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) assessment.

## **5. Recommendations from the shrimp and groundfish working group for the 18th Session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC)**

1. Strengthen management, data collection and quality, periodic stock assessment and continue enhancing capacity on stock assessment including for data limited fisheries;
2. WECAFC members are encouraged to carry out joint stock assessments and design common management measures taking into account available scientific knowledge on stock identification;
3. WECAFC members continue the collaborative research to complement and refine results on stock identification and extend research to additional shrimp and groundfish species.
4. Support the establishment of a formal mechanism for technical advice, decision-making and implementation for the shrimp and groundfish resources of the North Brazil-Guianas Shelf.
5. Revise the terms of reference of the WG to reflect expected tasks on provision of advice to a formal shrimp and groundfish resources management mechanism in the North Brazil-Guianas shelf.
6. The national inter-sectoral committees (NICs) are strengthened and, where necessary and appropriate, special NIC sub-committees (e.g. Atlantic seabob Working Group) be employed to explore particular issues (e.g. pollution, piracy, Sargassum).
7. Develop studies in the social dimension in fisheries to further gender and gender gap analysis at the country and multi-country/sub-regional level in order to mainstream gender in fisheries policies. Further develop analysis of decent work and working conditions in order to mainstream decent work on vessels and along the value chains for small scale and industrial fisheries.
8. WECAFC to collaborate with OSPESCA and CRFM to develop a regional strategy for management of bycatch in shrimp/bottom trawl fisheries to be completed in a consultative process that includes all stakeholders with the support of the REBYC-II LAC project and presented to the 18th Session of WECAFC for its review and endorsement.
9. Countries provide, in a timely manner, available fishery data and information on the priority species - as delineated in the WECAFC and interim DCRF - and for the related stocks and fisheries inventories, to populate and maintain the WECAFC regional database which supports needs for stock assessment, fisheries management plans and a decision support system.
10. Adopt the sub-regional strategic and management plans on shrimp and groundfish fisheries in the North Brazil-Guianas Shelf that harmonize management practices within the sub-region and define institutional mechanisms to increase inclusiveness and effectiveness of fisheries management.
11. WECAFC members contribute to the implementation of the RPOA-IUU by developing national plans of action as well as taking collaborative action in MCS measures at sub-regional scale.

12. WECAFC members support the implementation of the SSF guidelines as part of their efforts to improve food security, eradicate poverty and enhance sustainable livelihoods.

## 6. Work plan

The Working Group will carry out the following activities in 2022-2023 period

| Activity   | Timetable                                 | Responsible Entity  |
|--|---|---|
| Provide technical and scientific advice to national governments and WECAFC Commission  | 2022- 2023                                | WG members  |
| Report to the<br>19 <sup>th</sup> session of WCAFC<br>12 meeting of the WECAFC SAG   | As deadlines for reporting require        | WECAFC Secretariat  |
| Continue work on data preparation, training in stock assessment for WG countries and carry out periodic stock assessment   | 2023                                      | IFREMER/CRFM/WECAFC in collaboration with NOAA, FIRMS and potential funders |
| Search resources for collaborative research to complement and refine results on stock identification and extend research to additional shrimp and groundfish species                         | 2022-2023                                 | Working group members   |
| Revise the terms of reference of the WG to reflect expected tasks on provision of advice to a formal shrimp and groundfish resources management mechanism in the North Brazil-Guianas shelf. | 5 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the WG in 2022 | IFREMER/CRFM/WECAFC, WG members with support from CLME+                     |
| Collaborate with:<br>-Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (RWG-IUU)<br>-WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group (FDS-WG)           |   |   |
| Further studies on mainstreaming human well-being (including gender and working conditions) in fisheries policies  |   | Member countries  |
| Next session of working group-intersessional meeting   | November 2022                             | WECAFC, IFREMER, CLME+  |

## **7. Participants**

Brazil, France (French Guiana), Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago are the countries sharing these transboundary shrimps and groundfish resources. The meeting is attended by staff of national fisheries administrations, representatives of fisheries sector, academia and NGOs, FAO representatives and WECAFC technical staff.

**WECAFC/CITES/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Shark  
Conservation and Management (Sharks WG)**

**Convener – Mauro Gongora**

Intersessional Report (2020 – 2021)

**Table of Contents**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Introduction and Background .....   | 30 |
| 2. Objectives.....   | 31 |
| 3. Main Accomplishments during the Intersessional Period .....   | 31 |
| 4. Challenges and Issues Faced during Intersessional Period and Steps taken to Mitigate .....  | 32 |
| 5. Conclusion.....   | 32 |
| 6. Appendix I : Terms of Reference for the WECAFC/CITES/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Shark Conservation and Management (Sharks Working Group)..... | 32 |
| 7. Appendix II: WECAFC/CITES/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Shark Conservation and Management WORK PLAN 2022 – 2024 .....                            | 36 |

## 1. Introduction and Background

The WECAFC/CITES/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Shark Conservation and Management (Sharks WG) was established by the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC held in Trinidad and Tobago in 2014 on specific request of the members. The adopted programme of work of the Commission included an activity (3.12) on Improved management and conservation of sharks. The Commission requested the Working Group to support the development of at least two national plans and a regional plan of action for the management and conservation of sharks.

In the period 2014-2015 the WECAFC Secretariat mobilized resources to carry out the work requested by the Commission and supported the development of a Caribbean Sharks and Rays identification guide, as well as sharks and rays assessments and the development of National Plans of Action (NPOA-sharks) in Antigua and Barbuda and Barbados. Moreover, some support was provided to Trinidad and Tobago to increase awareness on shark stocks and the need for improved management and conservation of those species listed in the CITES annexes. NOAA kindly agreed in 2016 to support the first meeting of the Working Group through Trust Fund project “Conservation and Management of Sharks and Rays in the Wider Caribbean Region”.

The First meeting of the WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CITES/CFMC working group on shark conservation and management was held in Barbados on 17-19 October 2017. The meeting brought together more than 30 shark fisheries experts, conservationists, marine biologists and fisheries officers from 15 WECAFC members, regional fisheries bodies, fisheries technical advisory institutions, non-governmental organizations, and other relevant stakeholders. During this meeting a second “Draft Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks and Rays in the WECAFC Area” was presented and discussed by the meeting participants. The revisions suggested that the document needed additional information to be finalized, with further inputs the participants agreed to provide after the meeting, but this didn’t materialize as was expected.

Pending the finalization and endorsement of the final Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks, the Commission discussed, amended as appropriate and adopted at its 17th Plenary held 15-18 July 2019, the recommendations WECAFC/17/2019/5-6-7 on the conservation and management of sharks and rays.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP18), which took place from 17 - 28 August 2019, added more shark species, including shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) and longfin mako (*Isurus paucus*) to CITES Appendix II. Silky sharks (*Carcharhinus falciformis*), Thresher

sharks (*Alopias* spp.) and Devil Rays (*Mobula* spp) were added to CITES Appendix II at CoP17 in 2016.

At its 26<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting held 18-25 November 2019, ICCAT discussed the conservation and management of sharks. This work has continued during the 2020 - 2022 correspondence period.

## **2. Objectives**

The main objectives of the Sharks WG are as follows:

1. Share data and information on shark and ray stocks, fisheries, conservation and management among the WECAFC member countries.
2. Create awareness on international agreements and measures for sharks and rays conservation among key stakeholders in the Caribbean region.
3. Discuss, review and work toward finalizing the second draft Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks and Rays in the WECAFC area.
4. In building on the new standard TORs of WECAFC working groups, finalize the relevant sections tailored to the sharks and rays WG and develop a Work Plan for the period 2022-2024.
5. Make recommendations as appropriate on sharks and rays conservation and management.

## **3. Main Accomplishments during the Intersessional Period**

In October 2021, a second meeting of the WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CITES/CRFM Working Group on Shark Conservation and Management was held. The preparation of this meeting, including the agenda items and experts and the review of the key background document, involved the extremely valuable contribution of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

The purpose of the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting was to contribute to the conservation, responsible management and sustainable use of sharks and rays in the Caribbean region, through the finalization of the Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks and Rays in the WECAFC Area. It is noted that the plan will place particular attention on conservation of those shark and ray species that are listed under CITES Appendix II.

A Task Force comprised of Stamatios Varsamos (EU DG Mare), Ms Laura Cimo (USA), Ms Chery McCarthy (USA), Mr Yoeeri de Vries (Netherlands, Caribbean), and Ms Yvette Diei

Ouadi WECAFC Secretary, FAO Subregional for the Caribbean (FAO SLC) and the Sharks Working Group Convener was established during this meeting. Since October 2021, the Task Force focused all its efforts to the finalization of the Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks, Rays and Chimaeras in the WECAFC area, which is planned for review by SAG11 and eventually, the Commission.

#### **4. Challenges and Issues Faced during Intersessional Period and Steps taken to Mitigate**

The most persistent challenge of the Sharks Working Group is the general lack of response by members to provide inputs such as comments and recommendations to the draft Sharks Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks, Rays and Chimaeras in the WECAFC area.

This lack of response was resolved through the establishment of a Task Force, which ultimately was responsible for the preparation and delivery of the final document that is going to be reviewed by the SAG in April 2022 and finally by the Commission.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The Sharks Working Group through the Task Force achieved a major accomplishment in the finalization of the “Sharks Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks, Rays and Chimaeras in the WECAFC area”. This regional work is considered key output of the Working Group and the major challenge ahead will be the execution of the work plan for the period 2022-2024.

#### **6. Appendix I : Terms of Reference for the WECAFC/CITES/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Shark Conservation and Management (Sharks Working Group)**

##### **1. ROLE OF THE WORKING GROUP**

More than 150 species of sharks and rays are present within the WECAFC region. There is currently limited information regarding their stocks and more needs to be done to protect and manage shark and ray populations. This Working Group, with the support of FAO, WECAFC Secretariat, CFMC, CRFM and OSPESCA, will provide, among others, a platform for supporting the conservation and sustainable management of shark fisheries in the Wider Caribbean region. Until an RPOA is adopted, the actions of the Working Group will be guided by the guidelines laid out in the FAO IPOA-Sharks. Sharks are a transboundary resource and as such, the TORs may apply at regional and/or national levels as appropriate.



## 1.1 Scope

The scope of the working group is to provide advice on the management and conservation of sharks in the Wider Caribbean Region. This includes the development of national and regional plans of action in order to regulate target and bycatch fisheries, as well as manage existing populations within the region.

## 1.2 The goal of the Working Group

The objective of the Working Group is to provide a basis for the conservation and sustainable management of shark populations in WECAFC member countries. In pursuing this goal, the Working Group will be supporting the members in fulfilling the national and regional responsibilities for the conservation and management of sharks as specified by WECAFC.

## 1.3 Terms of Reference (TOR)

Specifically, the Working Group will:

- (a) Facilitate the sharing of available data and information on shark and ray stocks within the Wider Caribbean Region;
- (b) Provide support to the development National POAs for member states and the Regional POA;
- (c) Provide technical inputs to support the implementation of actions as defined in the RPOA.
- (d) Develop and implement a biennial work plan that will be monitored and evaluated;
- (e) Establish communication between the members of the working group, and between the working group and interested parties including the private sector;

The TOR may be amended as required by the members at the level of the WECAFC, following each two-year period coinciding with the meetings of the WECAFC

## 1.4 Mode of Operation

### 1.4.1 Role of Countries

The members of the working group will play a leading role in its activities through the following activities and commitments:

- Participate in agreed activities of the working group, and ensure the participation of appropriate experts;
- Promote the implementation, at the National level, the work identified in the WECAFC endorsed work plan (as appropriate);

- Assist with mobilization of resources for the activities of the Working Group;
- Provide assistance and facilitate the organization of Working Group meetings in the languages of the Commission (to the extent possible);
- Host working group meetings on a rotational basis.

#### 1.4.2 Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat

To coordinate activities of the Working Group, among WECAFC and Non-WECAFC Members, at the wider regional level;

- To assist with convening of meetings of the Working Group;
- To liaise with other Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) active in the Wider Caribbean Region and neighboring areas will be involved as much as possible in the work of the group; these RFBs include amongst others OSPESCA, CRFM, CFMC, ICCAT, NAFO, NEAFC and CECAF.
- To coordinate the formulation and adoption of recommendations by the Working Group so as to facilitate the decision-making process at the level of WECAFC Area 31.

#### 1.4.3 Roles of other Subregional organizations (e.g. CFMC, CRFM, OSPESCA)

Subregional organizations have an important role to play in assisting their member countries to participate fully in the activities of the working group by:

- Providing technical assistance and support;
- Facilitating procurement of funding when possible;
- Co-coordinating the activities of the working group;
- Facilitating the decision-making process at the Subregional level.

#### 1.4.4 Election and role of Convener of the Working Group

The Working Group shall elect a Convener from among its Members to serve over the two-year period.

The first task of the convener will be to seek for experts among the WECAFC Members on sharks and rays, their fisheries and conservation. The convener should also contact potential partner organizations and solicit their interest to join in this Working Group.

## 1.5 Communication

A mechanism for on-going communication among working group members (Video conference, Skype and email), is essential to ensure that the work of the group is sustained between meetings. It must include all working group members.

The successful functioning of the working group also requires that each member country and organization/ agency identify a national node or focal point through which communications will be directed. The outputs of the working group will be communicated through working group reports to WECAFC, OSPESCA, CFMC, CRFM, and national fishery administrations via the WECAFC Secretariat.

## 1.6 Working Group meetings

The working group should meet physically at a minimum once every two years. Meetings should use cost effective accommodations and institutional facilities and where possible take advantage of other meetings in the region. Meetings shall be chaired by the Convener of the Working Group. The reports of the meetings will be formally submitted to OSPESCA, WECAFC, CFMC and CRFM.

**7. Appendix II: WECAFC/CITES/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Shark Conservation and Management\_WORK PLAN 2022 – 2024**

| <b>Objectives</b>  | <b>Needs</b>   | <b>Actions</b>   | <b>Timeframe for implementation</b><br>S: “Short-term (1-3 years)”<br>M: “Medium-Term (3-5 years)”<br>L: “Long-Term (5-10 years)”<br>O: “Ongoing” | <b>Actors</b><br><br>(other than WECAFC Members)             |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| <b>1. Improving understanding of the status of shark<sup>4</sup> populations in the WECAFC geographic area of competence through research, monitoring and data collection.</b> | <b>1.1.</b> Essential data for assessing population status and/or risks of relevant species. | <b>1.1.1.</b> Collection of scientific and empirical information on relevant species’ biology and ecology, including life history characteristics, behaviour, feeding, identification. | S/M   | Public and private research institutions, NGOs, Universities |

<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of this RPOA, « sharks » encompasses all fishes of the class Chondrichthyes (sharks, skates, rays and chimaeras).

|  |  |   |     |   |
|--|--|---|-----|---|
|  |  | <b>1.1.2.</b> Collection of scientific and empirical information on population dynamics, distribution, spatial-temporal and/or migratory patterns of relevant species. Delineation of pupping and nursery areas and critical habitats, etc.         | M   | Public and private research institutions, NGOs, Universities                                  |
|  | <b>1.2.</b> Accurate and reliable species-specific time-series data and statistics on sharks from commercial and recreational fisheries, including total shark catches (landings and live and dead discards at sea) and effort for all fisheries (directed or by-catch) on a species-specific basis across the region. | <b>1.2.1.</b> Implementation of long-term fisheries data collection, verification and monitoring programs to collect commercial and recreational fisheries data, including total catches and effort, age/length compositions etc. at species level. | O/S | Governmental fisheries agency.<br><br>Public and private research institutions, Universities. |
|  |  | <b>1.2.2.</b> Ensure a scientifically appropriate level of observer coverage onboard fishing vessels to collect species-specific biological information and fisheries information for relevant targeted and/or incidentally caught sharks.          | O/M |   |
|  | <b>1.3.</b> Availability of appropriate methodologies for assessing the conservation status of relevant shark  | <b>1.4.1.</b> Development and/or implementation of existing standardised methodologies, such as abundance indices, quantitative or  | M   |   |

|  |   |   |     |  |
|--|---|---|-----|--|
|  | stocks.   | semi-quantitative stock assessments, or other appropriate approaches (e.g., data-poor methods, genetic methods etc.).                                       |     |  |
|  | <b>1.4.</b> Social, economic, trade and cultural information and data.  | <b>1.4.1.</b> Collection of available trade data and market chain information for shark products at lowest possible taxonomic level, ideally species level. | M   |  |
|  |   | <b>1.4.2.</b> Implementation of appropriate labelling and custom coding for priority/relevant sharks species and products thereof.                          | M/L |  |
|  |   | <b>1.4.3</b> Collection of information about social and cultural practices related to sharks.   | S/M |  |
| <b>2. Ensuring that shark catches are sustainable and that sharks' species/stocks with poor or protected conservation status have appropriate conservation measures in place</b> | <b>2.1.</b> Fishing mortality is maintained at sustainable levels that prevent overexploitation and allow recovery of sharks with poor conservation status. | <b>2.1.1.</b> Reduction of shark by-catch in non-target fisheries and limiting directed catch and effort in target fisheries to sustainable levels.         | S/M |  |
|  |   | <b>2.1.2.</b> For relevant shark stocks, development of conservation and  | M/L |  |

|  |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|--|---|--|
|  |  | management reference points that could serve as a basis for deriving stock status and evaluating the achievement of management objectives. |   |  |
|  |  | <b>2.1.3.</b> Design, implementation and monitoring for compliance with appropriate, science-based conservation and management measures    | O |  |
|  |  | <b>2.1.4.</b> Implementation of the precautionary approach in the absence of adequate scientific information, where appropriate.           | S |  |
|  |  | <b>2.1.5.</b> Design and promotion of safe handling and release guidelines for shark species, appropriate.                                 | M |  |
|  | <b>2.2.</b> Exploration and, as applicable, implementation of methods to improve traceability in the trade flows of sharks and products thereof. | <b>2.2.1</b> Exploration of regional fisheries sustainability initiatives (e.g. certification, FIPs, etc.).                                | L |  |

|  |   |  |       |  |
|--|---|--|-------|--|
|  | <b>2.3.</b> Implementation and compliance with applicable measures adopted under national and international legislation, as appropriate, such as, UNCLOS, UNFSA, ICCAT, CITES, etc. | <b>2.3.1</b> Development of national laws and policies in line with FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries  | S/M   |  |
|  |   | <b>2.3.2.</b> Binding international obligations (primarily under Multilateral Environmental Agreements and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations) are codified into national law and regulations.  | S/M   |  |
|  |   | <b>2.3.3.</b> Full utilization is promoted and by-catch of sharks is reduced in other fisheries.   | S/M/L |  |
|  |   | <b>2.4.6.</b> Development of Non-Detriment Findings for the exports of CITES-listed shark products.  | S/M   |  |
|  | <b>2.4.</b> Adequate monitoring and enforcement of shark conservation and management measures.  | <b>2.4.1.</b> Implementation of effective monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) systems (properly staffed, trained, equipped, financed and supervised), including observers, VMS, electronic monitoring, etc. that specifically include monitoring of | S/M/L |  |



|  |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|--|---|--|
|  |  | shark catch and bycatch.   |   |  |
|  |  | <b>2.4.2</b> Establishment/ improvement of institutional and legal frameworks for the implementation of shark conservation and management measures, implementation of the RPOA, regulation of surveillance and enforcement activities, empowerment of staff to carry them out, and protect their physical integrity. | S |  |
|  |  | <b>2.4.3.</b> Combat IUU fishing activities  | O |  |
| <b>3. Foster regional cooperation and improved governance for the conservation and management of sharks in the WECAFC region</b> | <b>3.1.</b> Strengthened capacity of subregional and regional organisations dealing with the conservation and management of sharks to coordinate their activities, avoid duplication of efforts and optimise the use of available resources, to ensure that target and non-target shark fisheries in the region are sustainably managed, | <b>3.1.1.</b> Regional systematic sharing of information and data, including through the WECAFC Data Collection Reference Framework, with sub/regional organisations with a mandate for the conservation and/or management of sharks, in line with confidentiality rules.  | S |  |

|  |   |  |     |  |
|--|---|--|-----|--|
|  | based on species' full range and all sources of mortality, by using all of the available biological, ecological, social, or economic information from each stock and fishery. |  |     |  |
|  |   | <b>3.1.2</b> Harmonisation of data collection protocols and information exchange systems related to sharks   | M   |  |
|  |   | <b>3.1.3.</b> Cooperate and coordinate on MCS activities and fighting IUU activities, including related to sharks, at bilateral, subregional and regional levels   | S   |  |
|  |   | <b>3.1.4.</b> Coordination of research priorities and activities related to the conservation and management of sharks  | O   |  |
|  |   | <b>3.1.5.</b> Development and coordination of capacity building activities related to sharks (e.g., training workshops, practical trainings etc.) by consolidating available resources and fostering expertise at subregional and regional levels. | O/M |  |

|  |   |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|---|--|
|  | <b>3.2.</b> Strengthened/improved governance of subregional and regional organisations dealing with the conservation and management of sharks           | <b>3.2.1.</b> Identification of policy, conservation and management issues related to sharks that require subregional/ regional cooperation to be effectively addressed.   | O |  |
|  |   | <b>3.2.2.</b> Ensure transparency and inclusiveness through the participation of relevant stakeholders (e.g., fishermen, fishers' organisations, fisheries managers, scientists, civil society/NGOs etc.) in the proceedings of subregional, regional fora addressing sharks-related issues. | O |  |
|  |   | <b>3.2.3.</b> Development/ strengthening of collaborative arrangements between subregional/ regional/ international organisations involved in the conservation and management of sharks  | O |  |
|  | <b>3.3.</b> Regular review and update of the RPOA-sharks to evaluate its adequacy and effectiveness, as well as, reflect new developments and knowledge | <b>3.3.1</b> Development/update of appropriate ToRs, methodologies (including indicators and metrics), to enable the assessment of progress towards RPOA objectives, identifying   | O |  |

|  |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|--|---|--|
|  |  | successes, shortcomings, gaps etc.   |   |  |
|  |  | <b>3.3.2.</b> Assess progress towards the RPOA-sharks implementation, including through annual reports                         | S |  |
|  | <b>3.4.</b> Cooperation with relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (e.g., SPAW Protocol, CITES, CMS)  | <b>3.4.1.</b> Participation in deliberations relevant to sharks (e.g., SPAW Protocol, CITES, CMS).                             | O |  |
| <b>4. Promote communication and increased public and stakeholder awareness about shark management and conservation</b> | <b>4.1.</b> Ensure opportunities for engagement and participation by all stakeholders in shark conservation and fisheries management decisions to increase levels of public support, in line with actions under 3.2.2. | <b>4.1.1.</b> Stakeholder meetings organized, as appropriate, on specific issues related to shark conservation and management. | S |  |
|  |  | <b>4.1.2</b> Processes for regular stakeholder feedback on the decision-making process on conservation and management measures | S |  |

|  |   |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|---|--|
|  | <b>4.2</b> Effective communication with stakeholders  | <b>4.2.1</b> Use existing and, if needed, develop appropriate communication tools for raising awareness about sharks adapted to the targeted audience.                                 | S |  |
|  |   | <b>4.2.2.</b> Environmental education activities including surveys, information and awareness raising campaigns etc. to raise public awareness about shark conservation and management | S |  |
| <b>5. Capacity building and financing mobilization for the effective implementation of the RPOA.</b> | <b>5.1.</b> Adequate resources are allocated for the implementation of the RPOA sharks      | <b>5.1.1.</b> Elaboration of a strategy for ensuring that adequate financial resources are made available for RPOA implementation at national level                                    | S |  |
|  |   | <b>5.1.2</b> Identify and seek commitment of potential donor agencies and organizations for supporting the implementation of the RPOA  | S |  |
|  | <b>5.2.</b> Availability of regional expertise in the conservation and management of sharks | <b>5.2.1.</b> Organise regular training workshops and courses in shark biology, ecology, data collection, identification, stock assessments methods, management, etc. for              | S |  |

|  |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|
|  |  | targeted audience including fisheries observers, researchers, fisheries managers, civil society and other relevant NGOs |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|

# **Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing**

**Convener: Peter A. Murray**

## **Table of Contents**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. Introduction and Background                                      | 48 |
| 2. Objectives   | 48 |
| 3. Main Accomplishments during the Intersession Period (2019-2022)  | 50 |
| 4. Challenges   | 58 |
| 5. Conclusions  | 59 |
| Appendix 1: Updated TOR   | 61 |
| Appendix 2: Draft Recommendation to WECAFC 18                       | 71 |
| Appendix 3. RWG-IUU inputs into the WECAFC Strategic Plan 2021-2027 | 77 |

## **1. Introduction and Background**

Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC) Member States seek to address the challenge of Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing, which poses a major threat to fisheries resources in the Commission region. IUU fishing undermines regional and national efforts to sustainably use, manage and protect fish stocks and marine ecosystems, leading to untold losses of both short and long-term social and economic opportunities, including food security, livelihoods, exports, and the realization of sustainable and inclusive blue economic growth of the region.

The joint Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing IUU fishing of the WECAFC, the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and the Organization for Fisheries and Aquaculture for Central America (OSPESCA), a.k.a. the Regional Working Group on IUU fishing, RWG-IUU, was established in March 2014 by the 15th Session of WECAFC.

The WECAFC Regional Plan of Action to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing (RPOA-IUU) was developed by the RWG-IUU, between 2018 and 2019, with the objective to combat IUU fishing in the WECAFC area of competence; through effective regional cooperation among the WECAFC Member States and other sub-regional organizations. It was approved by WECAFC 17, in June 2019, and is seen as an important link between the implementation of the IPOA-IUU and the formulation of National Plans of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU fishing (NPOA-IUU) and corresponding measures to combat IUU fishing in WECAFC Member States. The RPOA-IUU is further important to harmonize policies, to encourage information sharing, to identify capacity development needs, and to better facilitate the implementation of international instruments and tools to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing through effective regional and international cooperation, such as already foreseen in sub-regional policy mandates: for example, the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (CCCFP).

This document outlines intersessional activities accomplished by the RWG-IUU since the 17th Session of WECAFC (WECAFC17) held 15-18th July 2019 in Miami, USA; incorporating recommendations for activities generated during its fourth (virtual) meeting, which took place from 8 to 9 September 2020. Additionally, in this regard, this report outlines activities undertaken by Member States at the regional and national levels.

## **2. Objectives**

This document summarizes achievements, challenges and lessons learned by the RWG-IUU during the period 2019-2022. Implementation of activities was within the context of its TOR as enshrined in the report of the First Meeting of the RWG-IUU in March 2017 and regularised/revised based on mandate of WECAFC 17 (as seen in appendix 1):

- As a matter of priority, identify and recommend cost effective measures that can be easily implemented in the short to medium term to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing;



- Review and assess the nature and extent of IUU fishing in the WECAFC area. In particular, the specific areas and species that are targeted by foreign illegal fishing and the main market for these IUU fishing products;
- Review current methods and arrangements for timely collection, analysis, reporting and dissemination of data and information relating to Distant Water Fishing Nations (DWFN) IUU fishing activities;
- Assess the viability of adopting modern technologies and methodologies to increase data capture, coverage and reliability;
- Develop recommendations for the establishment of formal protocols to facilitate the collection, compilation and transmittal of information regarding IUU fishing to the Flag State;
- Conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of the methods by which IUU fishing products are harvested, handled and traded including potential loopholes in legal systems and make recommendations for cost effective strategies and mechanisms to address identified deficiencies;
- Review and assess best practices employed to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing and determine the suitability for adoption and implementation in the WECAFC area;
- Review and assess systems and mechanisms used by WECAFC Member to address IUU fishing and make such recommendations as may be necessary to improve their effectiveness;
- Provide advice and recommendations on viable methodologies to engage with flag States, regional fishery bodies and regional fishery management organizations in relation to data exchanges, in pursuit of reducing IUU fishing opportunities within the WECAFC area;
- Recommend mechanisms to ensure effective cooperation and coordination among WECAFC Members and entities as well as among national agencies within states as may be necessary to combat IUU fishing and seafood fraud including but not limited to sharing of data and information, capacity building, legal reforms, and enhancing prosecutorial success;
- Promote the concept of collaborative policing approaches, with national fishers, and, where possible, through fisher organizations;
- Recommend way of improving public education and awareness in order to strengthen community support and political will to marshal the resources and implement the legal and institutional reforms needed to eradicate IUU fishing;
- Identify and recommend policies and measures to ensure transparency in activities such as the allocation of fishing permits and licenses by official authorities; the reporting of catches, payment of fees, taxes and charges by fishers and fishing entities; and disclosure of the identity of the beneficial owners of fishing vessels and companies throughout the supply chain;
- Seek complementary funding to support activities relating to data capture, analysis and sharing at the regional, national and local levels;

- Promote technical assistance, training, experience exchange, and institutional development, to increase MCS knowledge and capability amongst participating parties; and
- Perform other tasks as may be determined by the members.

### **3. Main Accomplishments during the Intersession Period (2019-2022)**

- **Assessment of WECAFC Members' readiness to implement the RPOA-IUU**

The main objective and design of the study was to assess member States' readiness in terms of the timeline towards implementation and the priority level of each measure. The data was collected through a questionnaire that was administered online via the Qualtrics software. The response rate across member states was 56 percent, with the response rate per question by member states at 95 percent. Member States indicated overwhelming high priority for the implementation of the majority of the measures; however, there was great variability in their timeline and readiness to implement the associated measures. Member States also indicated that they were primarily not ready for the implementation of measures at the regional level; they were either very ready to implement measures associated with the policy and legal framework or that they have started this process. This proactive approach at the policy and legal level provided some indication that countries have begun to tackle IUU fishing actively at the national level.

Members consistently indicated that the top two needs were budgetary/financial assistance, and training and capacity development. In assessing sub-regional subgroups, while there was some variation, there were limited significant differences across the regions. For example, assessing sub-regional readiness to develop and adopt a National Plan of Action to combat IUU fishing, there was no significant variation across sub-regions. Seven measures have some connection to the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA). The results indicate that PSMA Parties on average are readier to accomplish the measures in comparison to the other WECAFC Member States. The study also produced an overview of the recommended strategic implementation plans for the consideration of the member States. The main impetus behind these strategic recommendations is that they will provide an opportunity to address the identified readiness gaps based on the requirements in the RPOA-IUU.

- **Determining implementation status in WECAFC Member States of the RPOA-IUU**

Overview: Caribbean Regional Fishery Mechanism (CRFM) Member States

Relatively little has been documented regarding cases of IUU fishing, notwithstanding that anecdotal information suggests that it does occur. Consequently, it cannot be confirmed which species face the brunt of this issue; nor can a good estimate of the losses due to IUU fishing be acquired. Most of the measures taken by CRFM Member States have been at the policy and regulatory level, though there is recognition of the need to put in place and/or strengthen enforcement/compliance measures. There are signs of political commitment for dealing with the issue, where there is scope for bilateral interventions. Concern has also

been expressed regarding the need to redouble efforts at collaboration and cooperation from importing countries, and efforts in this direction have borne fruit.

All CRFM Member States are committed to the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (and its protocols) and the CRFM MCS Strategy; and seven (7) of these states have had (a total of 59) personnel trained in Fisheries Prosecution and Interdiction, since 2017, as part of a joint initiative between the Regional Security System (RSS) through its Regional Maritime Training Centre and the CRFM Secretariat; and there has been an increase in the reporting of fisheries interdiction events is a result of the heightened awareness of the significance of fisheries prosecution and interdiction, generated by the course and its participants.

For CRFM Member States, little has occurred, post 2019, in terms of accession to international agreements and/or instruments. CRFM Member States participate in the RWG-IUU and WECAFC and have endorsed the Regional Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing (RPOA-IUU) in the region. Three CRFM Member States have developed National Plans of Action to Prevent, Deter and IUU fishing (NPOAs-IUU), but the most recent of these was adopted before 2019.

The CRFM Secretariat has provided specific technical guidance and assistance to its member States, when such States have been the subject of IUU fishing allegations; guiding the development and implementation of remedial measures to improve MCS mechanisms and/or provided support to national inter-ministerial committees and task forces formulated for the purpose of addressing the IUU fishing issues identified. The CRFM Secretariat has drafted a model/template NPOA-IUU for the consideration of its Member States for implementing national actions. This model is currently being customised for four (4) CRFM Member States

The need for financial and budgetary resources is most important in facilitating CRFM Member States' implementation of the RPOA-IUU. Training, and capacity development concerning IUU and "enhanced human resources" rank next, respectively.

CRFM Member States are working towards the development and implementation of a range of remedial measures to improve MCS mechanisms, including development of specific legislation and regulations to govern fishing on the high seas, and improved fisheries management planning.

The CRFM Secretariat has been interfacing with the UNODC Global Maritime Crime Program in the participating in the Caribbean Forum on Maritime Crime (CFMC) including having led a Fisheries Crime Specialized group at the first in-person edition of that Forum.

The CRFM Secretariat has initiated collaboration with the CARICOM Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS). In this context, the Secretariat has presented on Perspectives on fisheries crime in CARICOM to the first meeting of Coast Guard commanders organised by IMPACS. CARICOM IMPACS has partnered with UNODC's Global Maritime Crime Programme to develop a Caribbean Maritime Security Strategy (CMSS) to help ensure that the combined maritime security efforts of the CARICOM member States, along with the Dominican Republic, become greater than the sum of their parts. The CRFM Secretariat is a member of the working group on the development of this regional Maritime

Security Strategy. A survey, carried out as part of the CMSS development process, brought out the need to deal with fisheries crime. Preliminary indications are of a strong recognition of the need to enhance integration of maritime domain awareness to look at it holistically; closing the gap, as opposed to segmentation, between combatting IUU fishing and maritime law enforcement. The need for better information sharing was also a “stand-out” concern.

CARICOM IMPACS utilises a Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) tool that provides reports to give an idea of the flagged vessels, recognised in the system as fishing vessels, that incur into Member States waters. Regular reports are shared with Member States’ border control agencies (coast guard, police, defence force as appropriate). IMPACS shares monthly summaries of the “fishing reports” coming from Windward, with the Secretariat, and as appropriate, has begun monitoring vessels “flagged by the system as probably being involved in illegal fishing.

An IUU fishing scenario is to be incorporated into the annual maritime security simulation, Operation Tradewinds, which will be held in Belize and Mexico from 7 to 21 May 2022. CRFM is a collaborator in this activity.

Pursuant to a directive of the Ministerial Council CRFM Member States have expressed support for the International Declaration on Transnational Organized Crime in the Global Fishing Industry (also known as the ‘*Copenhagen Declaration*’) and in October 2020 12<sup>5</sup> CRFM ministers with responsibility for fisheries and/or the Blue Economy signed on to the Declaration, as they seek to renew efforts in the fight against IUU fishing and transnational organized crime in the fishing industry. Subsequently, in collaboration with the CARICOM Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) the CRFM Secretariat has hosted a regional technical meeting of senior fisheries and maritime law enforcement officers to engage Member States and strategic partners of the CRFM in identifying the specific needs of the region that must be urgently addressed to scale up coordinated and targeted actions to combat and eradicate IUU fishing and transnational organized crime in the fisheries sector in the region.

To this end, the following priorities and next steps have been identified:

- Prioritize focus on small-scale fisheries, which are critical within the Caribbean context, and expand the utilization of VMS for the small-scale fleet, particularly given their vulnerability to being exploited as a cover for nefarious activities;
- Follow up with the Blue Justice Initiative and the Blue Resilience Project to advance the region’s engagement on its combined approach to addressing IUU fishing and transnational organized crime in the fishing industry;
- Follow-up with the Blue Fairness Project on identifying a test site for its human trafficking questionnaire;

---

<sup>5</sup> The Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and The Turks and Caicos Islands

- Urge all countries to register with the Blue Justice Community, which provides clear benefits for the region;
- Pursue learning experiences with the North Atlantic Fisheries Intelligence Group;
- Take regional approaches, to spread limited ODA benefits to countries that would not ordinarily be eligible for assistance under certain initiatives;
- Conduct assessment and mapping to improve understanding of the processes using a holistic value chain approach;
- In the assessments and mapping exercise, the nexus must be made with taxation, and the need to determine the beneficial owners and funders of IUU fishing and TNOO operations.
- Urge countries to sign the ILO [Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 \(#188\)](#) or ILO C-188, which could help to address slavery and human trafficking in the sector, which are sometimes associated with IUU fishing and transnational organized crime;
- Create understanding of the importance of ILO C-188 and how it can help to fight organized crime in the fisheries sector;
- Strengthen the capacity of the countries to act upon the information received, with emphasis on both enforcement and prosecution capacities.

#### Overview: Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization (OSPESCA) Member States

Main directions on IUU fishing issues in the region are MCS, broaden exchange of experiences, capitalize on the lessons learned and the results obtained in the previous regional work and to support the activities of the regional WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA Working Group.

Development of a proposal on a Protocol for the implementation of regional regulations regarding IUU Fishing, to improve the harmonious implementation of national, regional and international regulations regarding IUU Fishing, through concerted efforts and review of procedures carried out by national, regional or extra-regional actors, especially including administrative sanctions and the effective prosecution of IUU fishing activities.

The Regulation OSP-02-09 was updated for the regional fishery management of the Caribbean lobster (*Panulirus argus*). The Regional Regulation on Port State Steering Measures designed to Prevent, Discourage and Eliminate IUU Fishing was approved, with the objective to establish a set of regionally harmonized norms in matters of Port State Governing measures to prevent, discourage and eliminate IUU Fishing. It includes regulations on: designation of ports, authorization or denial of entry to port, inspections in port, inspection priorities. authorization of inspection procedures, refusal of entry, joint cooperation actions, stricter measures, among others.

An update and adaptation of the digital platform for the the fisheries Registry was made, which includes registration of the fleet, fisheries and aquaculture production, and dynamic consultations.

At the country level, OSPESCA Member States have carried out activities such as:

- Promulgation of new fisheries legislation to modernize and transform the small-scale fishing industry, as well as guarantee the sustainable use and management of fishery resources and the conservation of coral reefs, mangroves and coastal waters that sustain them. In addition, it aims to provide greater authority for decision-making, food security and resilience of local communities.
- Signing interagency agreement to fight illegal fishing, for the certification of sustainable fishing for tuna, dorado and swordfish, to access international markets for responsible consumption; including traditional knowledge and the rights of the fishing sector complying existent regulations.
- Organising a program for the strengthening of Fisher’s General Registry, organized by the Centre for Marine Studies (CEM) and the international organization RARE through Fish Forever.
- Developing a National strategy to combat Illegal Fishing and the roadmap for compliance with the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA).
- Promulgating an Inter-institutional Resolution for collection centers and fishery and aquaculture products, including mechanisms to ensure that national and international marketing compliance with regulations that contribute to the health, legality and traceability of fishery and aquaculture products. Also achieving significant progress in the fishery improvement project (FIP) towards a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for the lobster pot fishery.
- Achieving progress in a National Action Plan for the management of stingrays, sharks and chimeras, including mechanisms to detect illegal fishing; and generally achieving progress in inter-institutional agreement for IUU fishing issues.

COVID-19 has affected all the activities carried out in every position in the value chain, that is, in the capture or cultivation, processing, transport and commercialization of fishery and aquaculture products, including the provision of equipment and supplies required. The sector is being highly affected, 70–80 percent at the beginning of the pandemic both from the socioeconomic perspective and in terms of operational facilities, coupled with the potential risk in maintaining jobs in formally established businesses, such as: processing, sale points and industrial and semi-industrial fishing fleets. OSPESCA is working in an intersectoral manner, regarding the Road Map “United Central America against Coronavirus”.

Other activities that have been carried out: (i) Training in the Caribbean Lobster Stock Assessment Model (ii) Technical assistance for data collection regarding artisanal fisheries, (iii) Central American Network (REDCA) of monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) for IUU fishing.

The Trazar-Agro System, the Regional Aquaculture and Fisheries Traceability Standard was implemented, as well as computer and smartphone applications. Technical training was done to address traceability regarding: (i) Capture, (ii) Harvest, (iii) Transportation, (iv) Processing and (v) Marketing.

Selected WECAFC Member States (other than CRFM or OSPESCA Member States)

Brazil is restructuring its system to have a more comprehensive and consistent knowledge on the occurrence, nature or intensity of IUU fishing in the country. To address shared concerns and other issues related with IUU, they are working on establishing a Working Group. Work has been done for working towards having a clearer and more consistent picture of IUU fishing in Brazil, in order to better tackle the issue. Efforts are being made for greater effectiveness in monitoring and control, and enforcement actions, and the integration and coordination of actions, tools, financial resources and coordination with the relevant public authorities. Some of the most recent advances in preventing IUU fishing in Brazil are: (1) Regulation of Associated School of Fishing or Shadow Fishing (Ordinance SG/MMA nº 59-A of 9 November 2018), available for up to 250 vessels, (2) Definition of compulsory landing ports for tuna and similar species (MAPA Normative Instruction No. 44 of 2 October 2019), and (3) Mulletts (*Mugil cephalus*) fisheries, in the South of Brazil for which various norms and regulations are being developed in 2020, for planning and governance of this fishery.

In addition, Brazil is carrying out a major restructuring and modernization mechanisms of fishing activities that support measures to combat IUU fishing, highlighting (1) new system for the General Register of Fishing Activity, applied to the registration and licensing of fishers and fishing vessels, (2) a National Program for Tracking Fishing Vessels by Satellite, obligatory for all fishing vessels with Gross Tonnage (GT) equal to or greater than 50 or with total length equal to or greater than 15 meters, (3) New Digital Vessel Map (Catch Documentation Scheme), already in operation for some fisheries (4) Ratification of the PSMA - Port State Measures Agreement (FAO), (5) a proposal to create a Commission for a Regional Fisheries Body in the Southwestern Atlantic Ocean, (6) creation of the the Brazil-Uruguay international working group to deal with shared, marine and continental resources, as well as aquaculture, (7) Legal Origin Accreditation Certificate to certify fishery products, (8) setting up Permanent Fisheries Management Committees for governance in the management of the main fisheries integrating mains stakeholders involved, (9) Restructuring of national fisheries statistics, (10) providing certifications for exports to the American and European markets. (11) Reviewing and updating closed periods, and others in planning (Electronic traceability in the production chain and implementation of electronic systems for monitoring and surveillance of fishing vessels).

In Colombia the National Aquaculture and Fisheries Authority (AUNAP), through the Office for Monitoring and Surveillance, has the goal to implement and apply control actions that allow verifying compliance with current legal provisions related to the exercise of fishing and aquaculture activities in the country, which are oriented to ensure the sustainability and the good use of fishery resources.

With the support of FAO human resources affiliated to this agency received training aiming for the strengthening its control and monitoring capacity. Colombia with technical support from FAO, signed in November 2019 the Agreement of AUNAP for the Global Program for capacity building, to strengthen the application of Port State Measures against IUU fishing. AUNAP, as the fishing authority, leads the National Board of Fishing and Illicit Activity, which comprises all state entities related (directly or indirectly) to the fight against illegal fishing. AUNAP is the agency designing and coordinating the actions that the country must undertake to control IUU fishing (National Action Plan against IUU fishing). There is an

established joint procedure between state entities to synchronize the procedures for enforcement action against illegal fishing events.

The Illegal Fishing Law (Law 1851 of 2017) was enacted, which streamlines the administrative sanctioning process and provides tools for the development of the criminal process. Within the framework of the National Board on Illegal Fishing, the competencies required to adhere to and comply with the requirements of the Port State Measures Agreement are being improved and implemented. Additionally, Colombia's accession to the FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), will strengthen its capacity to control IUU fishing effectively with regional participatory actions.

In the case of *the United States of America*, the Department of State, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) and the U.S. Coast Guard all coordinate closely to implement domestic and international actions related to combatting IUU fishing, including:

- Championing the establishment of schemes within regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) to identify and penalize IUU vessels, limit port and market access by nations that fail to curb IUU fishing, and provide strong monitoring, control, and surveillance of all fisheries.
- Implementing the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006 (latest report published in 2019).
- Supporting international efforts to better assess and curtail illegal transshipment of fish and fish products at sea.
- Working to improve the capacity of developing coastal States to manage their domestic fisheries and to combat IUU fishing, both by building the political will to devote resources to these issues and by providing information, equipment, and expertise from U.S. government agencies.
- Utilizing the Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP) to prevent certain fish and fish products identified as being particularly at-risk of IUU fishing and/or seafood fraud from entering the U.S. seafood market.
- Supporting international efforts to curb IUU fishing, like the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate IUU Fishing, the Port State Measures Agreement, and the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization.
- Supporting bilateral and cooperative fisheries law enforcement agreements between the United States Coast Guard and partner countries known as "ship rider" agreements, which support nations with limited resources through personnel training and by placing their enforcement personnel on U.S. vessels, where they may exercise their law enforcement authorities during enforcement operations.

The Maritime Security and Fisheries Enforcement (SAFE) Act was passed in December 2019. Under the Maritime SAFE Act and the United States will work through a whole-of-government approach to strengthen the global fight against IUU fishing and maritime security threats, including through a new interagency Working Group on IUU fishing. This Working Group brings together twenty-one agencies for an integrated, Federal



Government-wide response to IUU fishing globally. The chair and deputy chairs of the Working Group rotate among NOAA, U.S. Department of State, and U.S. Coast Guard. NOAA is serving as the first chair.

IUU fishing issues encountered since 2018 include violations of ICCAT conservation measures and EEZ incursions. These issues provide recent real-world examples of the importance of information sharing as reflected in Measure 21 of the WECAFC RPOA-IUU.

There is a regional problem between Mexican fishing boats fishing in United States waters and boats from the USA fishing in Bahamas waters. With the first problem in Mexico, the United States of America successfully relies on the Coast Guard and Fisheries and Wildlife Service, but due COVID-19 prosecuting activities have slowed down. The operation in Bahamas started in 2018 and it has been a success, it has been patrolling with aircraft and enforcement with intelligence. Currently, five civil cases are being prosecuted. Due to COVID-19 enforcement has been easy to conduct because Bahamas forbids any vessel activity in their waters.

In Venezuela, the Ministry of Popular Power for Fisheries and Aquaculture, in 2016, had developed policies in the production chain derived from fishing, aquaculture and its related activities, which contribute to the strengthening of the new social and economic model being developed; with the main goal being to boost the fishing sector guaranteeing the sustainability of the activity to guarantee food sovereignty and security for the people.

Despite having experienced some inconveniences when subscribing to the Port States Measures Agreement, Venezuela has been making a big effort to comply with the effective control and surveillance of the fleet. The National Socialist Fisheries and Aquaculture Institute (INSOPESCA), which is attached to the Ministry of the Popular Power of Fisheries and Aquaculture, is the entity in charge of policy implementation.

The measures that Venezuela is implementing to combat IUU fishing in the exclusive economic zone and in international waters are:

- Perform analysis of all the information and evidence that confirms the facts.
- Initiate, through INSOPESCA, an Administrative Procedure aimed to defining the responsibilities and sanctions to impose.
- When the responsibilities for non-compliance are verified, the measures to be considered are: suspend the vessel's fishing permit; suspend the captain's and fishing master's permits; impose a fine in accordance with the provisions of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Law; and notify the shipowner of the actions to be taken by the competent authority.

It is in the interest of Venezuela to continue executing action plans to promote the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing) of their ships or foreign vessels, inside and outside their exclusive economic zone.

- **Fourth meeting of the Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported And Unregulated Fishing IUU fishing, held virtually, 8 to 9 September 2020.**

The fourth meeting of the Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, was held virtually from 8 to 9 September 2020. The Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (RWG-IUU) Fishing is a joint working group of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC), the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), and Organization for Fisheries and Aquaculture of Central America (OSPESCA). A total of 114 experts from 25 WECAFC member countries, as well as three inter-governmental organizations, three non-governmental organizations and FAO attended the working group meeting.

At the meeting, the attendees provided updates on the implementation of the RWG-IUU work plan for 2019–2020 and their efforts in implementing the relevant recommendations that were endorsed at the 17th Session of WECAFC in July 2019. Participants were also informed of the developments at the global and regional levels in the implementation of the Port States Measures Agreement (PSMA) and complementing instruments. Key updates were provided on the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (Global Record) and the possibility of revamping the Regional Record was discussed. The WECAFC Secretariat shared the findings of the assessment of member states readiness to implement the Regional Plan of Action on IUU (RPOA-IUU). The attendants also discussed the elements of a targeted assistance framework to be submitted to the GEF in order to catalyse the operationalization of the RPOA-IUU. Participants developed an updated workplan of the RWG-IUU and elaborated recommendations (appendix 2) for submission to the WECAFC Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) on fisheries governance, transshipment and information sharing.

- **Drafting Task Force (STF-IUU)**

Under the direction of the Convener, the RWG-IUU set up a small Task force (STF-IUU) to regularise the RWG-IUU's terms of reference (as at appendix 1) and recommendation of the 4th meeting of RWG-IUU (appendix 2), in keeping with the requirements/templates set by WECAFC and to propose/draft Strategic Interventions related to IUU fishing (and Transnational Organised Crime in fisheries) for possible incorporation into the WECAFC Strategic Plan (appendix 3). The STF-IUU at its first meeting, held virtually, comprised representation from CRFM (in the person of the Convener), the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO), the Regional Security System (RSS), the United States of America, and FAOSLC (including in the person of the Secretary to WECAFC). Following on this meeting, the participants contributed to the outputs of the STF-IUU.

#### **4. Challenges**

With regard to implementing measures stated in the RPOA-IUU, some countries are not currently ready to develop national strategies and procedures for combatting IUU fishing with due regard to port, flag, coastal and market State obligations; nor to adopt and implement measures on the marking and identification of fishing vessels in order to improve transparency and allow a better identification of noncompliant vessels, or to develop regionally harmonised national inspection plans. Resource limitations hamper many countries' ability to establish fisheries enforcement units in their fisheries agencies and to

formalize an inter-agency information sharing and coordination mechanism at the national level for relevant agencies.

Increased incidence of extreme meteorological events due to climate change has contributed to making the job of fisheries monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement (MCSE) that much harder. Ocean warming can contribute to changes in maximum catch potential, compounding the impacts of overfishing and as fish stocks decline, fisher competition will likely increase, probably resulting in more IUU fishing

Consequent upon the COVID-19 pandemic, MCSE capabilities and resources of fisheries administrations were reduced. MCSE staff were not able to attend in person to their duties in the ports, on-board patrol boats and fishing boats. In some countries, national funds were directed to emergency activities leaving underfunded MCS unable to function effectively. It has been suggested that, in a few cases, fishers may have engaged in illicit activities, including IUU fishing and fishing in closed areas.

The top two needs of Member States can be quoted as having are budgetary/financial assistance, and training and capacity development. Related to the issue of capacities is the ability of States to make optimal use of the wealth of data available, such as that obtained through MDA tools, including through in-country discussions between Fisheries, Coast Guard, Defence, and Maritime administrations and other such agencies, to effectively analyse such data to derive insights and information to assist with combating IUU fishing.

At the regional and sub-regional levels, the issue of budgetary/financial resources and the concomitant training and capacity challenges also need to be addressed. Training is needed in various fields to enhance the capacity to strengthen the implementation of the PSMA and relevant international instruments. Only few WECAFC Member States have adopted a NPOA-IUU, and some Member States have not ratified, adopted or acceded to the relevant international fisheries instruments (such as the PSMA). Gaps remain in the legal frameworks and inter-agency coordination. Importantly, information sharing, and cooperation needs to be improved, both on the national and the regional levels. This includes the introduction of mechanisms and tools to effectively identify vessels engaged in IUU fishing and related activities and to take coordinated action against the vessel operators.

## **5. Conclusions**

Notwithstanding the challenges faced by many WECAFC Member Countries, in dealing with IUU fishing, at national, sub-regional and regional levels, high priority is being given to the implementation of the majority of the measures in the RPOA-IUU. However, there appears to be great variation in the perceived extent of readiness to implement the associated measures and the timeline for implementation, though PSMA Parties on average are readier to accomplish the measures in comparison to the other WECAFC Member States.

Unfortunately, Member States do not appear ready to implement the regional-level measures of the RPOA-IUU yet appear ready to implement measures associated with the policy and legal framework; and some of them have begun this process.

In general, it can be mooted that, even though there is significant variability in Member States' readiness to address operations and MCS measures, they have begun to actively consider their approaches to tackle IUU fishing at the national level. Simultaneously, the sub-regional grouping bodies are seeking to develop the enabling environment and capacities to assist Member States achieve the national and regional objectives. In carrying out its own stated objectives, the work of the RWG-IUU has been supportive of these efforts.

## **Appendix 1: Updated TOR**

### **WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE**

#### **REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING (RWG-IUU)**

**Terms of Reference agreed/approved at the Fifteenth session of the Commission, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 26 to 28 March 2014**

### **CONTENTS**

1. Introduction and Background
2. Objectives
3. Main Accomplishments during the Intersession Period (2019-2022)
4. Challenges
5. Conclusions
- Appendix 1: Recommendation
- Appendix 2: Updated TOR
- I. Background and justification
- II. Role of the Working Group
  - a) Scope of the Work
  - b) Goal
  - c) Tasks/ functions
  - d) Membership
- III. Mode of Operation:
  - a) Role of Countries
  - b) Role of Convener
  - c) Election and role of Convener of the Working Group
  - d) Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat
  - e) Roles of other Subregional organizations (e.g. CFMC, CRFM, ICCAT, OSPESCA, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECS, CARICOM IMPACS, RSS, etc.)
- IV. Outputs
- V. Communication
- VI. Working Group meetings and cost

- VII. Amendments to the Terms of Reference
- VIII. Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions

## I. Background and justification

Fishery management advice and recommendations, based on the best available scientific information, are provided to WECAFC member countries for their implementation by dedicated Working Groups, established by the Commission.

The Working Groups that were established or confirmed in the subsequent sessions since the 14th session of the Commission in 2012 are the following:

1. [OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Caribbean Spiny Lobster](#)
2. [CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch](#)
3. [WECAFC Working Group on the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries](#)
4. [WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries](#)
5. [CRFM/WECAFC/JICA/IFREMER Working Group on Fisheries Using fish aggregating devices \(FADS\)](#)
6. [CRFM/WECAFC Working Group on Flyingfish in the Eastern Caribbean \(established since the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC as the flyingfish- Dolphinfish WG\)](#)
7. [WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Northern Brazil-Guianas Shelf](#)
8. [CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations](#)
9. [Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing \(RWG-IUU\)](#)
10. [WECAFC Working Group for the Conservation And Management of Sharks in the Wider Caribbean Region](#)
11. [WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group \(FDS-WG\)](#)

Most Working Groups are joint working groups with other regional partner institutions, such as the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), the Organization of Fisheries for the Central American Isthmus (OSPESCA), the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC), the French Research Institute for Exploration of the Sea (IFREMER), etc. Fishery scientists, experts, managers and decision-makers of member countries, Regional partner organizations including academia and NGOs participate in the Working Groups, which have specific terms of reference that are time bound. The data used by the Working Groups to assess the status of fish stocks, to conduct fishery assessments and to generate fishery management advice and recommendations to the Commission are collected by the participating countries and NGOs. The key drivers behind the establishment of these working groups are the need to collaborate and cooperate in the assessment and management of shared resources; need to standardize data collection and reporting systems to enable assessment of stock status using data and information from a range of countries that target the stock/species/resources throughout their distribution range; need to standardize conservation and management measures for effective management, need for training and capacity building to improve data collection and assessment of the status of fisheries/fish stocks; etc. etc.

In undertaking its work, the Working Group will pay due attention to the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its related guidelines, including the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries, as well as any other agreed

international or regional instruments for the conservation and management of fisheries, and the principles of precautionary, participatory and ecosystem approaches to fisheries management. The activities of the WG are also guided by any specific regional or international fisheries management or related obligations and initiatives or instruments of relevance to the respective resources associated with the specific WG – e.g. any FMPs, Declarations, agreed CMMs, regional strategies, regulations etc.

## **II. Role of the Working Group**

### **a) Scope of the Work**

The scope of each Working Group is to provide scientific and management advice for the sustainable management, conservation and development of living marine resources in the area of competence of WECAFC. This includes the development and support to national and regional plans of action in order to regulate target and bycatch fisheries, as well as manage existing populations within the region. Using a multidisciplinary approach, the working group will contribute to the sustainable management by providing management advice to Members of WECAFC based on the best available scientific knowledge/evidence and traditional/local ecological knowledge. In pursuing this goal, the Working Group will contribute to the fulfilment of national and regional responsibilities for the marine environment and for the management of all living aquatic species and resources WECAFC and related or interacting species or fisheries in the WECAFC Region.

### **b) Goal**

The goal of each Working Group is to inform and provide guidance for the management of living marine resources in WECAFC members in such a manner as to promote responsible fisheries that provide economic opportunities, secure social wellbeing while ensuring the conservation of living marine resources and the protection of marine biodiversity. Specifically, the objective of the RWG-IUU is to improve coordination and cooperation between national organizations / institutions responsible for fisheries-related MCS in support of their common efforts to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.

### **c) Tasks/ functions**

The Working Group will:

- As a matter of priority, identify and recommend cost effective measures that can be easily implemented in the short to medium term to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing;
- Review and assess the nature and extent of IUU fishing in the WECAFC area. In particular, the specific areas and species that are targeted by foreign illegal fishing and the main market for these IUU fishing products;
- Review current methods and arrangements for timely collection, analysis, reporting and dissemination of data and information relating to Distant Water Fishing Nations (DWFN) IUU fishing activities;
- Assess the viability of adopting modern technologies and methodologies to increase data capture, coverage and reliability;



- Develop recommendations for the establishment of formal protocols to facilitate the collection, compilation and transmittal of information regarding IUU fishing to the Flag State;
- Conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of the methods by which IUU fishing products are harvested, handled and traded including potential loopholes in legal systems and make recommendations for cost effective strategies and mechanisms to address identified deficiencies;
- Review and assess best practices employed to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing and determine the suitability for adoption and implementation in the WECAFC area;
- Review and assess systems and mechanisms used by WECAFC Member to address IUU fishing and make such recommendations as may be necessary to improve their effectiveness;
- Provide advice and recommendations on viable methodologies to engage with flag States, regional fishery bodies and regional fishery management organizations in relation to data exchanges, in pursuit of reducing IUU fishing opportunities within the WECAFC area;
- Recommend mechanisms to ensure effective cooperation and coordination among WECAFC Members and entities as well as among national agencies within states as may be necessary to combat IUU fishing and seafood fraud including but not limited to sharing of data and information, capacity building, legal reforms, and enhancing prosecutorial success;
- Promote the concept of collaborative policing approaches, with national fishers, and, where possible, through fisher organizations;
- Recommend way of improving public education and awareness in order to strengthen community support and political will to marshal the resources and implement the legal and institutional reforms needed to eradicate IUU fishing;
- Identify and recommend policies and measures to ensure transparency in activities such as the allocation of fishing permits and licenses by official authorities; the reporting of catches, payment of fees, taxes and charges by fishers and fishing entities; and disclosure of the identity of the beneficial owners of fishing vessels and companies throughout the supply chain;
- Seek complementary funding to support activities relating to data capture, analysis and sharing at the regional, national and local levels;
- Promote technical assistance, training, experience exchange, and institutional development, to increase MCS knowledge and capability amongst participating parties; and
- Perform other tasks as may be determined by the members.

#### **d) Membership**

Membership of the Working Group shall consist of all Member States of CRFM and WECAFC, OSPESCA, including overseas territories and Departments.

Specifically, the national organizations responsible for fisheries MCS and IUU fishing in general nominated by each WECAFC member; and, experts of key partner organizations (OECS, Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations, CRFM, OSPESCA, FAO). Persons or organizations with expertise in matters pertaining to MCS and IUU fishing may also be

invited to participate as [experts] observer to the RWG-IUU. The WECAFC Secretariat will act as secretary to the RWG-IUU.

### **III.Mode of Operation:**

#### **a) Role of Countries**

The members of the Working Group will play a leading role in its activities through the following activities and commitments, and through a monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement perspective:

- Participate in agreed activities of the Working Group, and ensure the participation of appropriate experts;
- Implement, at the National level, the work identified in the WECAFC endorsed work plan (as appropriate);
- Report on implementation of agreed measures
- Assist with mobilization of resources for the activities of the Working Group;
- Facilitate the organization of Working Group meetings in the languages of the Commission
- Host Working Group meetings on a rotational basis.
- Facilitate the identification of the Convener of the Working Group

#### **b) Role of Convener**

The Convener of the Working Group will play a leading role during the organization of the meetings and subsequent follow up with the Secretariat of WECAFC by coordinating the inputs of the members of the Working Group. The Convener should:

- Seek experts from among the WECAFC Members, contact potential partner organizations, and solicit their interest to join in the Working Group;
- Call for meetings as appropriate;
- Ensure that technical contributions are received in a timely manner and in the appropriate format;
- Ensure that outputs are delivered as agreed during each meeting
- Collaborate closely with FAO-WECAFC and other sub-regional and regional organizations as appropriate;
- Assist in the preparation and publication process of the proceedings of the Working Group meeting;
- Participate (in person or virtually) at the SAG meetings to present the draft working documents and provide any clarifications as required;
- Facilitate the review by the Working Group membership within a reasonable period of time (max. 15 days) on suggested edits or modifications as considered necessary to address the comments of the SAG and the return of the revised document to the WECAFC Secretariat for distribution and consideration by the Commission;

- Participate in the Commission's sessions (physically or virtually) if required, to support the Secretariat in clarifying or substantiating some points of the draft working documents;
- Assist in the relevant processes to gather information in support of seeking funds to implement priority activities of the Working Group.

### **c) Election and role of Convener of the Working Group**

- The Working Group shall elect a Convener from among its Members to serve over a two-year period. The term of office of the Convener may be extended as determined appropriate. In the case where another qualified Convener is not available, the Convener's term may be renewed for an additional two-year term until another Convener is selected.

### **d) Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat**

The FAO/WECAFC Secretariat will play a supporting role in the activities of the Working Group by assisting in:

- Coordinating activities of the Working Group, among WECAFC and Non-WECAFC Members, at the wider regional level (including facilitate procurement of funding);
  - Assisting with logistical arrangements for the convening of meetings of the Working Group;
  - Providing technical assistance, such as a technical secretary or research support, if needed and as resources permit
  - Liaising with other Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) active in the Wider Caribbean Region and neighboring areas for their engagement as much as possible in the work of the Working Group; these RFBs include amongst others OSPESCA, CRFM, CFMC, ICCAT, NAFO, NEAFC, CECAF, COPPESAALC, etc..
  - Liaising with other relevant regional and international organizations as appropriate
  - Coordinating the formulation and adoption of recommendations and/or resolutions and reports/documents by the Working Group so as to facilitate the decision-making process by the Commission
  - Ensuring the strategic linkage between the work of the Working Group and programmes and projects hosted to support the fisheries and healthy ecosystems framework of the CLME+ and any future phase of this project.
  - Facilitating training and collaboration of WECAFC Member States and sub-regional training institutions as appropriate and based on available resources.

**e) Roles of other Subregional organizations (e.g. CFMC, CRFM, ICCAT, OSPESCA, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECS, CARICOM IMPACS, RSS, etc.)**

Sub-regional organizations have an important role to play in assisting their member countries to participate fully in the activities of the Working Group. Therefore, they may be invited to:

- Provide expertise, technical assistance and support;
- Facilitate procurement of funding when possible;
- Collaborate in implementing the activities of the Working Group;
- Collaborate with the WECAFC Secretariat and sub-regional organizations in coordinating the activities of the Working Group
- Facilitate the decision-making process at the Sub-regional level.

#### **IV. Outputs**

In discharging its duties, the WG will deliver the following outputs, monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement perspective:

- Biennial Work Plans including providing performance of projects on a routine schedule;
- Reports on the status of monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement of measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in WECAFC Member Countries;
- Report on the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in WECAFC Member Countries
- Make recommendation for the revision and/or updating of the Regional Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in WECAFC Member Countries
- Proposed Recommendations and Resolutions to the Commission,
- Revised TORs as needed

#### **V. Communication**

A mechanism for on-going communication among Working Group members (video conference, Skype, zoom meeting and email), is essential to ensure that the work of the group is sustained between meetings. It must include all Working Group members and the communication tools must be accessible to all Working Group members.

The successful functioning of the Working Group also requires that each member country and organization/ agency identify a national node or focal point who will be contacted through the WECAFC National Focal Point and technically coordinate at national level all matters pertinent to the WG. The outputs of the Working Group will be communicated

through working group reports to WECAFC, OSPESCA, CFMC, CRFM, CITES, UNEP-CEP, ICCAT, IFREMER, and national fishery administrations via the WECAFC Secretariat.

## **VI. Working Group meetings and cost**

The Working Group should meet physically or virtually on a regular basis, the timing of which is decided by the members, but at a minimum once every two years. The meetings should be of 2-5 days' duration. The meetings should use cost effective accommodations and institutional facilities and where possible take advantage of other meetings in the region. Meetings shall be chaired by the Convener of the Working Group. The reports of the meetings will be formally submitted to OSPESCA, WECAFC, CFMC and CRFM, ICCAT, CITES, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Network, etc.

## **VII. Amendments to the Terms of Reference**

Amendment of these terms of reference may be done at each biennial meeting of the Commission for implementation by the working groups in the subsequent intersessional period.

## **VIII. Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions**

[Standardized templates will ensure a common understanding of what should be included in draft recommendations and resolutions, ease the reporting of deliverables as well as facilitate their review by other WECAFC bodies, as appropriate. Working Groups should include the following elements when preparing draft recommendations and resolutions to be presented to the WECAFC membership or other WECAFC bodies (e.g. the Scientific Advisory Group or other WECAFC Working Groups).

### **Recommendations and Resolutions**

Draft recommendations and resolutions for review by other WECAFC bodies and the WECAFC membership should include the following elements:

- **Cover Note**: A brief cover note for draft recommendations and/or resolutions should be provided to assist reviewers. The cover note should include a clear, candid, and transparent explanation of:
  - a. why the action was developed,
  - b. at which Working Group meeting it was discussed,
  - c. a brief overview of how the Working Group arrived at its decision to put the action forward;
  - d. how the action will impact future WECAFC activities, including, where relevant any possible changes in resource or workload requirements for Members or the WECAFC Secretariat;
  - e. the ramifications of \*not\* approving the recommended action;
  - f. the full picture of the context for the recommended action.

- **Preambular Text**: This should provide essential elements to highlight the context and intent of the proposed action in a concise bulleted format. The preambular text should include only the core historical elements and should include references to related decisions or measures.
- **Action Text**: This should indicate clearly what action(s) the Working Group is taking, or is asking the WECAFC Membership to take, at a national, subregional, and/or regional level, including specific timelines to which the action(s) will adhere.

Considering that each Working Group can have more than one meeting, and more than one issue to address during each intersessional period, the Working Groups can produce several reports/documents or draft resolutions/recommendations. In order to facilitate analysis by the Commission, each Working Group shall prepare a single set of recommendations and/or resolutions organized by fishery or by theme, including all the topics addressed in the intersessional meetings. In this regard, the Commission would consider a single set of draft recommendations and/or resolutions for spiny lobster, queen conch, flying fish and dolphinfish, FADs, FDS, etc.

The Working Groups shall refer relevant recommendations and resolutions of a scientific nature to the SAG for scientific review at least one month before the meeting of SAG, in order to provide adequate time to the Secretariat and SAG members to review them before the meeting. This will improve the efficiency of the reviews during the SAG sessions.]

## Appendix 2: Draft Recommendation to WECAFC 18

### Cover note

IUU fishing is considered a major threat to sustainable fisheries management in the Wider Caribbean Region, undermining regional efforts to conserve and manage fish stocks. In 2009, It was estimated that 20–30 percent of total reported catches in the WECAFC area originate from illegal and unreported catches, representing a value of 450 to 750 million USD annually.<sup>6</sup>.

Overall, there has been a general decline in reported fish capture production in the Western Central Atlantic region from the 1980s fisheries production of 2.4 million tonnes to around 1.5 million tonnes in 2016 to date, with the 2015 to 2018 showing an average production of 1.47 million tonnes, live weight<sup>7</sup>. It has been reported that, in this region, the stocks of many shared and highly migratory species continue to be heavily exploited and increasingly targeted for harvest even though they are already depleted well below biomasses that could achieve maximum sustainable yields.

The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) Ministerial Council, at its 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting held virtually on 25 June 2020, has expressed concern that depletion of tuna stocks in the other parts of the world can cause the affected fishing fleets to shift their operations to the Western Central Atlantic Ocean, whether legally or illegally.

Given this potential for increased fishing effort by distant water fishing fleets, WECAFC Members need to strengthen their cooperation to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources of the area of competence of the Commission, which is the final objective of the organization..

WECAFC Members recognize that the sustainable management of the fish stocks should lead to increased employment opportunities and income for their fishing industry and local communities. WECAFC Members are also cognizant of the positive effects that sound administrative, legal and scientific frameworks bring to the fisheries together with enhanced cooperation between and among Regional Fishery Management Organizations/Regional Fishery Bodies. WECAFC Members note that national administrations need to strike the right balance the resources allocated for access to the fisheries with the resources allocated to fulfil Monitoring Control and Surveillance obligations as part of their flag states' responsibilities as they are two sides of the same coin.

---

<sup>6</sup> From Draft Recommendation WECAF/17/2018/1 „on the marking and identification of fishing vessels in the WECAFC area“ – as these only available estimates are based on the Agnew et al. 2009 estimates, these estimates could be outdated.

<sup>7</sup> FAO (2018). Report of the first meeting of the regional working group on illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Bridgetown, Barbados. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report. No. 1190.

WECAFC Members should give the due consideration to the possibility of a situation where their fisheries development policies can become stifled and thus lead to IUU fishing by some distant water fishing nations. In this regard, WECAFC is called to play a key role to promote the necessary coordination to address the conservation of the fishery resources.

Noting that the WECAFC Members are called to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources of the area of competence, the CRFM Ministerial Council has opined that WECAFC Member should do what was necessary, including putting in place the requisite legislation and regulation to adequately manage, protect and use the resources available in a sustainable manner.

Following the CRFM Ministerial meeting, the WECAFC Regional Working Group on IUU Fishing (RWG-IUU) met virtually on September 8-9, 2020. Members shared information on progress toward implementation of the WECAFC17 recommendations and discussed WECAFC members' States of readiness to implement the Regional Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing (RPOA-IUU). In light of these discussions and the updated workplan of the RWG-IUU, and mindful that IUU fishing and the often attendant organised crime harms legitimate fishing activities and livelihoods, jeopardizes food and economic security, benefits transnational crime, distorts markets, contributes to human trafficking, and undermines ongoing efforts to implement sustainable fisheries policies, the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

## **1. Fisheries governance**

*NOTING* the current situation with regard to fish stocks status and related management concerns;

*NOTING* the concern expressed by the CRFM Ministerial Council that depletion of global fish stocks and accompanying fishing effort reductions can cause the affected fishing fleets to shift to the WECAFC region, whether legally or otherwise;

*RECALLING* the obligations of Member States under:

- a. the CRFM-OSPESCA Joint declaration and action plan (y2012, revised in 2019),
- b. the Castries, St Lucia, Declaration on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (2010),
- c. the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (2010),
- d. Resolution WECAFC/15/2014/6 on region-wide support to the implementation of the CRFM "Castries, St Lucia, (2010) Declaration on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing",
- e. Resolution WECAFC/15/2014/9 "on the implementation of the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) and the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Flag State Performance in the region";



- f. WECAFC 17 recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/15 “on the monitoring and control of transshipment at sea”;
- g. WECAFC 17 recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/17 “on the marking of fishing gear”;  
and
- h. the Regional Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in WECAFC Member Countries (2019-2029) endorsed at WECAFC 17.

*REITERATING* the importance of strengthening national legislation for effective conservation, management and sustainable utilization of the fisheries resources and related ecosystems, including combatting IUU fishing, to optimize benefits and to effectively discharge responsibilities and obligations under international fisheries management instruments;

*ADOPTS* in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RECOMMENDATION that:

Member States should make the necessary investments in administrative, legal and scientific frameworks in support of meeting international fisheries conservation and management obligations (including RFMO initiatives) as well as implementation of related RFB initiatives;

Member States should develop a strengthened evidence base for fisheries management decision-making, and to develop the capacity to use it skillfully to balance resources allocated for access to new fishing opportunities with their capacity to effectively implement their flag State responsibilities;

The WECAFC Secretariat and the RWG-IUU should develop a report format and process that will allow WECAFC to monitor the progress of implementation of this and all other RWG-IUU recommendations that have been endorsed by WECAFC.

## **2. Transshipment**

*RECALLING* the Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/15 supporting developments towards arrangements for an effective system for enhanced surveillance of transshipment operations at sea and enforcement of relevant legislation, including effective information-sharing among WECAFC Members and with other States and international organizations, aimed at strengthening the monitoring, control and surveillance network for fisheries-related activities;

*NOTING* with concern, that while some countries have transshipment regulations in place, the limited implementation of the regulatory framework addressing transshipment and landing activities in port and at sea can increase the risk of fish and fish products derived from IUU fishing entering the supply chain;

*NOTING* that the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI33) in 2018 expressed concern about transshipment activities and called for an in-depth study to support the development of guidelines on best practices for regulating, monitoring and controlling transshipment which will be presented at COFI 34 (postponed to February 2021);

*CONCERNED* about evidence that transshipment activities in the Caribbean also support other criminal activities such as smuggling of narcotics and weapons as well as violations of labor laws and human rights;

*ADOPTS* in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes the RECOMMENDATION that:

WECAFC Members should support the process towards development and implementation of international guidelines on the management (regulation, monitoring and control) of transshipment;

WECAFC Members should seek to develop and effectively implement measures in the WECAFC region consistent with the adopted international guidelines for the effective management (regulation, monitoring and control) of transshipment so as to minimize the risk of fish and fish products derived from IUU fishing entering national and international markets and that this is without prejudice to the existing international obligations applicable to individual WECAFC Members as flag, port, coastal and market States to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.

### **3. Information-sharing**

*NOTING* the existing obligation by flag States to exercise effective jurisdiction and control over their vessels;

*RECALLING* the importance of regional information-sharing and cooperation, especially on the identities and operations of fishing and fishing support vessels operating in the WECAFC region, to support countries in effectively meeting their international responsibilities as flag, port, coastal and market States to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing;

*NOTING* that the Second Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on Port State Measures (MOP2) requested that: (1) the PSMA Global Information Exchange System (GIES) be operationalized as soon as possible for an effective implementation of the PSMA; (2) that a prototype be prepared for the Third Meeting of the Technical Working Group on Information Exchange (TWG-IE), and that the meeting participants agreed that active participation by States in this initiative can be an important element to maximize the potential of the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (Global Record) to support the functioning of the GIES;

*NOTING* that several WECAFC Members are Parties to the PSMA and the second meeting of the Parties to the PSMA noted that the effective implementation of the PSMA requires

further uptake of the Agreement and called on those that have not yet adhered to the PSMA to do so;

*NOTING* that WECAFC Members who are already Party to the PSMA should submit to FAO information on their designated ports and national contact points, as per Article 7 and Article 16 (3) of PSMA, while those who are not Party may choose to designate a national contact point and communicate it to FAO for the purposes of exchange of information under the PSMA;

*FURTHER NOTING* that WECAFC Members that are Parties to the PSMA are to start exchanging daily inspection reports in 2021 with other Parties of the PSMA, and that inspection reports include identity of the vessels inspected (under a foreign flag) and that this identity has to be verified, to the greatest extent possible

*NOTING ALSO* that a significant portion of the fishing vessels in the region are small-scale fishing vessels with a length overall of less than 12 meters and most catches are taken by a variety of these small-scale vessels;

*MINDFUL* that IUU fishing and fishing related activities can be carried out by both industrial-scale vessels and the large number of small-scale vessels throughout the region;

*NOTING* the new developments on the Global Record in order to facilitate multi-tenancy functionality allowing national and regional records to be built from the basis of the Global Record system, adapted to fit the specific requirements of the region at reduced cost and maintenance in comparison to the development of a new system;

*FURTHER RECALLING* the importance of IMO numbers for the identification of fishing vessels and for identifying IUU fishing activities and for implementing appropriate measures, and that WECAFC Members should ensure that its flagged motorized fishing vessels, refrigerated transport vessels and supply vessels down to a size limit of 12 meters Length Overall (LOA) and authorized to operate outside waters under national jurisdiction, obtain an IMO number and use it as a mark for identification. The IMO number should be marked either on the stern or stern quarter, with the name and port of registry, or on the side of the hull or superstructure.

*ADOPTS* in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RECOMMENDATION that

Member States develop effective mechanisms for information-sharing, consistent with existing approaches, to include fishing vessel related information, such as their beneficial owners, vessel identifiers operations, authorizations, histories, and compliance to improve monitoring, control and surveillance operations, verification of information and risk assessment to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing in the region and beyond; to

complement individual WECAFC Members activities such mechanisms should also be built at the regional level.

### Appendix 3. RWG-IUU inputs into the WECAFC Strategic Plan 2021-2027

#### Support for the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action on, and addressing gaps to improved effectiveness in combatting IUU fishing

Below are some proposed strategic outputs (*and possible indicators*), for consideration<sup>8</sup>:

- Promote Member State ratification, acceptance, approval or accession to relevant international instruments, such as the FAO Compliance Agreement and the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, as soon as possible. (*# countries ratified, accepted, approved or acceded to the PSMA; # Countries ratified, accepted, approved or acceded to the Compliance Agreement*)
- Coordinate the development of and updates to national plans of action and monitoring, control, and surveillance regulatory frameworks to combat IUU fishing, consistent with the approaches prescribed by the Regional Plan of Action on IUU Fishing and relevant international instruments. (*# national plans of action to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing*)
- [Support][Encourage][Promote] strengthening of national and subregional institutional arrangements for MCS and law enforcement capacities in Member States, especially regarding training of fisheries inspectors and maritime security agents. (*# regional partnerships for fisheries monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement; # persons trained in support of monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement*)
- Support/facilitate collaboration with other national, regional and international entities and their inputs in the implementation of the Regional Plan. (*# regional partnerships for fisheries monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement; [%] [#] WECAFC Member countries involved in the Blue Justice Initiative*)
- Support strengthening of regional and international cooperation to combat transnational organized crime associated with the fisheries sector (*[%] [#] WECAFC Member countries involved in the Blue Justice Initiative; # regional partnerships for fisheries monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement*)
- Support (sub-)regional network(s) for implementation of the regional plan of action on IUU fishing<sup>9</sup>. (*% increase in capacities for monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement; # regional partnerships for fisheries monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement; # RWG-IUU recommendations endorsed by WECAFC*)

---

<sup>8</sup> Brackets ([ ]) indicate optional text for consideration/agreement; possible indicators are parenthesised in *italics*; in this instance, brackets ([ ]) similarly indicate optional text for consideration/agreement

<sup>9</sup> Question to RWG members: Is it appropriate to include specific examples of these kinds of networks?

- Facilitate bilateral and subregional exchanges to address IUU fishing between and among two or more countries to address specific IUU fishing problems.<sup>10</sup> (*# bilateral and/or regional exchanges in support of addressing IUU Fishing*)
- Improve public awareness and education on IUU fishing and seafood fraud and facilitate the sharing and exchange of information to improve monitoring, control and surveillance to prevent IUU fishing (*# information/public awareness/education products on IUU fishing and seafood fraud; % improvement in sharing and exchange of information to support monitoring, control and surveillance*)
- Strengthening the sensitization of the judiciary at the national and regional levels in recognizing the socio-environmental and transnational dimensions of IUU fishing (*# of persons charged for IUU fishing offences; % of successful legal actions taken in IUU fishing cases; # of successful applications for forfeiture of illegal equipment*)
- Strengthening technology-driven traceability programmes (e.g. VMS, data loggers, electronic monitoring, e-logbooks, etc.) and/or reporting frameworks at the national and regional (and sub-regional) levels in support of deterring IUU fishing practices (*% of licensed vessels with VMS [and/or other] tracking technology; # [sub-]regional reports on IUU fishing [vessels]*)

---

<sup>10</sup> Question to RWG members: Should the WECAFC Secretariat be facilitating these exchanges?

## Status since the Third working group meeting and proposed 2020-22 work plan

### Activities completed since 3<sup>rd</sup> RWG-IUU:

| # | Activity  | Timeframe            | Responsible   | Status   | Proposed activity end date           | Notes     |
|---|---|----------------------|---|--|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Develop a draft regional plan of action to combat IUU fishing (RPOA-IUU)                        | Rescheduled to 2018  | RWG IUU coordinated by the WECAFC Secretariat   |  |                                      | Completed |
| 2 | Develop and finalise RPOA IUU   | January 2019         | WG Members with WECAFC, CRFM, OSPESCA, Consultant(s)  | Activity pursuant to outcome of RWG IUU 3, <a href="http://www.fao.org/3/ca9457t/ca9457t.pdf">http://www.fao.org/3/ca9457t/ca9457t.pdf</a> | Submission to WECAFC 17 in July 2019 | Completed |
| 3 | Organization of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> meeting of the RWG-IUU – focus on the RPOA-IUU finalization | 26-28 September 2018 | WECAFC + CRFM (as convener): meeting supported by EU-DG Mare funded project, the CLME+ project sub-project for shrimp and groundfish and REBYC II LAC | Meeting held <a href="http://www.fao.org/3/ca7572en/CA7572EN.pdf">http://www.fao.org/3/ca7572en/CA7572EN.pdf</a>                           |                                      | Completed |

| # | Activity  | Timeframe                   | Responsible  | Status  | Proposed activity end date | Notes     |
|---|---|-----------------------------|--|---|----------------------------|-----------|
| 4 | Submission of advice and recommendations generated by the 3 RWG-IUU meetings for review/discussion and approval within CRFM and OSPESCA | October 2017 – January 2019 | Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries (CLME+ supported) | Recommendations from 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> meetings and the outcomes of 3 <sup>rd</sup> meeting to be submitted to ICM once clarified | In time for WECAFC 17      | Completed |
| 5 | Reporting to the 9th meeting of the WECAFC Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) for review of advice and recommendations                     | November 2018               | Convener + WECAFC Secretariat  | Recommendations from RWG IUU 3rd meeting submitted to SAG for endorsement   | November 2018              | Completed |

**Items ongoing or postponed since the 3<sup>rd</sup> RWG-IUU:**

| # | Activity  | Initial Timeframe | Responsible           | Status   | Proposed activity end date | Notes   |
|---|---|-------------------|-----------------------|--|----------------------------|---|
| 1 | Design and carry out a review study to assess the nature and extent of IUU fishing in the WECAFC region | 2019              | Convener + WG members | (Had previously been) postponed pending development[finalization] of FAO methodological guidelines | 2021                       | In coordination with NFIO's work towards methodology to estimate the extent of IUU fishing. Pending the field guide toward mid 2021 |



| # | Activity  | Initial Timeframe | Responsible  | Status  | Proposed activity end date                               | Notes   |
|---|---|-------------------|--|---|--|---|
| 2 | Develop NPOAs -IUU based on the RPOA-IUU and inform FAO/WECAFC after adoption   | 2018 to 2020      | WG members   | ongoing   | 2021   | To be informed by the ongoing work on NPOA-IUU development guidance and the findings of the members Readiness study.  |
| 3 | Finalization of the study proposal<br>Determining cost effective measures to combat IUU fishing, and approaching of potential resource partners | 2019              | Convener + CRFM  | Concept note developed; develop and finalise proposal | Dependent on progress of assessment of the extent of IUU | Postponed. Achievement based on relevant info from the study to assess the nature and extent of IUU fishing   |
| 4 | Encourage/support increased national regulations, to ensure effective monitoring and control of transshipment activities                        | 2018 to 2020      | Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries; WG Members | New activity pursuant to outcome of RWG IUU 3         | 2022   | In progress in national support activities  |
| 5 | Identify information that should be shared at regional level to facilitate enforcement of national transshipment regulations                    | 2018-2019         | Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries; WG Members | New activity pursuant to outcome of RWG IUU 3         | 2021   | Important for the work to be done to raise awareness on transshipment contributing to laundering IUU catch into the supply chain and improve the monitoring, control and regulation of transshipment activities |

| # | Activity  | Initial Timeframe | Responsible   | Status  | Proposed activity end date          | Notes  |
|---|---|-------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| 6 | Encourage/support alignment of national regulations, with voluntary guidelines for marking of fishing gear.   | 2018-2019         | Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries; WG Members    | New activity pursuant to outcome of RWG IUU 3 | 2020-2021                           | In progress in national support activities   |
| 7 | Develop an IUU Vessel List for the region, using internationally applied criteria and procedures, and arrange with TM Tracking for maintaining the list   | September 2018    | WG Members with WECAFC, CRFM, OSPESCA and TM Tracking                   | t.b.d.  | Guidance to be sought from WECAFC18 | Probable review of the FAO Standard Specifications for the Marking and Identification of Fishing Vessels   |
| 8 | Develop protocols for “cooperation in monitoring, control and surveillance to combat illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing” under the Caribbean Community Common Fishery Policy and OSPESCA, respectively | 2018 to 2020      | CRFM, OSPESCA plus relevant WG members; supported by WECAFC Secretariat | ongoing                                       | Late 2021                           |  |
| 9 | Organize exchange of information and study tours for WG members to learn about successful and best-practice approaches in MCS and fisheries inspection in general   | 2018-2020         | WG members, facilitated by the CRFM, OSPESCA and WECAFC Secretariats    | Ongoing                                       | 2022                                | Needs to be strengthened, with more collaboration, information generation by WG members or WECAFC focal points then coordination by WECAFC Secretariat |

**New items proposed for 2020-2022:**

| # | Activity  | Timeframe | Responsible  | Status          | Proposed activity end date | Notes   |
|---|---|-----------|--|-----------------|----------------------------|---|
| 1 | Assessment of WECAFC members' readiness to implement the RPOA-IUU   | 2020      | WECAFC Secretariat in consultation with WG Convener and NFIO colleagues  | Study completed | September 2020             | Report to be presented to the 4 <sup>th</sup> WG Meeting then publication                                   |
| 2 | Develop new draft recommendation for regional vessel record for WECAFC region   | 2020      | WECAFC Secretariat together with FAO HQ, in consultation with WG Members | -               | In time for WECAFC 18      |   |
| 3 | Organise the 4 <sup>th</sup> RWG-IUU and publication of the proceedings   | 2020      | RWG-IUU  | -               | November 2020              |   |
| 4 | Guidance document for the development of NPOA-IUU   | 2020      | CLME+ project together with FAO HQ and WECAFC Secretariat                |                 | December 2020              |   |
| 5 | Engage in the ongoing process coming up to COFI 34 for the possible development of guidelines for regulating, monitoring and controlling transshipment operations | 2020-2021 | WG Members   | -               | COFI 34                    |   |
| 6 | Development of a GEF proposal to combat IUU fishing in selected countries in the WECAFC area  | 2020-2021 | CLME+ project together with FAO HQ and WECAFC Secretariat                |                 | 2021                       | Concept Note to be presented at the 4 <sup>th</sup> WG Meeting for expression of interest by WECAFC members |
| 7 | Development of an implementation plan of the RPOA-IUU   | 2021      | WECAFC Secretariat and FAO HQ colleagues                                 |                 | In time for WECAFC18       | Based on the findings of the readiness study, the report of which includes the elements of                  |

|    |  |           |   |   |            |   |
|----|--|-----------|---|---|------------|---|
|    |  |           |   |   |            | an implementation plan. WG to guide on the what makes sense to be done next   |
| 8  | Presentation of deliverables (recommendations and resolutions) of scientific nature to the 11 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) of WECAFC | 2021      | WECAFC Secretariat and Convener of the RWG-IUU              | - | April 2021 | As per WECAFC17 instructions, WG convener to present recommendations to SAG and be on hold for the Commission's deliberations |
| 9  | Report on the work of the RWG-IUU and eventual support to SAG for the submission of recommendations to WECAFC18  | 2021      | SAG and WECAFC Secretariat in consultation with WG Convenor |   | July 2021  | As per WECAFC17 instructions, WG convener to present recommendations to SAG and be on hold for the Commission's deliberations |
| 10 | Organise the 5 <sup>th</sup> RWG-IUU and publication of the proceedings  | 2020-2021 | RWG-IUU   | - | 2022       |   |

**CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM-Working Group on Spawning Aggregations**  
**Convener: Myles Phillips**

## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. Introduction and Background  | 86 |
| 2. Objectives   | 86 |
| 3. Main Accomplishments during the Intersession Period (2019-2021)          | 86 |
| 4. Challenges   | 87 |
| 5. Conclusions  | 88 |
| Appendix 1: Recommendations   | 89 |
| Appendix 2: Updated TOR   | 92 |
| Appendix 3: Draft Work Plan 2022-2023 Intersession Period for WECAFC/SAG/XI | 99 |

## 1. Introduction and Background

The CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations (SAWG) was established in February 2012 by the 14<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC. This document outlines intersessional activities accomplished by the SAWG since the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC (WECAFC17) held 15-18<sup>th</sup> July 2019 in Miami, USA. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and its disruptive effect on collaborative work, the 2018-2020 workplan confirmed at that meeting was internally updated by SAWG to include new activities to be implemented through 2021 as activity timelines shifted.

These new activities largely expanded the ongoing work of the SAWG, incorporating recommendations for activities generated during its third meeting in December 2019. Other line items involved adaptations to facilitate ongoing remote collaboration and consultation with working group member representatives and observers, driving forward the production of a draft regional fisheries management plan and a regional communication strategy. The critically endangered Nassau Grouper and the commercially important Mutton Snapper are commonly targeted and well known aggregating fish species, and were used in these outputs as focal points to promote formal and informal conservation action.

## 2. Objectives

This document summarizes achievements, challenges and lessons learned by the SAWG during the period 2019-2022. Implementation of activities was within the context of its TOR as enshrined in the report of the Fourth Meeting of the SAWG in November 2020:

- Compile and analyze data on spawning aggregations in the member countries and monitor any changes.
- Seek partnerships with other institutions that could provide assistance in the monitoring, evaluation, and recommendations for management for protection and conservation of spawning aggregations.
- Provide advice on the management and implementation of regional strategies and regulations to protect spawning aggregations.
- Report to the appropriate institutions at each session.

## 3. Main Accomplishments during the Intersession Period (2019-2021)

- Third meeting of the CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA-/CRFM-Working Group on Spawning Aggregations, held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, 18-19 December 2019

A key objective of this meeting was to advance development of the draft *Regional Fish Spawning Aggregation Draft Fishery Management Plan (FSAMP)*. This document, which focuses primarily on the commercially important Nassau Grouper and Mutton Snapper, is intended to outline guidance for best practices and catalyze improved management of aggregating fish species by member States. The referenced management plan was adopted by the Working Group subject to inclusion of recommendations provided at this meeting. An updated version was then produced by the contractors by the end of March 2020, to continue its formal adoption process. In addition, participants learned about the achievements of the ongoing communications strategy for Fish Spawning Aggregations Conservation “Recovering Big Fish” and its next steps. Generated products became available for broad distribution. Following recommendations from the WECAFC 17th session, the Working Group agreed to conduct a regional survey to assess the potential inclusion of

parrotfishes within the Spawning Aggregation Working Group. CFMC supported the parrotfish studies and production of a technical document

(<https://www.fao.org/wecafc/publications/detail/en/c/1469227/>).

- Fourth (Virtual) meeting of the CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations, 9-10 November 2020

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic universally necessitated the adoption of virtual meeting strategies in order for work to continue. Nonetheless, wide and active participation was received from a broad assemblage of stakeholders. The meeting provided an opportunity for review of the updated management FSAMP, as well as updates on the regional communication strategy and the implementation of Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/24. Discussion of the outputs of the parrotfish surveys and keen interest during deliberations regarding the mandate of the SAWG with respect to this family of fish resulted in the establishment of a collaborative framework with the SPAW Scientific Technical Advisory Committee (SPAW-STAC). The SAWG resolved only to consider parrotfish species which reproduce solely in spawning aggregations, deciding that the management and conservation of parrotfish in general was more appropriate to the mandate of the SPAW-STAC.

- Regional Fish Spawning Aggregation Fishery Management Plan: Focus on Nassau Grouper and Mutton Snapper (FSAMP)

The production of this collaborative document has been an extensive intersessional effort by a dedicated team of WG members spanning multiple years, its content curated with a view to “stop and reverse the declines associated with uncontrolled exploitation of vulnerable fish spawning aggregations”. The adopted FSAMP by the SAWG was presented to the 74<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute in November 2021 reaching an even more broad and diverse list of stakeholders. Currently the available English, Spanish and French versions of the FSAMP are under final review to verify that all updates received have been incorporated, and are ready for presentation to SAG XI.

- Communications Strategy for the Conservation and Management of Fish Spawning Aggregations in the WECAFC Region

The SAWG communications strategy was successfully launched in 2021. Titled “Big Fish” to evoke the size of the Nassau Grouper and Mutton Snapper and their aggregations, the size of the stakeholder group which is financially and dependent on healthy aggregations, and the magnitude of the fisheries crisis associated with their decline, it will involve a trilingual, multifaceted approach targeting the general public, the fishing community and decision makers. Two short films were released in 2021 - “Nassau Grouper Against the Clock” ([https://youtu.be/45\\_OIs2jJ8I](https://youtu.be/45_OIs2jJ8I)) and “F2F Advice: Fish Smart” (<https://youtu.be/M87V4yEBENM>) - and future outputs include a 1 hour film, a digital hub, and radio kits to equip local champions to promote fish spawning aggregation (FSA) conservation.

#### **4. Challenges**

- The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated coordination of a virtual Fourth Meeting of SAWG in 2020 as a follow up to the Third Meeting. The pandemic also delayed implementation of multiple elements of the communications strategy which required travel to shoot on location,

including the 1 hour feature film “The Secret Crown”. Filming was delayed by a year, and finally proceeded in February 2022 under a battery of preventative biosafety measures. Production of the film is anticipated to end in Fall 2022.

- The Working Group was unable to secure funding to support some of its 2018-2021 objectives within the program period (listed below). Multiple grant applications have been submitted in late 2021-early 2022 with a view to financing these activities, which include:
  - A regional cooperative monitoring protocol, database and data management system to characterize and monitor FSAs
  - Regional and national status and needs assessment of FSA sites in the WECAFC region
  - Provision of technical capacity to identify FSAs in regions where FSAs have not been documented or characterized (e.g. Eastern Caribbean)

## **5. Conclusions**

The 2019-2022 programme period was one of prolific activity despite the disruptions of the global pandemic, and has resulted in the production of key materials upon which to build the future work of the SAWG. If implemented, these outputs will represent powerful tool sets to change the trajectory of FSAs away from extirpation and towards recovery by promoting effective management of aggregating species. The financial and administrative contributions of CFMC to the production of these outputs must be gratefully acknowledged here, as well as the diligent efforts of the members of the SAWG Task Force in preparation of proposals, leading the update of working group documents, coordination of meetings and other stakeholder engagements, and implementation of the communications strategy.



## Appendix 1: Recommendations

### CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM-Working Group on Spawning Aggregations (SAWG)

#### Cover Note

The SAWG has held two meetings since the adoption of the Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/14 “*On the Sustainable Management of Spawning Aggregations and Aggregating Species*” at the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission (WECAFC17) held from 15-18 July 2019. This document enshrined 10 recommendations which emerged from commitments made to an associated 2018-2020 work plan at the second meeting of the SAWG in March 2018. These recommendations were subject to review at the third meeting of SAWG in December 2019, during which many of these recommendations were found to have been accomplished through diligent intersessional efforts.

The advancement of the formal adoption process for the *Regional Fish Spawning Aggregation Draft Fishery Management Plan (FSAMP)* and completion of the “*Big Fish*” Regional Communications Strategy now demand high levels of commitment for their most needed implementation. Annual calls for regional harmonization of closed seasons and strengthened enforcement have been issued, along with short films for stakeholder engagement. Many activities have also been implemented at the member State level, including status assessments, passing of legislation and the creation of protected areas.

It is recognized that at the regional level, many of the data-dependent recommendations have not been achieved, impeded by data scarcity and resource limitations for implementation of associated high level tasks. Fundraising efforts are ongoing to support the development of projects to determine the status of all known FSA sites, and to produce a set of standard monitoring protocols and sustain an associated regional monitoring database.

Another gap is the lack of national implementation of a seasonal closure for Nassau grouper and mutton snapper as called for in FSAMP. Recognizing the need for this measure, the Chair of the WECAFC Executive Committee sent a letter to the WECAFC membership in August 2020 strongly encouraging member States to establish synchronized regional closed seasons for Nassau grouper and mutton snapper to safeguard their spawning aggregations, and promote their effective conservation, management and development.

The transition from the 2018-2020 workplan to the 2021-2025 workplan reaffirms the commitment of the SAWG to procure funding to pursue its data dependent objectives, and to establish a framework to facilitate regional monitoring of FSA management trends by WECAFC. The Fifth meeting of the SAWG had to be re-scheduled given Covid-19 travel restrictions, and as such, opportunities to achieve concrete results toward conservation and recovery of the FSAs continue to be postponed. The need for strong education and communication should be highlighted.

In the meantime, existing recommendations have been modified to reflect the status of deliverables. These recommendations call for adoption and implementation of the FSAMP, and actions to advance improved data collection, assessment, communication, and outreach for the conservation of FSAs. They also promote capacity building and the mobilization of resources to assist WECAFC members conduct priority research, monitoring, management, and enforcement activities.

The ramifications of not adopting these recommendations include the perpetuation of gaps in knowledge and critical information necessary to guide decision makers, inadequate protection and management of FSAs, and overexploitation of FSAs that [further] threatens their sustainability.

## **Preamble**

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC):

- RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;
- REAFFIRMING its commitment to support management and implementation of regional strategies and regulations to protect spawning aggregations and aggregating species through the establishment of the WECAFC Working Group on Spawning Aggregations (SAWG) at the 14<sup>th</sup> session of WECAFC in 2012.
- NOTING that stocks of many species of groupers and snappers in the Caribbean have declined significantly in the last three decades, some of their fish spawning aggregations (FSAs) have declined or disappeared and that immediate action is required to stop further reductions.
- MINDFUL that many fishers' livelihoods are dependent on harvest from spawning aggregations and the fisheries that they support, but also that these fishers have experience and expertise that could be invaluable in the conservation, management, and possible tourism at such sites and that the development of economic alternatives for affected fishers should accompany efforts to halt fishing during spawning periods or close areas where spawning occurs.
- REAFFIRMING the recommendations of the Declaration of Miami (2013) issued at the 1<sup>st</sup> CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations.
- REAFFIRMING and supporting the recommendations and the workplan from the 2nd meeting of the CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations.
- NOTING members' commitment to the 2018 SAWG workplan, various planned actions and that activities are well underway,
- COMMITTED to individually and collectively taking measures and actions to further improve the management and conservation of fish spawning aggregations and species that aggregate to spawn in the Wider Caribbean Region

## **Action Items**

The CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA-/CRFM-Working Group on Spawning Aggregations, at its Third and Fourth Meetings on 18-19 December 2019 and 9-10 November 2020, ADOPTS in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the RECOMMENDATION that:

1. WECAFC, CFMC, and as appropriate CRFM, OSPESCA, and CEP-SPAW support the national adoption and strategic implementation of a Regional Fish Spawning Aggregation Fisheries Management Plan by all Member States.

2. WECAFC Secretariat and Members invest resources and support the standardization of existing monitoring programs, or introduction where these do not exist, to coalesce them into a unified regional monitoring program utilizing standard protocols to share data designed to track the status and trends of aggregations and the species that form them and thus contribute to local, national and regional management efforts.
3. Members of WECAFC identify and determine the status of all known Fish Spawning Aggregation (FSA) sites (particularly for mutton snapper and Nassau grouper), confirm the timing of spawning seasons, and inform the SAWG and WECAFC Scientific Advisory Group (SAG).
4. Members of WECAFC call for standardized measures to protect Fish Spawning Aggregations (FSAs) at the national, regional and international scale, including strengthening enforcement of closed seasons, closed areas, sales bans during the closed season, and international collaboration and communication around law enforcement.
5. Members of WECAFC agree upon and adopt a regional seasonal closure for all commercial and recreational fishing of Nassau grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*), at least for the period 1 December – 31 March and that Members will not permit export or commercial sale of Nassau grouper or its products (e.g. roe, fillets) for the duration of the seasonal closure.
6. WECAFC Secretariat supports an assessment of the economic value of FSAs and the socio-economic impact of proposed management measures to inform future management decision-making.
7. Members offer training to fishers (displaced due to FSA closures) in monitoring, research, assessment, and suitable economic alternatives. Fishers and other stakeholders to be involved in cooperative research and FSA management.
8. The WECAFC Secretariat and Members support and promote a regional outreach and communication strategy on conservation and management of FSAs.
9. Members of WECAFC prioritize FSAs for monitoring, conservation, and management based on status, vulnerability and Members' institutional capacity.
10. The WECAFC Secretariat, together with the Members of WECAFC, seek to mobilize resources to assist the Members in the implementation of priority research, monitoring, enforcement, management and conservation of FSAs and the species that form them, with particular focus on mutton snapper and Nassau Grouper.

## Appendix 2: Updated TOR

### WORKING GROUPS TERMS OF REFERENCE DRAFT

[CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM-Working Group on Spawning Aggregations]

[insert date of endorsement of ToRs by Commission]

#### CONTENTS

- I. Background and justification
- II. Role of the Working Group
  - a) Scope of the Work
  - b) Goal
  - c) Tasks/ functions
  - d) Membership
- III. Mode of Operation
  - a) Role of Countries
  - b) Role of Convener
  - c) Election and role of Convener
  - d) Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat
  - e) Roles of other Subregional organizations
- IV. Outputs
- V. Communication
- VI. Working Group meetings and cost
- VII. Amendments to the Terms of Reference
- VIII. Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions

#### **I. Background and justification**

Fishery management advice and recommendations, based on the best available scientific information, are provided to WECAFC member countries for their implementation by dedicated Working Groups, established by the Commission.

The Working Groups that were established or confirmed in the subsequent sessions since the 14th session of the Commission in 2012 are the following:

1. OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Caribbean Spiny Lobster
2. CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch
3. WECAFC Working Group on the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries
4. WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries
5. CRFM/WECAFC/JICA/IFREMER Working Group on Fisheries Using fish aggregating devices (FADS)
6. CRFM/WECAFC Working Group on Flyingfish in the Eastern Caribbean (established since the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC as the flyingfish- Dolphinfish WG)
7. WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Northern Brazil-Guianas Shelf

8. CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations
9. Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (RWG-IUU)
10. WECAFC Working Group for the Conservation And Management of Sharks in the Wider Caribbean Region
11. WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group (FDS-WG)

Most Working Groups (WGs) are joint groups with other regional partner institutions, such as the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), the Organization of Fisheries for the Central American Isthmus (OSPESCA), the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC), the French Research Institute for Exploration of the Sea (IFREMER), etc. Fishery scientists, experts, managers, and decision-makers of member countries as well as regional partner organizations, including academia and NGOs, participating in the WGs, which have specific, time-bound terms of reference. The data used by the Working Groups to assess the status of fish stocks, to conduct fishery assessments and to generate fishery management advice and recommendations to the Commission are collected by the participating countries and NGOs.

The key drivers behind the establishment of these WGs are the need to:

- collaborate and cooperate in the assessment and management of shared resources;
- standardize data collection and reporting systems to enable assessment of stock status using data and information from various countries targeting the stock/species/resources throughout their distribution range;
- standardize the conservation and management measures for effective management;
- provide training and capacity-building to improve data collection and assessment of fisheries/fish stocks;
- harmonize regulations across the region, and countries, for effective fishery management; and
- cooperate to implement and enforce actions for effective fishery management.

Each WG will pay due attention to the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its related guidelines, including the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries, as well as any other agreed international or regional instruments for the conservation and management of fisheries. Also, the principles of precautionary, participatory and ecosystem approaches to fisheries management will be considered. The activities of the WGs are also guided by any specific regional or international fisheries management, or related obligations and initiatives or instruments of relevance, to the respective resources associated with the specific WG – e.g. any FMPs, Declarations, agreed CMMs, regional strategies, regulations etc.

## **II. Role of the Working Group**

### **. Scope of the Work**

The scope of each WG is to provide scientific and management advice for the sustainable management, conservation, and development of living marine resources in the area of competence of WECAFC. This scope also includes the development and support to national and regional plans of action, and fishery management plans, to regulate target and bycatch fisheries, as well as manage existing populations in the region. Using a multidisciplinary approach, the WG will contribute to sustainable management by providing advice to the Members of WECAFC based on the best available scientific knowledge/evidence and traditional/local ecological knowledge. In pursuing this goal, the WG will contribute to the fulfillment of national and regional responsibilities for the marine environment and for the management of fish spawning aggregations, and related or interacting

species or fisheries in the WECAFC Region, with special emphasis on the mutton snapper and Nassau Grouper.

**b. Goal**

The goal of each WG is to inform and provide guidance for the management of living marine resources to the WECAFC members in such a manner as to promote responsible fisheries, provide economic opportunities, and secure social wellbeing while ensuring the conservation of living marine resources and the protection of marine biodiversity.

**c. Tasks/ functions**

The WG will:

- Identify issues (gaps, deficiencies), challenges, and best practices in data collection at the national level in the region, and provide recommendations on how to address issues and challenges, and implementation of best practices.
- Collect, review and share the past and present data and information on spawning aggregations and their associated fisheries in the WECAFC area, involving the fishers and private sector
- Analyze the data and information collected from capture fisheries and aquaculture production and make recommendations for the sustainability of the fisheries of aggregating species in the WECAFC region.
- Monitor changes in distribution and abundance of all living aquatic species and resources of relevance to the mandate of the WG in the WECAFC region.
- Develop common methodologies for data collection, assessment, and monitoring of fish aggregations and stocks.
- Seek partnerships with other institutions that could provide assistance in the monitoring, evaluation, and effective implementation of management recommendations for the protection and conservation of fish spawning aggregations.
- Monitor and provide advice on the management and implementation of regional strategies, regulations, and management plans to protect fish spawning aggregations.
- Establish communication between the members of the WG, other WGs and relevant parties on issues of common interest in order to strengthen regional collaboration in the conservation, assessment and management of fish spawning aggregations.
- Ensure development of education and outreach programs that articulate the message/s of the WG and facilitate the achievement of the goals and objectives of the SAWG work plan.
- Report to the Commission and contribute to communication and visibility of the deliverables of the Working Group as may be needed.

**d. Membership**

Membership in the WG shall consist of representatives from all those Member States of CRFM and WECAFC, OSPESCA, including overseas territories and Departments. Specifically, Member representatives will be national Officers responsible for fisheries management with activities related to the following domains: statistical analyses of fisheries data, data collection, designing data collection systems, analyzing statistics for statistical bulletins, report preparation, organizing and managing data collection, storage and dissemination according to a variety of needs (e.g., RFMO reporting, departmental, scientific meetings, etc.).

### **III. Mode of Operation:**

#### **a. Role of Countries**

The members of the WG will play a leading role through the following activities and commitments:

- Participate in agreed activities and ensure the participation of appropriate experts;
- Implement, at the national level, the work identified in the WECAFC endorsed work plan (as appropriate);
- Identify and report on country-specific challenges and opportunities related to implementation of agreed conservation and management measures;
- Assist with mobilization of resources and outreach materials;
- Facilitate the organization of meetings in the languages of the Commission;
- Host meetings on a rotational basis;
- Facilitate the identification of the Convener.

#### **b. Role of Convener**

The Convener of the WG will play a leading role during the organization of the meetings and subsequent follow up with the Secretariat of WECAFC by coordinating the inputs of the members of the WG. The Convener should:

- Seek experts from the WECAFC Members, contact potential partner organizations, and solicit their interest to join the WG;
- Call for meetings as appropriate;
- Ensure that technical contributions are received in a timely manner and in the appropriate format;
- Ensure that outputs are delivered as agreed during each meeting
- Collaborate closely with FAO-WECAFC and other sub-regional and regional organizations as appropriate;
- Assist in the preparation and publication process of the proceedings of the WG meeting;
- Participate (in person or virtually) at the meetings to present the draft working documents and provide any clarifications as required;
- Facilitate the review by the WG membership within a reasonable period of time (max. 15 days) on suggested edits or modifications as considered necessary to address comments and the return of the revised document to the WECAFC Secretariat for distribution and consideration by the Commission;
- Participate in the Commission's sessions (physically or virtually) if required, to support the Secretariat in clarifying or substantiating some points of the draft working documents;
- Assist in the relevant processes to gather information in support of seeking funds to implement priority activities of the WG;
- Identify, participate in and share information on inter-sessional activities.

#### **c. Election and role of Convener**

- The WG shall elect a Convener from among its Members to serve over a two-year period. The term of office of the Convener may be extended as determined appropriate. In the case where another qualified Convener is not available, the Convener's term may be renewed for an additional two-year term until another Convener is selected.

#### **d. Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat**

The FAO/WECAFC Secretariat will play a supporting role in the activities of the Working Group by

assisting in:

- Coordinating activities of the WG, among WECAFC and Non-WECAFC Members, at the wider regional level (including facilitating procurement of funding);
- Assisting with logistical arrangements for the convening of meetings;
- Providing technical assistance, such as a technical secretary or research support, if needed and as resources permit;
- Liaising with other Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) active in the Wider Caribbean Region and neighboring areas for their engagement and collaboration as much as possible in the work of the WG; these RFBs include amongst others OSPESCA, CRFM, CFMC, ICCAT, NAFO, NEAFC, CECAF, COPPESAALC, etc.;
- Liaising with other relevant regional and international organizations as appropriate, such as the Sargasso Sea Commission, SPAW Protocol, etc.;
- Coordinating the formulation and adoption of recommendations and/or resolutions and reports/documents by the WG so as to facilitate the decision-making process by the Commission;
- Ensuring the strategic linkage between the work of the WG and programmes and projects hosted to support the fisheries and healthy ecosystems framework of the CLME+ and any future phase of this project;
- Facilitating training and collaboration of WECAFC Member States and sub-regional training institutions as appropriate and based on available resources.

**e. Roles of other Subregional organizations (e.g. CFMC, CRFM, ICCAT, OSPESCA, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECS, etc.)**

Sub-regional organizations have an important role to play in assisting their member countries to participate fully in the activities of the Working Group. Therefore, they may be invited to:

- Provide expertise, technical assistance and support;
- Facilitate procurement of funding when possible;
- Collaborate in implementing the activities of the Working Group;
- Collaborate with the WECAFC Secretariat and sub-regional organizations in coordinating the activities of the WG
- Facilitate the decision-making process at the Sub-regional level.

**Regional Activity Centre for the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife for the Wider Caribbean Region (CAR-SPAW-RAC)**

Pursuant to mutual aims and objectives with the WG:

- The convener of this working group will contribute as a technical representative to the SPAW STAC Ad Hoc Working Group on Parrotfish.
- CAR-SPAW-RAC will provide expertise technical assistance and support with respect to management of species of parrotfish which form spawning aggregations.

**IV. Outputs**

In discharging its duties, the WG will deliver the following outputs:

- Biennial Work Plans including providing performance of projects on a routine schedule;
- Reports on assessment and monitoring of the status of spawning aggregations;
- Draft Fisheries Management Plans;
- Draft Regional Plans of Action;
- Proposed Recommendations and Resolutions to the Commission;



- Revised TORs as needed.

## **V. Communication**

A mechanism for on-going communication among WG members (video conference, Skype, zoom meeting and email), is essential to ensure that the work of the group is sustained between meetings. It must include all members and the communication tools must be accessible to all members.

The successful functioning of the WG also requires that each member country and organization/ agency identify a national node or focal point who will be contacted through the WECAFC National Focal Point and technically coordinate at national level all matters pertinent to the WG. The outputs of the WG will be communicated through reports to WECAFC, OSPESCA, CFMC, CRFM, CITES, UNEP- CEP, ICCAT, IFREMER, and national fishery administrations via the WECAFC Secretariat.

## **VI. Working Group meetings and cost**

The WG should meet physically or virtually on a regular basis, the timing of which is decided by the members, but at a minimum once every two years. The meetings should be of 2-5 days and use cost effective accommodations and institutional facilities and where possible take advantage of other meetings in the region. Meetings shall be chaired by the Convener of the WG. The reports of the meetings will be formally submitted to OSPESCA, WECAFC, CFMC and CRFM, ICCAT, CITES, UNEP- CEP, IFREMER, Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Network, etc.

## **VII. Amendments to the Terms of Reference**

Amendment of these terms of reference may be done at each biennial meeting of the Commission for implementation by the working groups in the subsequent intersessional period.

## **VIII. Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions**

Standardized templates will ensure a common understanding of what should be included in draft recommendations and resolutions, ease the reporting of deliverables as well as facilitate their review by other WECAFC bodies, as appropriate. Working Groups should include the following elements when preparing draft recommendations and resolutions to be presented to the WECAFC membership or other WECAFC bodies (e.g. the Scientific Advisory Group or other WECAFC Working Groups).

### **Recommendations and Resolutions**

Draft recommendations and resolutions for review by other WECAFC bodies and the WECAFC membership should include the following elements:

- **Cover Note:** A brief cover note for draft recommendations and/or resolutions should be provided to assist reviewers. The cover note should include a clear, candid, and transparent explanation of:
  - a. why the action was developed,
  - b. at which WG meeting it was discussed,
  - c. a brief overview of how the WG arrived at its decision to put the action forward;
  - d. how the action will impact future WECAFC activities, including, where relevant any possible changes in resource or workload requirements for Members or the WECAFC Secretariat;
  - e. the ramifications of \*not\* approving the recommended action;

- f. the full picture of the context for the recommended action.
- **Preambular Text**: This should provide essential elements to highlight the context and intent of the proposed action in a concise bulleted format. The preambular text should include only the core historical elements and should include references to related decisions or measures.
  - **Action Text**: This should indicate clearly what action(s) the WG is taking, or is asking the WECAFC Membership to take, at a national, subregional, and/or regional level, including specific timelines to which the action(s) will adhere.

Considering that each WG can have more than one meeting, and more than one issue to address during each intersessional period, the WGs can produce several reports/documents or draft resolutions/recommendations. In order to facilitate analysis by the Commission, each WG shall prepare a single set of recommendations and/or resolutions organized by fishery or by theme, including all the topics addressed in the intersessional meetings. In this regard, the Commission would consider a single set of draft recommendations and/or resolutions for spiny lobster, queen conch, flying fish and dolphinfish, FADs, FDS, etc.

The WGs shall refer relevant recommendations and resolutions of a scientific nature to the SAG for scientific review at least one month before the meeting of SAG, in order to provide adequate time to the Secretariat and SAG members to review them before the meeting. This will improve the efficiency of the reviews during the SAG sessions.

### Appendix 3: Draft Work Plan 2022-2023 Intersession Period for WECAFC/SAG/XI

The Working Group will carry out the following activities in 2022-2023 period:

| Activity  | Timetable  | Responsible Entity  | Group/Theme                   |
|---|--|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Present Fishery Management Plan (FSAMP) to WECAFC Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) to review the recommendations                                    | Spring 2022  | WECAFC Secretariat  | Technical/Scientific Advisory |
| 2. Convene the 5 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the SAWG (Panama)   | March 2-3, 2022  | WECAFC + CFMC as coordinator; meeting supported by NOAA Fisheries<br><br><i>Deferred</i>              | Coordination/ Collaboration   |
| 3. Submit Fishery Management Plan to WECAFC 18 (Nicaragua)  | Summer 2022  | Spawning Aggregations Working Group   | Technical/Scientific Advisory |
| 4. Publish and distribute Report of 5 <sup>th</sup> SAWG meeting (2022)   | Fall 2022  | WECAFC + CFMC supported by NOAA Fisheries   | Coordination/ Collaboration   |
| 5. Maintain the SAWG network intersessional communications by regularly posting FSA news and events to the GCFI, CAMPAM, and other lists              | 2021 – 2025  | FWRI (Acosta)<br><br><i>Ongoing – ListServe established; postings ongoing</i>                         | Education and Outreach        |
| 6. Final cooperative monitoring program and database  | Not started  | WECAFC, CFMC, NOAA Fisheries, SAWG members and researchers, and others<br><br><i>Requires funding</i> | Technical/Scientific Advisory |
| 7. Develop a FSA Protocol to: 1) report on the status of spawning aggregations and associated environmental factors, and 2) evaluate local management | Present draft at 6 <sup>th</sup> SAWG meeting; adopt at 7 <sup>th</sup> SAWG | FSAMP Team<br><br><i>Funding application submitted (applicable to</i>                                 | Technical/Scientific Advisory |

|   |               |  |                                   |
|---|---------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| initiatives.<br><br>Identify lessons learned and apply positive outcomes.   | meeting       | <i>all relevant countries)</i>   |                                   |
| 8. Conduct a regional and national status and needs assessment of FSA sites in the WECAFC region  | Not started   | WECAFC, CFMC, NOAA Fisheries, SAWG members and researchers, and others<br><br><i>Requires funding</i>              | Technical/<br>Scientific Advisory |
| 9. Establish clear and simple guidance to: 1) update and/or verify the status (timing and location, fish numbers, catches) of known spawning aggregations at the national level, and 2) facilitate prioritization of those spawning aggregations most urgently needing protective action. | 2022 – 2023   | FSAMP Team<br><br><i>Funding application submitted (applicable to pilot countries)</i>                             | Technical/<br>Scientific Advisory |
| 10. Mobilize resources from bilateral and international agencies to assist with Activities called for in SAWG Work Plan   | 2021 - 2025   | WECAFC, CFMC, NOAA Fisheries, SAWG members, and others<br><br><i>Initiated summer 2021</i>                         | Coordination/<br>Collaboration    |
| 11. Secure financial support to develop Digital Hub in support of Communication Plan with downloadable resources and resource library   | 2022- 2023    | CFMC (support to A. Salceda, BelugaSmile)<br><br><i>Requires additional funding</i><br><br><i>\$100,000</i>        | Education and<br>Outreach         |
| 12. Production of one-hour film for International Broadcast   | Jan-Sept 2022 | Ana Salceda, BelugaSmile Productions, supported by The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI), Terra Mater and PBS | Education and<br>Outreach         |

|  |                    |   |                                       |
|--|--------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| <p>13. Develop materials for Citizen Science Program aimed at fishers and enforcement officials: 1) Produce &amp; distribute radio kits in Spanish and French; 2) Produce &amp; distribute two short films: a) a 30-minute “call to action” film aimed at fishing communities to stop decline of mutton snapper; and b) a film that calls on the general public to protect FSAs by not consuming grouper and snapper during spawning periods</p> | <p>2022- 2023</p>  | <p>CFMC (support to A. Salceda, BelugaSmile)</p> <p>1) <i>Radio kits require \$32,000</i></p> <p>2) <i>Short films require \$38,000</i></p> | <p>Education and Outreach</p>         |
| <p>14. Share technical capacity to identify FSAs in regions where FSAs have not been documented or characterized (e.g. Eastern Caribbean)</p>  | <p>2021- 2025</p>  | <p>WECAFC</p> <p><i>Requires funding</i></p>  | <p>Technical/ Scientific Advisory</p> |
| <p>15. Implementation of 1) Public Broadcasting Service’s Outreach plan and 2) The Howard Hughes Medical Institute’s (HHMI) Science Outreach Plan.</p>   | <p>2022 - 2023</p> | <p>Ana Salceda will coordinate with HHMI &amp; PBS.</p>   | <p>Education and Outreach</p>         |
| <p>16. Secure support to assist WECAFC members with FSAMP Implementation for most urgent actions needed</p>  | <p>2022 – 2023</p> | <p>FSAMP Team, CFMC, NOAA Fisheries, WECAFC</p> <p><i>Funding application submitted</i></p>   | <p>Coordination/ Collaboration</p>    |



**Fishery Data and Statistics Working Group (FDS-WG)**  
**Convener: Nancie Cummings**

## Table of Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Objectives   | 104 |
| 2. Main Accomplishments during the Intersession Period (2019-2021)          | 104 |
| 3. Challenges   | 109 |
| 4. Conclusions  | 109 |
| Appendix 1: Recommendations   | 110 |
| Appendix 2: Updated TOR   | 117 |
| Appendix 3: Draft Work Plan 2022-2023 Intersession Period for WECAFC/SAG/XI | 131 |

## 1. Objectives

This document summarizes achievements, challenges and lessons learned by the FDS-WG during the period 2019-2022. Implementation of activities was within the context of its TOR as contained in the report of the First Meeting of the FDS-WG in May 2018 and the Conclusion meeting of the FDS-WG2 in March 2022:

- Progress development of the interim Data Collection Framework (iDCRF) and its Appendices
- Finalize WECAFC List of Aquatic Species, proposal for subareas and other appendices
- Conduct intersession discussions to progress WECAFC proposals for statistical reporting
- Advance the work on WECAFC-FIRMS inventories of fisheries and stocks and initial steps towards operationalization of the Regional DataBase (RDB) now named WECAFIS
  - Through regional data calls and data preparatory workshops
  - Support initial training to WECAFC Members in completion of DCRF task inputs towards implementation of the DCRF

## 2. Main Accomplishments during the Intersession Period (2019-2021)

- Convene the Second meeting of the FDS-WG hereafter referenced as FDS-WG2. Due to covid-19 situation it was necessary to convene the FDS-WG2 via an online (Virtual) environment. Three sessions and a series of preparatory sessions (5) were organized in order to carry out the full complement of FDS-WG2 meeting tasks:
  - Preparatory sessions (5) September 2020 - October 2020 (Virtual)
  - FDS-WG2 Session 1 (October 2020) (Virtual)
  - FDS-WG2 Extended Session (May 2021) (Virtual)
  - FDS-WG2 Conclusion Session (March 2022) (Virtual)
  - Regional Data Base (RDB) and FIRMS stocks and fisheries inventories sessions from November 2021-February (2022) (Virtual)

The main objective of the FDS-WG2 meeting was to progress refinement on the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) and the WECAFC List of Aquatic Species, proposal for subareas and other appendices, incorporating modifications received from member countries since the FDS-WG1 meeting. For completeness sake the chronology of development is presented here.

The first formal DCRF version (v0.4, 2018.1) was reviewed by the Ninth Session of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) in November 2018 and eventually presented for endorsement at WECAFC 17 in July 2019, which endorsed it as an Interim document (i-DCRF). The DCRF manual is organized as follows: Working Definitions, Structure of data collection, and Supplemental Appendices providing WECAFC standard classifications and a Glossary. The manual is accompanied by several documents of which three initial documents include: Data Access and Sharing Policies; List of WECAFC Stocks and Fisheries; Regional Guidelines for Logbooks.

Following WECAFC 17, the Interim DCRF was further enriched from Members' comments/input received on the version presented at SAG through January 2019 and the upgraded document was presented at the FDS-WG2 Preparatory sessions that convened virtually between July and September 2020. Comments received during these Preparatory sessions were incorporated in a more-advanced version v0.5 for review by FDS-WG2 in October 2020. The main content reviewed at the Preparatory sessions addressed refinements needed on some of the modular tasks of DCRF and organization of the Appendices, particularly the vessel mappings and the Species lists.



The October session of FDS-WG2 recommended to modify the structure of the DCRF document in order to facilitate the operationalization of the DCRF. Changes implemented as part of Version 0.6 were presented at FDS-WG2 Extended session (May 2021): the Task description was improved by i) articulating the Tasks on well-defined WECAFC objectives; ii) refining a scope clearly aligned with WECAFC objectives, mandate and taking into account capabilities (covering capacities and scales of cost) of the Members; and by iii) providing informative and acceptable/workable Data access and sharing rules. Version 0.6 implemented in each Tasks section the following structure:

- an '*Objectives*' header identifying how the collected data relates with WECAFC assessment and/or management strategies
- a '*Scope*' header defining boundaries of the data for upload to the Regional database, e.g. sets the list of concerned species for the Task
- '*Rules*' are defined for access and sharing and are proposed under "Data access and sharing rules"

The FDS-WG2 Extended session (May 2021) recommended further improvements which were brought as part of Version v0.7 presented at FDS-WG2 Conclusion session (10 March 2022). Final modifications brought in v0.8 resulted from the drafting during this Conclusion session of the recommendations proposed for endorsement by the Commission 18.

For the main document:

- a simplified presentation focusing on the WECAFC regional level
- a focused priority for provision of data to the Regional Database on Group1 (i.e. basis 1) Species
- addition of the 12 meters length as the minimum vessel length for the vessel registries
- addition of the FAO disclaimer for maps of subareas and divisions to appear as a FAO publication standard in the prelims of final DCRF document

For the appendices:

- Appendix 2 "WECAFC fishing subareas/divisions for statistical purpose": content was developed from the decisions taken by the two sessions of FDS\_WG2 including options proposed, principles retained, and description of current state of adoption of the subareas/divisions, with names proposed for these. The FAO disclaimer for maps of subareas and division added.
- Appendix 3 "WECAFC Reference List of Aquatic Species": this appendix is now composed of three sub-appendices, clearly distinguishing in their titles the Group 1 - Main Reference Species (Appendix 3.1), the Group 2 - Other Reference Species (Appendix 3.2), and Group 3 - Other Species (Appendix 3.3)
- Appendix 4 "Fishing vessels typology", with appendix 4.1 detailing the regional classification of "Fleet segment - vessel types by length classes"
- Appendix 5.2 "Fishing mode" updated with the latest draft proposals by the CWP Fishing Effort working group

The FDS-WG2 recognized that the DCRF represents a data and statistics standards framework, harmonized with other reporting frameworks (e.g. FAO, ICCAT, WECAFC Members frameworks) while encompassing supplementary flexible provisions for the region, and strives aiming at collecting robust, harmonized and comparable fisheries data addressing end-users needs. Further, it is recognized that through operationalization of the DCRF a framework will be established which provides minimum data requirements for data collection by WECAFC Members in support to fisheries management and stock assessment.

The FDS-WG2 also recognized that the DCRF should ensure compatibility with existing data collection frameworks already implemented by WECAFC members and should be aligned with the mandate of WECAFC to avoid any duplication in data collection processes in the region and foster optimization of resources already allocated to data collection mechanisms (e.g. avoid duplication of data collection tasks/work/resources covered by other organizations such as ICCAT).

The FDS-WG2 acknowledges that the DCRF serves a minimum of two purposes:

1. Capacity building tool, which can be used by countries as a reference standard framework to set-up national data collection and information systems for all aquatic marine species, in support of national policies and reporting needs including for the provision of data to WECAFC.
  2. An instrument to support science based conservation and management of marine biological resources under the mandate of WECAFC, the mandate and priorities of WECAFC-CRFM-OSPESCA Interim Coordination Mechanism (ICM), by implementing a modular task oriented structure articulated around five supporting bases (clustered in three Species Groups) for the WECAFC Reference list of aquatic species, through an incremental approach to implementation for some countries.
- Conduct intersession discussions to progress WECAFC proposals for statistical reporting.
    - Proposals identifying statistical delimitations for reporting were first presented at the FDS-WG1 meeting (May 2018). At that meeting participants reviewed options for reporting by WECAFC Subareas. Action items DCRF 4-6 requested consultation on preferred options for the delineation of boundaries (including FAO, CRFM, OSPESCA, and species WGs). In preparation for FDS-WG2 a subareas task team was identified to reach out to member countries to seek further input for updating proposals.
    - FDS-WG initiated (April 2020) discussions for defining the WECAFC subareas and divisional statistical limits, in accordance with Action items DCRF 4-6 agreed at the FDS-WG meeting in May 2018:
      - Consultation took place with FAO, CRFM, OSPESCA, WECAFC species Working Groups, in addition to discussions of proposed options at the FDS-WG2 preparatory meetings in September 2020, FDS-WG2 meeting in October 2020 (virtual), and the FDS-WG2 Extended Session (virtual) in May 2021. All consultation sessions were virtual format.
    - A set of guiding principles considered important in drafting the subarea proposals were identified during FDS-WG1 and the subsequent outreach discussions:

1. That the WECAFC subareas are identified, as far as possible, consistently with the major ecosystems in the region as the starting point for defining the boundaries, and as the overarching principle.
  2. That in defining the statistical delimitations lines, EEZ boundary lines are utilized (where they are formalized through treaties and are not disputed) and other default limits (e.g., 200 nautical miles) as the prevailing principle, in combination with, where required or preferred, simple longitudinal, latitudinal or oblique straight lines in the cases where:
    - i. there is no clear demarcation of the maritime boundaries, to avoid issues of undefined/disputed maritime spaces;
    - ii. there are locally recognized and important ecosystem boundaries, together with other considerations such as countries' data collection capacity that would limit adequate reporting.
- Two options regarding proposals for delineating the WECAFC subarea and divisions were presented at FDS-WG2 (October 2020). These options were identified as interim and were revisited at the May 2021 FDS-WG2 Extended session, with the support of an interactive map viewer: <https://wecafc-firms.d4science.org/data-viewer/index.html> . Furthermore, at the October 2020 session priority issues remaining outstanding (including next steps) were noted as follows:
    1. Agreement that additional discussions were needed to agree the short and long-term options for delineating two sub-regions (Central America (Honduras EEZ), Amazonian Basin (Brazil-French Guiana))
    2. Intersessional meetings to be held with selected OSPESCA countries, and Brazil/EU/France between March and April 2021.
  - At the FDS-WG2 Extended session (May 2021) it was identified that a small number of delimitations remain pending or subject to further discussion (e.g., Honduras long-term proposals, USA/Bahamas and Venezuela), while agreement was reached on the short-term options concerning Honduras and Brazil/EU/France. It was further noted that additional intersessional discussions would be needed for the USA/Bahamas and Venezuela cases.
  - At the FDS-WG Conclusion session (March 2022) discussions on the USA/Bahamas case continued and also during the few days after the session, after which agreement was reached to include a disclaimer relating to subarea proposals in the DCRF and Appendices as follows:

“The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement”.

This document and any proposal for, or final delineation of, any subarea or division is without prejudice to the WECAFC Member States' maritime claims and boundaries.

These delimitations do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO or WECAFC or its Member States concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries.”

- Regarding the Venezuela case, at the FDS-WG Conclusion session it was noted that additional intersession work was needed to finalize the statistical delineations concerning the Venezuelan Basin. It was also noted that no reservations or objections were raised on the subarea proposal recommendations. Since the FDS-WG2 meeting, the sub-areas task team has liaised with Venezuela to identify a date for additional discussions. No suitable date could be identified prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> May when the meeting with Venezuela will be held (i.e., after SAG XI).
- Main accomplishments on advancing the work on WECAFC-FIRMS inventories of fisheries and stocks, operationalization of RDB, and capacity building initiatives are described below:
  - A numeric scoring system was defined for identifying WECAFC Members for support for capacity building initiatives which resulted in three Members being selected for support for 2022-2023

Criteria used in selection of Members for capacity building support included:

- motivation, technical level (e.g., existence of good technical capacities),
  - political and institutional priority considerations (e.g., the presence of an FAO Country Programming Framework),
  - need to balance support from different groups (e.g., CRFM / OSPESCA), existence of on-going or completed projects related to capacity building,
  - degree to which project impact is measurable, and
  - feasibility of the implementation a consideration, and need to match WECAFC priorities in particular regarding the Fishery Management plans.
- WECAFC-FIRMS Preparatory Workshops for Regional Data base and FIRMS stocks and fisheries inventories (5) were held between November 2021 and March 2022. Accomplishments were:
    - Review of information content requested in the FIRMS template for fisheries and marine resources
    - Review of information content requested in the DCRF modular tasks
    - Statistics submitted by eight countries (Barbados, Dominica, EU-France, Nicaragua, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago; two Members indicated working on the templates (Guyana, Jamaica); One Member requested additional support to complete the task (Belize)
    - Regarding FIRMS inventories: four Members (Dominica, Nicaragua, Suriname and St Vincent and the Grenadines) contributed to 12 additional fisheries description (fact sheets) to the 31 ones already contributed (10 countries, 36 observations). Other Members have started compiling the inventories (Barbados, Costa Rica, Guyana) or updating former data submissions (Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago).
    - Feedback on the submission process in order to streamline next data calls and better ensure clarification of what data are expected to be contributed by Members

- The regional database was assigned the name of WECAFIS (Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Information System).

### **3. Challenges**

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated coordination of a virtual Second Meeting of FDS-WG spanning 2021-2022 as a follow up to the First Meeting (May 2018). The pandemic also prevented convening one-on-one outreach meetings relating to capacity building initiatives and in finalizing sub-area draft proposals. Due to the necessity of increasing the number of meetings held virtually in preparation for final FDS-WG2 the WG also was faced issues with funds available for required translation of documents. Additional resources will be needed to 1) further advance Members capacities to report statistics to the Regional Data Base (RDB) and FIRMS products and 2) ensure publishing and dissemination of products from FDS-WG activities.

### **4. Conclusions**

The intersession period since FDS-WG1 (May 2018) was characterized by an extensive level of activity necessary to carry out the workplan. The intersession activities further required a high level of collaborations with Members despite the disruptions of the global pandemic. The production of key materials needed to finalize the DCRF and its Appendices was achieved as was good progress in progressing Members capacities to report statistics needed for operationalization of the DCRF. If the FDS-WG2 Recommendations are implemented, expected improvements in regional information available for management and stock assessment will follow.

The financial, administrative and in-kind contributions of the EU-DG MARE, NOAA, CRFM and OSPESCA, the WECAFC Secretariat and FAO-FIRMS program are gratefully acknowledged here, as well as the diligent efforts of the members of the WECAFC-FIRMS Task Force in preparation of proposals, leading the update of working group documents, coordination of meetings and other stakeholder engagements, and implementation of the communications strategy. Finally the interest and willingness to participate in supporting the FDS-WG by the Members is greatly appreciated.

## Appendix 1: Recommendations

### Cover note

Fisheries for States of the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries region, in particular for African, Caribbean, Pacific (ACP) member countries and the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) from the Caribbean are important for food security and nutrition, as source of livelihoods, income earnings, and also source of foreign exchange for national governments.

For many years, the Caribbean regional data deficiencies and limited statistical information have been impeding national policy-making and fishery management in a regional context of shared marine resources.

The “Review of fisheries management performance and conservation in the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) area” in 2015 identified a number of challenges in data and statistics in support to fisheries management, including: inadequate legislation; challenges for cooperation with stakeholders with regard to acquisition of data and information on a routine basis; a weak data and information base for supporting fisheries management. The need to strengthen and maintain a quality statistical monitoring system was considered key to the success of immediate fisheries management needs<sup>11</sup>.<sup>[1]</sup>

Despite some regional European Union (EU) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) programmes aiming at improving statistics in the Caribbean region, a lack of capacity to collect and exchange data and information, and to analyze the status and trends of fishery resources and regional data policies remains. In the meantime, environmental trends as well as extreme weather events suggest that climate change and variability are already impacting the region’s fisheries, in some cases severely.

During WECAFC 14 (6–9 February 2012, Panama) and 15 (26–28 March 2014, Trinidad and Tobago), the EU expressed the need for increased attention to improved fisheries data and information collection as the basis of better fisheries management in the region. The identified data gaps continue to undermine any significant effort to improve fishery management. This need was considered so pressing that one of the four technical Focus Areas in the WECAFC Strategic Plan 2014–2020 was dedicated to this topic and the current Programme of Work includes activity 2.4, “Improved fishery and aquaculture data collection, analysis and dissemination at regional and national level,” in support of this subject.

WECAFC 16 (Guadeloupe, France, 20–24 June 2016) agreed to establish a working group for fisheries data and statistics matters (FDS-WG), based on the ongoing work of the WECAFC-FIRMS (Fisheries and Resource Monitoring System) Partnership and supported by the development of a regional database (RDB) in collaboration with the WECAFC Members and partners in the region.

The most recent Commission session (17<sup>th</sup>) (Miami, July 2019) adopted 11 regional fisheries management recommendations, including among others for the conservation and management of sharks and rays, the management of Caribbean spiny lobster, the management of shrimp and groundfish resources of the North Brazil-Guianas Shelf, improved compliance with trade measures for Queen conch, the sustainability of fisheries using moored fish aggregating devices, the sustainable management of spawning aggregations and aggregating species. In order to support

---

<sup>11</sup> Singh-Renton, Susan & McIvor, Ian. (2015). Review of Current Fisheries Management Performance and Conservation Measures in the WECAFC Area.

these conservation and management measures, the Commission also adopted the WECAFC interim Data Collection Reference Framework (iDCRF), and an interim List of Main Species for data collection in the WECAFC area. The proposed actions if supported will contribute towards continued improvement in the quality of statistics and data available for monitoring and management in the region, building on the initiatives undertaken through the WECAFC-FIRMS and FDS-WG activities.'

Following this 17<sup>th</sup> WECAFC Commission, the second session of the FDS-WG2 met virtually three times between October 2020 and March 2022 to address the requested improvements of the iDCRF, the operationalization of the regional database, and the steps for increasing Members capacities. In its Concluding meeting (10 March 2022), the FDS-WG2 adopted draft recommendations as laid out in this document.

The Commission is asked to:

**NOTE** that reliable and timely fisheries data, statistics and information are instrumental to supporting national science-based policy-making and management, and development and monitoring of Regional Fisheries Management Plans;

**RECALL** that WECAFC 17 urged WECAFC Members to provide national data and statistics to the Regional Database in line with the interim DCRF and to support and promote the WECAFC-FIRMS partnership as a collaborative platform for collating and sharing scientific information throughout the region and leveraging of ongoing regional projects.

#### **1. Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF)**

**RECALLING** that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

**MINDFUL** that qualitative and quantitative improvement of regional data and statistics requires harmonization and standardization at national and regional level with the definition of minimum data requirements in support of evidence-based decision-making;

**MINDFUL** of the global Reference Harmonization standard being developed by the FAO's Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics under which WECAFC, ICCAT, FAO and other RFBs collaborate for harmonizing and streamlining data collection and reporting frameworks including consideration of multiple reporting burdens;

**REAFFIRMING** the commitment of CARICOM States to improving evidence-based decision-making through regional cooperation as expressed in multiple regional policy documents including the "Strategic Action Programme for the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem", the CARICOM Strategic Plan, 2015 -2019, the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (CCCFP) and the CRFM Strategic Plan, 2013-2021;

**RECOGNIZING** the continued efforts by the WECAFC members to increase their capacities to collect, analyze and report fisheries data and statistics;

**RECALLING** the endorsement of the WECAFC-FIRMS partnership by WECAFC 15 in 2014;

**FURTHER RECALLING** Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/22 “ON WECAFC INTERIM DATA COLLECTION REFERENCE FRAMEWORK;”

**FURTHER RECALLING** Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/5+6+7 “ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS AND RAYS IN THE WECAFC AREA” related to reporting data and information on sharks and rays including for non-contracting parties to ICCAT;

**FURTHER RECALLING** Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/9 “ON THE MANAGEMENT OF CARIBBEAN SPINY LOBSTER IN THE WECAFC AREA” section 4 related to Catch Documentation Schemes;

**ADOPTS** in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes the RECOMMENDATIONS that:

1(a) Recognize the DCRF serves a minimum of two purposes, including i) a capacity building tool, which can be used by Members as a reference standard to set-up national data collection and information systems for all aquatic marine species, and ii) an instrument to support the scientific mandate and priorities of WECAFC-CRFM-OSPESCA ICM.

1(b) Recognize the DCRF, its appendices, and associated documents titled, “Data sharing and access policies” and “Lists of fisheries and stocks within the WECAFC competence area,” are living documents based on a modular task-oriented structure articulated around clear supporting bases for reference list of species, with parts more mature than others, and as such conducive to a staged and incremental approach to implementation of the DCRF for some Members.

1(c) Endorse version v.8 of the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) and its appendices, including in particular Appendix 2, “WECAFC subareas” and Appendix 3, “WECAFC Reference list of main species.”

1(d) Recommend the following general principles for the delineation of WECAFC sub-areas and divisions:

- That the WECAFC subareas and divisions are identified, as far as possible, consistently with the major ecosystems in the region as the starting point for defining their delineations, and as the overarching principle.

- That in defining the subareas and divisions, established maritime boundaries and 200 nautical mile EEZ limits are utilized (where they are established and are not disputed) and other default limits as the prevailing principle, in combination with, where required or preferred, simple longitudinal, latitudinal or oblique straight lines in the cases where:

- (a.) there are no established maritime boundaries, to avoid issues of undefined/disputed maritime spaces; and

- (b.) there are locally recognized and important ecosystem boundaries, together with other considerations, such as WECAFC Member countries’ data collection capacities, that would limit adequate reporting.

- That some of these subareas and divisions remain to be finalized and are subject to further discussion and modification. This document and any proposal for, or final delineation of, any subarea or division is without prejudice to the WECAFC Member States' maritime claims and boundaries.



- That these delimitations do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO or WECAFC or its Member States concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries.

1(e) Further recommend regarding statistical delineations:

- That the above general principles should be followed for further proposals on the final statistical limits, subject to approval by the WECAFC Members directly involved.

- The adoption of a provisional list of subareas and divisions, that include correspondence to the Large Marine Ecosystems, or marine ecoregions, as identified in DCRF Appendix 2, and promotes the use by all WECAFC Members in their national data collection of the newly established WECAFC geographic subareas and divisions as per DCRF Appendix 2.

- That, to the extent possible, reporting is done at the finest possible division level to ensure the availability of spatial granular data required for scientific purposes.

1(f) Recommend the use by all WECAFC Members in their national data collection on the evolved categorization of WECAFC Reference list of aquatic species developed by the FDS-WG as DCRF Appendix 3, which consists of three groups and several subgroups with defined bases for selection:

- Group 1, “Main Reference Species,” are key species to the region, other than those included in Group 3, and of specific interest to the WECAFC mandate for which States are strongly encouraged to statistical reporting:
  - Subgroup Basis 1: Species with fisheries management plans endorsed.
- Group 2, “Other Reference Species,” other than those included in Group 3, are Species of interest for WECAFC that could be elevated to the Group 1, with three Subgroups:
  - Subgroup Basis 2: Species of interest to historical WGs of regional bodies (WECAFC, CRFM, OSPESCA, including through their Interim Coordination Mechanisms)
  - Subgroup Basis 3: Species in high seas (areas beyond national jurisdiction)/straddling / shared and not under mandate of another RFMO
  - Subgroup Basis 4: Species for WECAFC region originating from 1978 working party on fishery statistics and/or of interest for other reasons (e.g., of local interest including high commercial value, for biodiversity reasons, or for importance of impacts from/due to climate changes)
- Group 3, “Other species of interest for WECAFC Members,” are...
  - Subgroup Basis 5 - Species under the mandate of other RFMOs, including for mandatory reporting (e.g., ICCAT), such as tuna and tuna-like species and pelagic sharks.

1 (g) Strongly encourage WECAFC Members to proceed with the use of DCRF for monitoring and reporting, with prioritization for provision of data for Tasks III (Fleet), II (Catch by species and Effort), and IV (Biological data), with high priority on Group1 species.

1 (h) Recommend continued participation in the FDS-WG and specifically to support the intersessional work plan as related to interactions with thematic working groups relating to:

- national vessel mappings to regional fleet segment classifications, promotion of species and associated subareas for priority reporting, species biological parameters.
- further tailor the DCRF and associated data sharing policies in consideration of the use of relevant data sets by those working groups.

## 2. WECAFC Regional Database

**RECALLING** that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

**NOTING** that the 16th session of WECAFC held in Guadeloupe, France, 20-24 June 2016, agreed to establish the Regional Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group (FDS-WG);

**FURTHER NOTING** that FDS-WG acts as a steering committee for the Regional Database as per its Terms of Reference;

**MINDFUL** that sharing of information in support to management and monitoring of Regional Fisheries Management Plans requires an instrument for data dissemination and sharing;

**NOTING** that data access and sharing in the region is to “facilitate regional fisheries data and information exchange to support evidence-based fisheries policy-making at national and regional levels, while ensuring non-disclosure and/or careful handling of sensitive fisheries data and information;”

**RECOGNIZING** the important role of WECAFC, CRFM, and OSPESCA to validate regional inventories and to support and facilitate consistency and harmonization with national inventories and their publishing through FIRMS as a contribution to the global monitoring framework requested under SDG14.4.1;

**RECALLING** Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/22 “ON WECAFC INTERIM DATA COLLECTION REFERENCE FRAMEWORK” section 4 related to the Regional Database;

**FURTHER RECALLING** Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/11 “ON THE MANAGEMENT OF SHRIMP AND GROUND FISH RESOURCES OF THE NORTH BRAZIL-GUIANAS SHELF IN THE WECAFC AREA” section 1 related to the Regional Database;

**RECALLING** Resolution WECAFC/XVII/2019/8 “ON THE WECAFC-FIRMS PARTNERSHIP;”

**ACKNOWLEDGING** that WECAFC Regional Database is a fully functional information system;

**REITERATES** the promotion to WECAFC MEMBERS of provisioning of national data and statistics to the WECAFC-CRFM-OSPESCA Regional DataBase (RDB) according to Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF);

**ADOPTS** in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes the RECOMMENDATIONS that:

2(a) The Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Information System (“WECAFIS”) has the mandate to disseminate data and statistics covered by DCRF with due consideration of DCRF data access and

sharing rules, as well as FIRMS information on status and trends of fisheries and stocks under the WECAFC competence area.

2(b) The WECAFIS be published in the Data section of the new WECAFC website.

2(c) Members publish DCRF data in WECAFIS for Task I, and for Task II.1 and Task II.2, Task III.1 and Task IV.1 with high priority for Groups 1 species to reinforce management of shared stocks, and promote proceeding with related tasks including:

- carrying out mappings of national vessel types to regional fleet segment classifications

2(d) Members recognize the important role of WECAFC, CRFM, and OSPESCA to validate regional inventories and to support and facilitate consistency and harmonization with national inventories and their publishing through FIRMS as contribution to the global monitoring framework requested under/ SDG14.4.1.

2(e) WECAFC Members are therefore encouraged to:

- Update or further develop their inventories of fisheries and develop status reports on national fisheries and publish in FIRMS
- Update or further develop new List of Stocks and stock status reports be updated and published in FIRMS
- Engage in training opportunities towards completion of WECAFIS-DCRF data templates towards progressing operationalization of the DCRF and WECAFC-FIRMS data templates to enrich FIRMS content

2(f) SAG is encouraged to review and provide recommendations in light of other processes as regards the information/content on list of stocks and stock status

### **3. WECAFC Capacity Building for collection and production of data, statistics, and information**

**RECALLING** that WECAFC's mandate covers all living marine resources, without prejudice to the management responsibilities and authority of other competent fisheries bodies and other living marine resources management organizations or arrangements in the area

**CONCERNED** about the challenges that WECAFC members still face to collect data and produce statistics on all living marine resources

**ACKNOWLEDGING** continuing technical support from FAO and financial support from donors, including the EU and the USA, to develop WECAFC Members' capacities for production and collection of data, statistics, and information;

**RECALLING** the important steps taken by the WECAFC, OSPESCA, and CRFM members in the recent years in terms of increasing their capacities to collect, analyze and report reliable and timely fisheries data and statistics

**RECALLING** Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/11 "ON THE MANAGEMENT OF SHRIMP AND GROUND FISH RESOURCES OF THE NORTH BRAZIL-GUIANAS SHELF IN THE WECAFC AREA section 2 related to capacity building on stock assessment and bioeconomic analysis of priority fisheries

**FURTHER RECALLING** Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/22 “ON WECAFC INTERIM DATA COLLECTION REFERENCE FRAMEWORK” section 7 related to strengthening of national capacity

**ADOPTS** in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes the RECOMMENDATIONS that:

3(a) Members reiterate recognition that the WECAFC-FIRMS project provides a collaborative platform for collation and sharing of scientific information, leveraging ongoing regional projects, and prioritizing national data needs.

3(b) Membes are encouraged to acknowledge the development by the FDS-WG of criteria and related scoring to support the identification and prioritization of capacity-building investments and projects that improve science-based decision-making and support the further development of these criteria as a dashboard for monitoring needs and mobilizing resources for the benefit of WECAFC and its Members.

3(c) Members recognize that further investments should be made to build national capacities of WECAFC Members for data collection, analysis, and reporting with priorities on implementing DCRF and feeding the WECAFIS through the SAG process.

## Appendix 2: Updated TOR

### WORKING GROUPS TERMS OF REFERENCE DRAFT

[WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA Working Group on Fishery, Data and Statistics]

[insert date of endorsement of ToRs by Commission]

### CONTENTS

- I. [Background and justification](#)
- II. [Role of the Working Group](#)
  - a) [Scope of the Work](#)
  - b) [Goal](#)
  - c) [Tasks/ functions](#)
  - d) [Membership](#)
- III. [Mode of Operation](#)
  - a) [Role of Member countries](#)
  - b) [Role of Convener](#)
  - c) [Election and role of Convener](#)
  - d) [Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat](#)
  - e) [Roles of other Subregional organizations](#)
- IV. [Outputs](#)
- V. [Communication](#)
- VI. [Working Group meetings and cost](#)
- VII. [Amendments to the Terms of Reference](#)
- VIII. [Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions](#)

- I. Background and justification

Fishery management advice and recommendations, based on the best available scientific information, are provided to WECAFC member countries for their implementation by dedicated Working Groups, established by the Commission.

The Working Groups that were established or confirmed in the subsequent sessions since the 14th session of the Commission in 2012 are the following:

- 12. [OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Caribbean Spiny Lobster](#)
- 13. [CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch](#)
- 14. [WECAFC Working Group on the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries](#)
- 15. [WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries](#)
- 16. [CRFM/WECAFC/JICA/IFREMER Working Group on Fisheries Using fish aggregating devices \(FADS\)](#)
- 17. [CRFM/WECAFC Working Group on Flyingfish in the Eastern Caribbean \(established since the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC as the flyingfish- Dolphinfish WG\)](#)
- 18. [WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Northern Brazil-Guianas Shelf](#)
- 19. [CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations](#)
- 20. [Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing \(RWG-IUU\)](#)

21. [WECAFC Working Group for the Conservation And Management of Sharks in the Wider Caribbean Region](#)
22. [WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group \(FDS-WG\)](#)

Most Working Groups are joint working groups with other regional partner institutions, such as the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), the Organization of Fisheries for the Central American Isthmus (OSPESCA), the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC), the French Research Institute for Exploration of the Sea (IFREMER), etc. Fishery scientists, experts, managers and decision-makers of member countries, Regional partner organizations including academia and NGOs participate in the Working Groups, which have specific terms of reference that are time bound. The data used by the Working Groups to assess the status of fish stocks, to conduct fishery assessments and to generate fishery management advice and recommendations to the Commission are collected by the participating countries and NGOs.

The key drivers behind the establishment of these working groups are the need to collaborate and cooperate in the assessment and management of shared resources; need to standardize data collection and reporting systems to enable assessment of stock status using data and information from a range of countries that target the stock/species/resources throughout their distribution range; need to standardize conservation and management measures for effective management, need for training and capacity building to improve data collection and assessment of the status of fisheries/fish stocks; etc. etc.

In undertaking its work, the Working Group will pay due attention to the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its related guidelines, including the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries, as well as any other agreed international or regional instruments for the conservation and management of fisheries, and the principles of precautionary, participatory and ecosystem approaches to fisheries management. The activities of the WG are also guided by any specific regional or international fisheries management or related obligations and initiatives or instruments of relevance to the respective resources associated with the specific WG – e.g. any FMPs, Declarations, agreed CMMs, regional strategies, regulations etc.

## II. Role of the Working Group

### a. Scope of the Work

The scope of each Working Group is to provide scientific and management advice for the sustainable management, conservation and development of living marine resources in the area of competence of WECAFC. This includes the development and support to national and regional plans of action in order to regulate target and bycatch fisheries, as well as manage existing populations within the region. Using a multidisciplinary approach, the working group will contribute to the sustainable management by providing management advice to Members of WECAFC based on the best available scientific knowledge/evidence and traditional/local ecological knowledge. In pursuing this goal, the Working Group will contribute to the fulfilment of national and regional responsibilities for the marine environment and for the management of all living aquatic species and resources under the mandate of the WECAFC and related or interacting species or fisheries in the WECAFC Region.

### b. Goal

The goal of each Working Group is to inform and provide guidance for the management of living marine resources in WECAFC members in such a manner as to promote responsible fisheries that

provide economic opportunities, secure social wellbeing while ensuring the conservation of living marine resources and the protection of marine biodiversity. .

c. Tasks/ functions

The Working Group will ):

- Identify issues (gaps, deficiencies), challenges and best practices in data collection at national level in the region, and provide recommendations on how to address issues and challenges, and implementing best practices.
- Formulate recommendations and guidelines for data collection and statistics.
- Develop standardized data collection formats and templates to be collectively considered for coordinated national and regional implementation.
- Collect, review and share the existing (past and present) data and information on the fishery in the WECAFC area, involving the fishers and private sector, in addition to identifying the potential for development of such fisheries in the region.
- Analyze the data and information collected from capture fisheries and aquaculture production and make recommendations for the sustainability of the fisheries in the WECAFC region.
- Monitor changes in distribution and abundance of all living aquatic species and resources of relevance to the mandate of WECAFC] in the WECAFC region
- Develop common methodologies for assessment and monitoring of the fish stocks
- Seek partnerships with other institutions that could provide assistance in the monitoring, evaluation, and recommendations for management for protection and conservation of the resources.
- Monitor and provide advice on the management and implementation of regional strategies, regulations and management plans to protect the fish resources.
- Establish communication between the members of the Working Group, other Working Groups and relevant parties on issues of common interest in order to strengthen regional collaboration in the assessment and management of living marine resources.
- Report to the Commission and contribute to communication and visibility of the deliverables of the Working Group as may be needed

d. Membership

Membership of the Working Group shall consist of all Member States of CRFM and WECAFC, OSPESCA, including overseas territories and Departments.

Specifically, Member representatives will be national Officers responsible of Fishery Statistics and Data in WECAFC Member Countries ( e.g., statisticians, data managers, directors of fisheries statistics, or fisheries offices, etc.) with activities related to the following domains: statistical analyses of fisheries data, data collection, designing data collection systems, analyzing statistics for statistical bulletins, report preparation, organizing and managing data collection, storage and dissemination according to a variety of needs (e.g., RFMO reporting, departmental, scientific meetings, etc.).

III. Mode of Operation:

a. Role of Countries

The members of the Working Group will play a leading role in its activities through the following activities and commitments, and through a data and statistics perspective:

- Participate in agreed activities of the Working Group, and ensure the participation of appropriate experts;
- Implement, at the National level, the work identified in the WECAFC endorsed work plan (as appropriate);
- Report on implementation of agreed conservation and management measures
- Assist with mobilization of resources for the activities of the Working Group;
- Facilitate the organization of Working Group meetings in the languages of the Commission
- Host Working Group meetings on a rotational basis.
- Facilitate the identification of the Convener of the Working Group

b. Role of Convener

The Convener of the Working Group will play a leading role during the organization of the meetings and subsequent follow up with the Secretariat of WECAFC by coordinating the inputs of the members of the Working Group. The Convener should:

- Seek experts from among the WECAFC Members, contact potential partner organizations, and solicit their interest to join in the Working Group;
- Call for meetings as appropriate;
- Ensure that technical contributions are received in a timely manner and in the appropriate format;
- Ensure that outputs are delivered as agreed during each meeting
- Collaborate closely with FAO-WECAFC and other sub-regional and regional organizations as appropriate;
- Assist in the preparation and publication process of the proceedings of the Working Group meeting;
- Participate (in person or virtually) at the SAG meetings to present the draft working documents and provide any clarifications as required;
- Facilitate the review by the Working Group membership within a reasonable period of time (max. 15 days) on suggested edits or modifications as considered necessary to address the comments of the SAG and the return of the revised document to the WECAFC Secretariat for distribution and consideration by the Commission;
- Participate in the Commission's sessions (physically or virtually) if required, to support the Secretariat in clarifying or substantiating some points of the draft working documents;
- Assist in the relevant processes to gather information in support of seeking funds to implement priority activities of the Working Group.

c. Election and role of Convener of the Working Group

- The Working Group shall elect a Convener from among its Members to serve over a two-year period. The term of office of the Convener may be extended as determined appropriate. In the case where another qualified Convener is not available, the Convener's term may be renewed for an additional two-year term until another Convener is selected.

d. Role of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat

The FAO/WECAFC Secretariat will play a supporting role in the activities of the Working Group by assisting in:

- Coordinating activities of the Working Group, among WECAFC and Non-WECAFC Members, at the wider regional level (including facilitate procurement of funding);
- Assisting with logistical arrangements for the convening of meetings of the Working Group;
- Providing technical assistance, such as a technical secretary or research support, if needed and as resources permit



- Liaising with other Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) active in the Wider Caribbean Region and neighboring areas for their engagement as much as possible in the work of the Working Group; these RFBs include amongst others OSPESCA, CRFM, CFMC, ICCAT, NAFO, NEAFC, CECAF, COPPESAALC, etc..
- Liaising with other relevant regional and international organizations as appropriate, such as the Sargasso Sea Commission, SPAW Protocol, etc.
- Coordinating the formulation and adoption of recommendations and/or resolutions and reports/documents by the Working Group so as to facilitate the decision-making process by the Commission
- Ensuring the strategic linkage between the work of the Working Group and programmes and projects hosted to support the fisheries and healthy ecosystems framework of the CLME+ and any future phase of this project.
- Facilitating training and collaboration of WECAFC Member States and sub-regional training institutions as appropriate and based on available resources.

e. Roles of other Subregional organizations (e.g. CFMC, CRFM, ICCAT, OSPESCA, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECS, etc.)

Sub-regional organizations have an important role to play in assisting their member countries to participate fully in the activities of the Working Group. Therefore, they may be invited to:

- Provide expertise, technical assistance and support;
- Facilitate procurement of funding when possible; Collaborate in implementing the activities of the Working Group;
- Collaborate with the WECAFC Secretariat and sub-regional organizations in coordinating the activities of the Working Group
- Facilitate the decision-making process at the Sub-regional level.

#### IV. Outputs

In discharging its duties, the WG will deliver the following outputs, from a data and statistics perspective:

- Biennial Work Plans including providing performance of projects on a routine schedule;
- Reports on assessment and monitoring of the status of fish stocks;
- Draft Fisheries Management Plans;
- Draft Regional Plans of Actions;
- Proposed Recommendations and Resolutions to the Commission,
- Revised TORs as needed

#### V. Communication

A mechanism for on-going communication among Working Group members (video conference, Skype, zoom meeting and email), is essential to ensure that the work of the group is sustained between meetings. It must include all Working Group members and the communication tools must be accessible to all Working Group members.

The successful functioning of the Working Group also requires that each member country and organization/ agency identify a national node or focal point who will be contacted through the WECAFC National Focal Point and technically coordinate at national level all matters pertinent to the WG. The outputs of the Working Group will be communicated through working group reports to

WECAFC, OSPESCA, CFMC, CRFM, CITES, UNEP-CEP, ICCAT, IFREMER, and national fishery administrations via the WECAFC Secretariat.

#### **VI. Working Group meetings and cost**

The Working Group should meet physically or virtually on a regular basis, the timing of which is decided by the members, but at a minimum once every two years. The meetings should be of 2-5 days' duration. The meetings should use cost effective accommodations and institutional facilities and where possible take advantage of other meetings in the region. Meetings shall be chaired by the Convener of the Working Group. The reports of the meetings will be formally submitted to OSPESCA, WECAFC, CFMC and CRFM, ICCAT, CITES, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Network, etc.

#### **VII. Amendments to the Terms of Reference**

Amendment of these terms of reference may be done at each biennial meeting of the Commission for implementation by the working groups in the subsequent intersessional period.

#### **VIII. Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions**

[Standardized templates will ensure a common understanding of what should be included in draft recommendations and resolutions, ease the reporting of deliverables as well as facilitate their review by other WECAFC bodies, as appropriate. Working Groups should include the following elements when preparing draft recommendations and resolutions to be presented to the WECAFC membership or other WECAFC bodies (e.g. the Scientific Advisory Group or other WECAFC Working Groups).

#### **Recommendations and Resolutions**

Draft recommendations and resolutions for review by other WECAFC bodies and the WECAFC membership should include the following elements:

- **Cover Note**: A brief cover note for draft recommendations and/or resolutions should be provided to assist reviewers. The cover note should include a clear, candid, and transparent explanation of:
  - g. why the action was developed,
  - h. at which Working Group meeting it was discussed,
  - i. a brief overview of how the Working Group arrived at its decision to put the action forward;
  - j. how the action will impact future WECAFC activities, including, where relevant any possible changes in resource or workload requirements for Members or the WECAFC Secretariat;
  - k. the ramifications of \*not\* approving the recommended action;
  - l. the full picture of the context for the recommended action.
- **Preambular Text**: This should provide essential elements to highlight the context and intent of the proposed action in a concise bulleted format. The preambular text should include only the core historical elements and should include references to related decisions or measures.
- **Action Text**: This should indicate clearly what action(s) the Working Group is taking, or is asking the WECAFC Membership to take, at a national, subregional, and/or regional level, including specific timelines to which the action(s) will adhere.

Considering that each Working Group can have more than one meeting, and more than one issue to address during each intersessional period, the Working Groups can produce several

reports/documents or draft resolutions/recommendations. In order to facilitate analysis by the Commission, each Working Group shall prepare a single set of recommendations and/or resolutions organized by fishery or by theme, including all the topics addressed in the intersessional meetings. In this regard, the Commission would consider a single set of draft recommendations and/or resolutions for spiny lobster, queen conch, flying fish and dolphinfish, FADs, FDS, etc.

The Working Groups shall refer relevant recommendations and resolutions of a scientific nature to the SAG for scientific review at least one month before the meeting of SAG, in order to provide adequate time to the Secretariat and SAG members to review them before the meeting. This will improve the efficiency of the reviews during the SAG sessions.

## WORKING GROUPS TERMS OF REFERENCE DRAFT

[WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA Working Group on Fishery, Data and Statistics]

[insert date of endorsement of ToRs by Commission]

### CONTENTS

- IX. Background and justification
  - X. Role of the Working Group
    - e) Scope of the Work
    - f) Goal
    - g) Tasks/ functions
    - h) Membership
  - XI. Mode of Operation
    - f) Role of Member countries
    - g) Role of Convener
    - h) Election and role of Convener
    - i) Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat
    - j) Roles of other Subregional organizations
  - XII. Outputs
  - XIII. Communication
  - XIV. Working Group meetings and cost
  - XV. Amendments to the Terms of Reference
  - XVI. Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions
- IX. Background and justification

Fishery management advice and recommendations, based on the best available scientific information, are provided to WECAFC member countries for their implementation by dedicated Working Groups, established by the Commission.

The Working Groups that were established or confirmed in the subsequent sessions since the 14th session of the Commission in 2012 are the following:

- 23. OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Caribbean Spiny Lobster
- 24. CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch
- 25. WECAFC Working Group on the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries
- 26. WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries
- 27. CRFM/WECAFC/JICA/IFREMER Working Group on Fisheries Using fish aggregating devices (FADS)
- 28. CRFM/WECAFC Working Group on Flyingfish in the Eastern Caribbean (established since the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC as the flyingfish- Dolphinfish WG)
- 29. WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Northern Brazil-Guianas Shelf
- 30. CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations
- 31. Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (RWG-IUU)

32. WECAFC Working Group for the Conservation And Management of Sharks in the Wider Caribbean Region
33. WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group (FDS-WG)

Most Working Groups are joint working groups with other regional partner institutions, such as the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), the Organization of Fisheries for the Central American Isthmus (OSPESCA), the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC), the French Research Institute for Exploration of the Sea (IFREMER), etc. Fishery scientists, experts, managers and decision-makers of member countries, Regional partner organizations including academia and NGOs participate in the Working Groups, which have specific terms of reference that are time bound. The data used by the Working Groups to assess the status of fish stocks, to conduct fishery assessments and to generate fishery management advice and recommendations to the Commission are collected by the participating countries and NGOs.

The key drivers behind the establishment of these working groups are the need to collaborate and cooperate in the assessment and management of shared resources; need to standardize data collection and reporting systems to enable assessment of stock status using data and information from a range of countries that target the stock/species/resources throughout their distribution range; need to standardize conservation and management measures for effective management, need for training and capacity building to improve data collection and assessment of the status of fisheries/fish stocks; etc. etc.

In undertaking its work, the Working Group will pay due attention to the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its related guidelines, including the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries, as well as any other agreed international or regional instruments for the conservation and management of fisheries, and the principles of precautionary, participatory and ecosystem approaches to fisheries management. The activities of the WG are also guided by any specific regional or international fisheries management or related obligations and initiatives or instruments of relevance to the respective resources associated with the specific WG – e.g. any FMPs, Declarations, agreed CMMs, regional strategies, regulations etc.

- X. Role of the Working Group
  - a. Scope of the Work

The scope of each Working Group is to provide scientific and management advice for the sustainable management, conservation and development of living marine resources in the area of competence of WECAFC. This includes the development and support to national and regional plans of action in order to regulate target and bycatch fisheries, as well as manage existing populations within the region. Using a multidisciplinary approach, the working group will contribute to the sustainable management by providing management advice to Members of WECAFC based on the best available scientific knowledge/evidence and traditional/local ecological knowledge. In pursuing this goal, the Working Group will contribute to the fulfilment of national and regional responsibilities for the marine environment and for the management of all living aquatic species and resources under the mandate of the WECAFC and related or interacting species or fisheries in the WECAFC Region.

- b. Goal

The goal of each Working Group is to inform and provide guidance for the management of living marine resources in WECAFC members in such a manner as to promote responsible fisheries that

provide economic opportunities, secure social wellbeing while ensuring the conservation of living marine resources and the protection of marine biodiversity.

c. Tasks/ functions

The Working Group will ):

- Identify issues (gaps, deficiencies), challenges and best practices in data collection at national level in the region, and provide recommendations on how to address issues and challenges, and implementing best practices.
- Formulate recommendations and guidelines for data collection and statistics.
- Develop standardized data collection formats and templates to be collectively considered for coordinated national and regional implementation.
- Collect, review and share the existing (past and present) data and information on the fishery in the WECAFC area, involving the fishers and private sector, in addition to identifying the potential for development of such fisheries in the region.
- Analyze the data and information collected from capture fisheries and aquaculture production and make recommendations for the sustainability of the fisheries in the WECAFC region.
- Monitor changes in distribution and abundance of all living aquatic species and resources of relevance to the mandate of WECAFC] in the WECAFC region
- Develop common methodologies for assessment and monitoring of the fish stocks
- Seek partnerships with other institutions that could provide assistance in the monitoring, evaluation, and recommendations for management for protection and conservation of the resources.
- Monitor and provide advice on the management and implementation of regional strategies, regulations and management plans to protect the fish resources.
- Establish communication between the members of the Working Group, other Working Groups and relevant parties on issues of common interest in order to strengthen regional collaboration in the assessment and management of living marine resources.
- Report to the Commission and contribute to communication and visibility of the deliverables of the Working Group as may be needed

d. Membership

Membership of the Working Group shall consist of all Member States of CRFM and WECAFC, OSPESCA, including overseas territories and Departments.

Specifically, Member representatives will be national Officers responsible of Fishery Statistics and Data in WECAFC Member Countries ( e.g., statisticians, data managers, directors of fisheries statistics, or fisheries offices, etc.) with activities related to the following domains: statistical analyses of fisheries data, data collection, designing data collection systems, analyzing statistics for statistical bulletins, report preparation, organizing and managing data collection, storage and dissemination according to a variety of needs (e.g., RFMO reporting, departmental, scientific meetings, etc.).

XI. Mode of Operation:

a. Role of Countries

The members of the Working Group will play a leading role in its activities through the following activities and commitments, and through a data and statistics perspective:

- Participate in agreed activities of the Working Group, and ensure the participation of appropriate experts;
- Implement, at the National level, the work identified in the WECAFC endorsed work plan (as appropriate);
- Report on implementation of agreed conservation and management measures
- Assist with mobilization of resources for the activities of the Working Group;
- Facilitate the organization of Working Group meetings in the languages of the Commission
- Host Working Group meetings on a rotational basis.
- Facilitate the identification of the Convener of the Working Group

b. Role of Convener

The Convener of the Working Group will play a leading role during the organization of the meetings and subsequent follow up with the Secretariat of WECAFC by coordinating the inputs of the members of the Working Group. The Convener should:

- Seek experts from among the WECAFC Members, contact potential partner organizations, and solicit their interest to join in the Working Group;
- Call for meetings as appropriate;
- Ensure that technical contributions are received in a timely manner and in the appropriate format;
- Ensure that outputs are delivered as agreed during each meeting
- Collaborate closely with FAO-WECAFC and other sub-regional and regional organizations as appropriate;
- Assist in the preparation and publication process of the proceedings of the Working Group meeting;
- Participate (in person or virtually) at the SAG meetings to present the draft working documents and provide any clarifications as required;
- Facilitate the review by the Working Group membership within a reasonable period of time (max. 15 days) on suggested edits or modifications as considered necessary to address the comments of the SAG and the return of the revised document to the WECAFC Secretariat for distribution and consideration by the Commission;
- Participate in the Commission's sessions (physically or virtually) if required, to support the Secretariat in clarifying or substantiating some points of the draft working documents;
- Assist in the relevant processes to gather information in support of seeking funds to implement priority activities of the Working Group.

c. Election and role of Convener of the Working Group

- The Working Group shall elect a Convener from among its Members to serve over a two-year period. The term of office of the Convener may be extended as determined appropriate. In the case where another qualified Convener is not available, the Convener's term may be renewed for an additional two-year term until another Convener is selected.

d. Role of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat

The FAO/WECAFC Secretariat will play a supporting role in the activities of the Working Group by assisting in:

- Coordinating activities of the Working Group, among WECAFC and Non-WECAFC Members, at the wider regional level (including facilitate procurement of funding);
- Assisting with logistical arrangements for the convening of meetings of the Working Group;
- Providing technical assistance, such as a technical secretary or research support, if needed and as resources permit

- Liaising with other Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) active in the Wider Caribbean Region and neighboring areas for their engagement as much as possible in the work of the Working Group; these RFBs include amongst others OSPESCA, CRFM, CFMC, ICCAT, NAFO, NEAFC, CECAF, COPPESAALC, etc..
- Liaising with other relevant regional and international organizations as appropriate, such as the Sargasso Sea Commission, SPAW Protocol, etc.
- Coordinating the formulation and adoption of recommendations and/or resolutions and reports/documents by the Working Group so as to facilitate the decision-making process by the Commission
- Ensuring the strategic linkage between the work of the Working Group and programmes and projects hosted to support the fisheries and healthy ecosystems framework of the CLME+ and any future phase of this project.
- Facilitating training and collaboration of WECAFC Member States and sub-regional training institutions as appropriate and based on available resources.

e. Roles of other Subregional organizations (e.g. CFMC, CRFM, ICCAT, OSPESCA, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECS, etc.)

Sub-regional organizations have an important role to play in assisting their member countries to participate fully in the activities of the Working Group. Therefore, they may be invited to:

- Provide expertise, technical assistance and support;
- Facilitate procurement of funding when possible; Collaborate in implementing the activities of the Working Group;
- Collaborate with the WECAFC Secretariat and sub-regional organizations in coordinating the activities of the Working Group
- Facilitate the decision-making process at the Sub-regional level.

## XII. Outputs

In discharging its duties, the WG will deliver the following outputs, from a data and statistics perspective:

- Biennial Work Plans including providing performance of projects on a routine schedule;
- Reports on assessment and monitoring of the status of fish stocks;
- Draft Fisheries Management Plans;
- Draft Regional Plans of Actions;
- Proposed Recommendations and Resolutions to the Commission,
- Revised TORs as needed

## XIII. Communication

A mechanism for on-going communication among Working Group members (video conference, Skype, zoom meeting and email), is essential to ensure that the work of the group is sustained between meetings. It must include all Working Group members and the communication tools must be accessible to all Working Group members.

The successful functioning of the Working Group also requires that each member country and organization/ agency identify a national node or focal point who will be contacted through the WECAFC National Focal Point and technically coordinate at national level all matters pertinent to the WG. The outputs of the Working Group will be communicated through working group reports to



WECAFC, OSPESCA, CFMC, CRFM, CITES, UNEP-CEP, ICCAT, IFREMER, and national fishery administrations via the WECAFC Secretariat.

#### **XIV. Working Group meetings and cost**

The Working Group should meet physically or virtually on a regular basis, the timing of which is decided by the members, but at a minimum once every two years. The meetings should be of 2-5 days' duration. The meetings should use cost effective accommodations and institutional facilities and where possible take advantage of other meetings in the region. Meetings shall be chaired by the Convener of the Working Group. The reports of the meetings will be formally submitted to OSPESCA, WECAFC, CFMC and CRFM, ICCAT, CITES, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Network, etc.

#### **XV. Amendments to the Terms of Reference**

Amendment of these terms of reference may be done at each biennial meeting of the Commission for implementation by the working groups in the subsequent intersessional period.

#### **XVI. Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions**

[Standardized templates will ensure a common understanding of what should be included in draft recommendations and resolutions, ease the reporting of deliverables as well as facilitate their review by other WECAFC bodies, as appropriate. Working Groups should include the following elements when preparing draft recommendations and resolutions to be presented to the WECAFC membership or other WECAFC bodies (e.g. the Scientific Advisory Group or other WECAFC Working Groups).

#### **Recommendations and Resolutions**

Draft recommendations and resolutions for review by other WECAFC bodies and the WECAFC membership should include the following elements:

- **Cover Note**: A brief cover note for draft recommendations and/or resolutions should be provided to assist reviewers. The cover note should include a clear, candid, and transparent explanation of:
  - m. why the action was developed,
  - n. at which Working Group meeting it was discussed,
  - o. a brief overview of how the Working Group arrived at its decision to put the action forward;
  - p. how the action will impact future WECAFC activities, including, where relevant any possible changes in resource or workload requirements for Members or the WECAFC Secretariat;
  - q. the ramifications of \*not\* approving the recommended action;
  - r. the full picture of the context for the recommended action.
- **Preambular Text**: This should provide essential elements to highlight the context and intent of the proposed action in a concise bulleted format. The preambular text should include only the core historical elements and should include references to related decisions or measures.
- **Action Text**: This should indicate clearly what action(s) the Working Group is taking, or is asking the WECAFC Membership to take, at a national, subregional, and/or regional level, including specific timelines to which the action(s) will adhere.

Considering that each Working Group can have more than one meeting, and more than one issue to address during each intersessional period, the Working Groups can produce several

reports/documents or draft resolutions/recommendations. In order to facilitate analysis by the Commission, each Working Group shall prepare a single set of recommendations and/or resolutions organized by fishery or by theme, including all the topics addressed in the intersessional meetings. In this regard, the Commission would consider a single set of draft recommendations and/or resolutions for spiny lobster, queen conch, flying fish and dolphinfish, FADs, FDS, etc.

The Working Groups shall refer relevant recommendations and resolutions of a scientific nature to the SAG for scientific review at least one month before the meeting of SAG, in order to provide adequate time to the Secretariat and SAG members to review them before the meeting. This will improve the efficiency of the reviews during the SAG sessions.

### Appendix 3: Draft Work Plan 2022-2023 Intersession Period for WECAFC/SAG/XI

The Working Group will carry out the following activities in 2022-2023 period.

[Highlighted text indicates minor editorial change since March 2022 FDS-WG2 Conclusion meeting.]

| Activity   | Timeframe | Responsible Entity                | Group/Theme            |
|--|-----------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Extended Meeting Components</b>   |           |                                   |                        |
| <b>1. Vessel mapping Content</b>   | 2022-2023 | WECAFC-FIRMS and member countries | Technical              |
| a. Liaise with FDS WG focal points for additional submissions  |           |                                   |                        |
| b. Review submission from WECAFC Members and highlight where revisions are needed  |           |                                   |                        |
| c. Implementations in the Regional Database with corresponding metadata  |           |                                   |                        |
| d. Discussion of adding vessel type information into FIRMS tables, including vessels images when available                     |           |                                   |                        |
|  |           |                                   |                        |
| <b>2. WECAFC Subarea Boundaries</b>  | 2022-2023 | FDS-WG and member countries       | Technical/Coordination |
| a. Finalize the proposal in the Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala sub-region under the OSPESCA umbrella                        |           |                                   |                        |
| b. Review feedback from member countries on sub-areas related to area 31 and 41, and if the case appears feasible, prepare for |           |                                   |                        |

|           |   |           |                                   |                         |
|-----------|---|-----------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
|           | presentation at CWP   |           |                                   |                         |
| c.        | Discuss a recommendation for SAG and the Commission, or any other plan to move forward  |           |                                   |                         |
| d.        | Conduct intersession discussions on Venezuela sub area delimitations  |           |                                   |                         |
|           |   |           |                                   |                         |
| <b>3.</b> | <b>FIRMS Inventories</b>  | 2022-2023 | WECAFC-FIRMS and member countries | Technical/Collaborative |
| a.        | Summarize inputs by member countries, highlight latest submissions, discuss/elaborate specific FIRMS services for the region (delivered through WECAFC map viewer)  |           |                                   |                         |
| b.        | Discuss/identify/implement a path for updating inventories in OSPESCA region- e.g., consultant to further inventory development on a country by country basis possibly, considerations of focus groups working with fleet segments (across multiple member countries) to enrich inventories |           |                                   |                         |
|           |   |           |                                   |                         |
| c.        | Also noting that FIRMS Secretariat may develop a pilot demonstrating how a possible future addition of FIRMS fishery Ids (optional) in certain Tasks of the DCRF can be exploited, for presentation at  |           |                                   |                         |

|   |           |                             |                         |
|---|-----------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| next FDS-WG   |           |                             |                         |
| <b>4. Small Scale Fisheries Matrix</b>  | 2022-2023 | FAO and FDS-WG              | Technical/Collaboration |
| a. Summarize list of member countries which submitted highlighting latest submissions and new pilot testing   |           |                             |                         |
| b. Present a synthesis of the level of adaption of the SSF matrix to the WECAFC region and what would need to be changed in the SSF matrix for it to be of practical application for the region   |           |                             |                         |
| c. Discuss a recommendation for submitting to FAO for consideration WECAFC iDCRF  |           |                             |                         |
|   |           |                             |                         |
| <b>5. WECAFC Reference list of aquatic species, annotation of important Subareas by species and DCRF tasks</b>  | 2022-2023 | FDS-WG and member countries |                         |
| a. Review submissions by member countries and WGs for additional species, and sub-areas for species, and proceed with member countries endorsements for the proposals. The use of the FIRMS map viewer will help to obtain additional input on annotation of area by species. |           |                             |                         |
| b. Review inputs from relevant Working groups, for the list of species and their sub-areas and identification of specific DCRF tasks  |           |                             |                         |
| c. Annotation of relevant   |           |                             |                         |

|  |           |                             |           |
|--|-----------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| standard conversion metrics by species/subarea for inclusion in DCRF catalogue (Tables) of conversions   |           |                             |           |
| d. Annotation of relevant biological parameters for select set of species in main list of species by important subareas (e.g., reproductive ogives, growth parameter estimates) for inclusion in DCRF catalogue (Tables) of biological parameters  |           |                             |           |
|  |           |                             |           |
| <b>6. iDCRF</b>  | 2022-2023 | FDS-WG and member countries | Technical |
| a. A revised DCRF document will be made available early December for review by Members, WGs and ICCAT by end January 2021, for consolidation in February and final review in March for adoption at the extended session of FDS-WG2 (end March/early April) of a recommendation for SAG and the Commission, or any other plan to move forward |           |                             |           |
| b. Further proofing DCRF (post extended session of FDS-WG2) with:  |           |                             |           |
| i. pilot testing starting with Data preparatory workshop and initial country submissions that will follow  |           |                             |           |
| ii. two proposed e-TWGs:   |           |                             |           |
| a. for elaboration   |           |                             |           |

|   |           |                             |                         |
|---|-----------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| on measures of fishing effort per Fleet segment or Gear type  |           |                             |                         |
| b. for refinement of Biological tasks – member countries with experience invited to be part of this WG  |           |                             |                         |
|   |           |                             |                         |
| <b>I. Operationalization of the DCRF (DCRF) and Contributions to RDB (RDB-1)- post Q2 2021, initiate June 2021</b>  | 2022-2023 | FDS-WG and member countries | Technical/Collaboration |
| a. Finalize the Maps viewer (through e-TWG?) for public release as soon as possible   |           |                             |                         |
| b. Identifying member countries willing to commit in the intersession, to populate the RDB using local statistics in 2020 and 2021. Local statistics uploaded to RDB. Identification of local country data manager. |           |                             |                         |
| c. Liaising with and identifying Regional species WGs to combine their expectations for data with the member countries contribution (Shrimp and Groundfish, Lobster, ...), and organize joint activities            |           |                             |                         |
| d. Identifying issues/challenges with member countries committing data to RDB during pilot tests  |           |                             |                         |
| e. Developing road map including pilot data sets for implementing data uploads to RDB by end  |           |                             |                         |

|   |           |                |                                     |
|---|-----------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| of 2021   |           |                |                                     |
| (*) [Consider communication of OSPESCA Director of 12 June 2020 on topic of collaborating on pilot data sets to test for RDB that currently are already capturing statistics]   |           |                |                                     |
| <b>II. Discussion of how the RDB information can contribute to informing SDG 14.4.1</b> (initiate Q1 2021 through the work of the FDS-WG via the DCRF? Has any progress been made yet, what is needed to begin to make progress (individual member countries operationalizing the DCRF through committing to contribute to the RDB). Develop some time tables and a path (roadmap)- | 2022-2023 | FAO and FDS-WG | Technical/scientific advisory       |
| 1. Consider if a sub-committee needed- perhaps focus on one of the pilots (e.g., OSPESCA lobster)   |           |                |                                     |
| <b>III. Fostering Growth of FDS-WG throughout region -this work is ongoing</b>  | 2022-2023 | FDS-WG         | Communication/Outreach              |
| a. Co-convener shadow training to develop leadership in WG  |           |                |                                     |
| <b>IV. How can this WG interact or begin to interact with other regional/international WGs</b> (species, topical, RFMOs) to further improve the regional statistics and   | 2022-2023 | FDS-WG//       | Collaboration/Coordination/Outreach |



|  |           |                                 |  |
|--|-----------|---------------------------------|--|
| information on fisheries   |           |                                 |  |
|  |           |                                 |  |
| 1. <b>Under MoU with ICCAT-</b> contribute to the planned joint ICCAT-WECAFC working group where respective species list might be examined   |           |                                 |  |
|  |           |                                 |  |
| 2. <b>Should this WG contact ICCAT re' participating in ICCAT statistics WG</b> as observer to learn how ICCAT develops/prioritizes and carries out its tasks/intersessional work on the topic of statistics (a question to ask to the participants? would anyone volunteer) |           |                                 |  |
| <b>V. Review Logbooks guidelines</b> and revisit FDS-WG 2 (LOG-1) Begin Q3 2021  | 2022-2023 | FDS-WG                          | Technical                                |
| Review work done during FDS-WG 1 intersession-discuss LOG-1 (two pilot surveys) and LOG-2 (historical experiences) survey instruments in context of best practices in logbook implementation in region and identify needed revisions for survey instruments LOG-1, LOG-2.    |           |                                 |  |
| <b>VI. Capacity building- other needs-this work is ongoing</b>   | 2022-2023 | FDS-WG, WECAFC-FIRMS, FAO-FIRMS | Communication/Coordination/Collaboration |
| 1. Finalize the list of selection criteria and propose a short list of WECAFC Members meeting these criteria for final selection   |           |                                 |  |
| 2. For the selected  |           |                                 |  |

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| WECAFC member(s),<br>define the work plan<br>and related budget for<br>support                   |  |  |  |
| 3. Seek for co-funding<br>from other regional<br>projects and agree on<br>the shared investments |  |  |  |

**Report of the OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on  
Caribbean Spiny Lobster  
Convener: Yesuri Pino**

## Índice

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. Background information .....  | 140 |
| 2. Goals/objectives.....   | 140 |
| 3. Activities carried out during the 2021-2022 period.....                                 | 141 |
| 4. Mandatos adaptados del GTR-LEC.....   | 143 |
| I. Antecedentes y justificación .....  | 144 |
| II. Función del Grupo de trabajo .....   | 145 |
| III. Modalidad de funcionamiento: .....  | 146 |
| IV. Resultados.....  | 148 |
| V. Comunicación .....  | 148 |
| VI. Reuniones del Grupo de trabajo y costo .....   | 149 |
| VII. Modificaciones de los Términos de referencia.....                                     | 149 |
| VIII. Plantillas para recomendaciones y resoluciones.....                                  | 149 |
| 5. Draft Work Plan of the WG for the intersessional period 2022-2024 (WECAFC/SAG/11) ..... | 150 |

## **1. Background information**

The Caribbean Spiny Lobster Regional Working Group (CSL-RWG) has so far held two face-to-face meetings, its first meeting in October 2014 and its second meeting held in March 2018 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

From the latter, the group made recommendations to the Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries. In addition, the terms of reference were updated and a work plan was developed for the 2018-2019 period and subsequently updated for the 2018-2019 period.

Among the main activities that were accomplished and that were included in these work plans of the group were the following:

- a. Finalisation of the Caribbean Spiny Lobster Regional Management Plan (MARPLESCA Plan).
- b. Presentation of the Caribbean Spiny Lobster Regional Management Plan (MARPLESCA Plan) at the meeting of the COPACO commission.
- c. Approval of Recommendation COPACO/XVII/2019/9 on the Management of the Caribbean Spiny Lobster in the WECAFC area during the 17th meeting of the WECAFC Commission held on 15-18 July 2019 in Miami, United States.

Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/9 states: “WECAFC members approve and implement the Caribbean Spiny Lobster Regional Management and Conservation Plan (MARPLESCA Plan) updated and presented at the 2nd meeting of the Joint Working Group held recently (March 2018)”.

It should be noted that the MARPLESCA Plan provides advice for the CSL-RWG/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC as a follow-up technical support body, and that the Plan also establishes a tentative timeline for its full implementation by 2020.

Considering the last work plan presented by the group for the 2019-2020 period, the following were not achieved:

1. Conduct the 3rd meeting of the Caribbean Spiny Lobster Regional Working Group.
2. Implementation of selected actions of the Caribbean Spiny Lobster Regional Management Plan.

## **2. Goals/objectives**

The objective of this report is to present in detail the group's background (information?), the main activities carried out during the 2019-2022 period, and to visualize the progress that has been achieved in the CSL-RWG in order to suggest a new work plan with activities that allow the group's goals to be met.

- a. Main achievements of the group during the intersessional period

The main achievements within the group have been to compile the most important characteristics of the fishery and management in the countries with lobster fisheries throughout the WECAFC area in the MARPLESCA plan. Thus, allowing the establishment of a systematic process for the management of the Caribbean spiny lobster (*Panulirus argus*) fishery in the countries where it is distributed, within a framework of sustainable use, promoting ecological balance and social and economic benefits for stakeholders.

And its approval for implementation through Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/9.

b. Difficulties during the intersessional period

The difficulties experienced during the intersessional period were closely linked to the lack of continuous monitoring of the CSL-RWG activities, due to the departure/withdrawal of the former convenor in early 2020 and the arrival of a new convenor in mid-2021. Thus, leading to a period of a year and a half without coordination, in which there is no record of the background information? and where there was no transition period between one and the other convenor.

Very long periods between meetings of the CSL-RWG, 4 years between the first and second meeting, thus preventing a more constant communication with the members of the group.

On the other hand, the completion of the projects that financed the OSPESCA lobster activities.

### **3. Activities carried out during the 2021-2022 period**

On July 22, 2021, the virtual meeting of WECAFC working group conveners, organized by the Secretariat, took place, where activities were assigned to be developed in each group.

1. Adaptation of the terms of reference template provided to each working group.
2. Review of the old WECAFC 2014-2020 Strategic Plan in order to make recommendations and suggestions, which could be used for the preparation of the new Strategic Plan.

These activities were discussed by e-mail, through which the document was shared and ideas were exchanged during the months of January and February.

Work was mainly carried out with the OSPESCA member countries, as no response was received from the Spanish-speaking countries to the emails shared by the WECAFC secretariat (List of participants in the meetings of the Spiny Lobster Working Group, 2014, 2018).

The final inputs to the terms of reference were worked on as a Word document, using the "Track Changes" tool. The summary of the final recommendations and suggestions of the lobster group to the 2014-2020 Strategic Plan is presented in a three-column table with the original text, the reference page of the strategic plan in Spanish and the group's suggestion, and addresses the technical action areas and priorities of WECAFC.



## 4. Mandatos adaptados del GTR-LEC

### PLANTILLA DE LOS TÉRMINOS DE REFERENCIA DE LOS GRUPOS DE TRABAJO

#### OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CFMC Caribbean Spiny Lobster Working Group

[include date of approval of the ToR by the Commission]

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <u>I. Antecedentes y justificación</u>  | 144 |
| <u>II. Función del Grupo de trabajo</u>   | 145 |
| <u>a) Ámbito del trabajo</u>  | 145 |
| <u>b) Objetivo</u>  | 145 |
| <u>c) Tareas/ funciones</u>   | 145 |
| <u>d) Membresía</u>   | 146 |
| <u>III. Modalidad de funcionamiento:</u>  | 146 |
| <u>a) Función de los países</u>   | 146 |
| <u>b) Función del Convocante</u>  | 147 |
| <u>c) Elección y función del Convocante del Grupo de trabajo</u>  | 147 |
| <u>d) Funciones de la Secretaría de la FAO/COPACO</u>   | 147 |
| <u>e) Funciones de otras Organizaciones subregionales (p.ej. CFMC, CRFM, CICAA, OSPESCA, PNUMA/CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECO, etc.)</u> | 148 |
| <u>IV. Resultados</u>   | 148 |
| <u>V. Comunicación</u>  | 148 |
| <u>VI. Reuniones del Grupo de trabajo y costo</u>   | 149 |
| <u>VII. Modificaciones de los Términos de referencia</u>  | 149 |
| <u>VIII. Plantillas para recomendaciones y resoluciones</u>   | 149 |

## I. Antecedentes y justificación

Los Grupos de trabajo creados por la Comisión proporcionan a los países miembros asesoramiento y recomendaciones sobre la ordenación pesquera, basados en la mejor información científica disponible, para facilitar su aplicación.

Los Grupos de trabajo que se crearon o confirmaron en las sucesivas reuniones desde la decimocuarta reunión de la Comisión en 2012, son los siguientes:

1. [OSPESCA/COPACO/CRFM/CFMC Grupo de trabajo para la langosta espinosa](#)
2. [CFMC/OSPESCA/COPACO/CRFM/CITES Grupo de trabajo para el caracol rosado](#)
3. [Grupo de trabajo de la COPACO para el manejo de la pesca de aguas profundas](#)
4. [COPACO/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Grupo de trabajo para la pesca recreativa](#)
5. [CRFM/COPACO/JICA/IFREMER Grupo de Trabajo de las Antillas Menores sobre el desarrollo de la pesca con dispositivos sostenibles fijos de agrupamiento de peces](#)
6. [CRFM/COPACO Grupo de trabajo para el pez volador en el Caribe Oriental \(establecido desde la decimoséptima reunión de la COPACO como Grupo de trabajo sobre pez volador y dorado\)](#)
7. [COPACO/CRFM/IFREMER Grupo de trabajo para el camarón y los peces de fondo en la Plataforma Norte de Brasil-Guayanas](#)
8. [CFMC/COPACO/OSPESCA/CRFM Grupo de trabajo sobre las agregaciones de desove](#)
9. [Grupo de trabajo regional sobre la pesca ilegal, no declarada y no reglamentada](#)
10. [Grupo de trabajo de la COPACO para la conservación y ordenación de los tiburones en la región del Gran Caribe](#)
11. [COPACO/CRFM/OSPESCA Grupo de trabajo sobre datos y estadísticas de pesca](#)

La mayoría de los Grupos de trabajo son grupos conjuntos con otras instituciones regionales asociadas, como el Consejo de Ordenación Pesquera del Caribe (CRFM, por sus siglas en inglés), la Organización del Sector Pesquero y Acuícola del Istmo Centroamericano (OSPESCA), el Consejo de Ordenación Pesquera del Caribe (CFMC), el Instituto Francés de Investigación para la Explotación del Mar (IFREMER), etc. En los Grupos de trabajo -que tienen un mandato específico limitado en el tiempo-, participan científicos pesqueros, expertos, gestores y responsables de la toma de decisiones de los países miembros, así como organizaciones regionales asociadas, incluidas las académicas y las ONG. Los datos utilizados por los Grupos de trabajo para evaluar la situación de las poblaciones of the harvested species, realizar evaluaciones de las pesquerías, y elaborar consejos y recomendaciones para la Comisión sobre ordenación pesquera, son recopilados por los países participantes y las ONG.

Los principales factores que impulsan la creación de estos Grupos de trabajo son la necesidad de colaborar y cooperar en la evaluación y ordenación de los recursos compartidos; la necesidad de estandarizar los sistemas de recopilación y presentación de datos para poder evaluar el estado de las poblaciones utilizando datos e información de una serie de países que se ocupan de las poblaciones/especies/recursos en toda su área de distribución; la necesidad de estandarizar las medidas de conservación y ordenación para una gestión eficaz, la necesidad de formación y desarrollo de capacidades para mejorar la recopilación de datos y la evaluación del estado de las pesquerías/poblaciones pesqueras; etc.



Al llevar a cabo su labor, el Grupo de trabajo prestará la debida atención al Código de Conducta para la Pesca Responsable de la FAO y sus directrices correspondientes, incluidas las Directrices voluntarias para lograr la sostenibilidad de la pesca en pequeña escala, en especial en lo que respecta a los medios de vida y la seguridad alimentaria de las comunidades y las partes interesadas de la cadena de valor que dependen de la ordenación sostenible de estos recursos naturales, así como su contribución a la consecución de las metas de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible de las Naciones Unidas, a saber los ODS 1 y 2; 5 y 8; 12, 13 y 14, así como cualquier otro instrumento internacional o regional acordado para la conservación y ordenación de la pesca, y los principios de los enfoques preventivos, participativos y ecosistémicos de la ordenación pesquera. Las actividades del Grupo de trabajo también se guían por cualquier obligación e iniciativa regional o internacional de ordenación pesquera o relacionada con los recursos respectivos asociados al Grupo de trabajo específico: p.ej. cualquier plan de ordenación pesquera, declaración, medida de conservación y ordenación acordada, estrategias regionales, reglamentos, etc.

## **II. Función del Grupo de trabajo**

### *a) Ámbito del trabajo*

El cometido de cada Grupo de trabajo es proporcionar asesoramiento científico y de gestión para la ordenación sostenible, la conservación y el desarrollo de los recursos marinos vivos en el área de competencia de la COPACO. Esta labor incluye el desarrollo y el apoyo a los planes de acción nacionales y regionales con el fin de regular las pesquerías objetivo y de captura incidental, así como el manejo de las poblaciones existentes en la región. Utilizando un enfoque multidisciplinar, el Grupo de trabajo contribuirá a la ordenación sostenible proporcionando asesoramiento en materia de ordenación a los Estados miembros de la COPACO sobre la base de los mejores conocimientos/evidencias científicas disponibles y de los conocimientos ecológicos tradicionales/locales disponibles.

Para alcanzar este objetivo, el Grupo de trabajo contribuirá a que se asuman las responsabilidades nacionales y regionales en relación con el medio ambiente marino y con la ordenación the Caribbean spiny lobster y de las especies o pesquerías afines o que interactúan con ellos en la región de la COPACO.

### *b) Objetivo*

El objetivo de cada Grupo de trabajo es informar y provide guidance for the management de los recursos marinos vivos a los miembros de la COPACO de manera que se promueva la transformación hacia una pesca responsable que ofrezca oportunidades económicas, seguridad alimentaria y nutrición para las personas y garantice el bienestar social, al tiempo que asegure la conservación de los recursos marinos vivos y la protección de la biodiversidad marina.

### *c) Tareas/funciones*

El Grupo de trabajo se encargará de:

- Recopilar, examinar y compartir los datos y la información existentes (pasados y presentes) sobre la pesca en la zona de competencia de la COPACO, con la participación de los pescadores y el sector privado, en especial las mujeres y los jóvenes, además de identificar el potencial para la ordenación y el desarrollo sostenibles de dichas pesquerías en la región.

- Analizar los datos y la información recopilada de spiny lobster catches y formular recomendaciones para la sostenibilidad de la pesca en la región de la COPACO.
- Supervisar los cambios en la distribución y la abundancia the Caribbean spiny lobster en la región de la COPACO.
- Desarrollar metodologías comunes y viables para la evaluación y seguimiento of the status of Caribbean spiny lobster stocks; taking into account the different levels of exploitation (industrial and artisanal) in the countries involved.
- Buscar asociaciones con otras instituciones que puedan prestar asistencia en el seguimiento, evaluación y recomendaciones de ordenación para el uso sostenible, la protección y conservación de los recursos.
- Supervisar y asesorar en el manejo y aplicación de estrategias regionales, reglamentos y planes de ordenación para la protección de los recursos pesqueros.
- Mantener la comunicación entre los miembros del Grupo de trabajo, otros Grupos de trabajo y las partes pertinentes sobre cuestiones de interés común para reforzar la colaboración regional en la evaluación y ordenación de los recursos marinos vivos.
- Informar a la Comisión y contribuir a comunicar y dar visibilidad a los resultados del Grupo de trabajo, según sea necesario.
- Identificar las necesidades de las comunidades dependientes de los recursos pesqueros e investigar medios de vida alternativos a la pesca y la acuicultura (pesca recreativa, hostelería y turismo, etc.)
- Develop and propose improved and coordinated management measures in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.
- Evaluate and define the most sustainable and resource and ecosystem friendly fishing gear to catch Caribbean spiny lobster.
- Inform OSPESCA, WECAFC, CFMC and CRFM about the outcome of each session.

#### *d) Membresía*

Los miembros del Grupo de trabajo serán todos los Estados miembros del CRFM y la COPACO, la OSPESCA, incluidos los territorios y departamentos de ultramar.

These members shall be national officials of fisheries authorities, fisheries offices or fisheries institutes responsible for fisheries collection, management and statistics. Experienced in the field of the Caribbean spiny lobster fishery, involved in or related to the collection, data processing and/or assessment of the lobster fishery. Have knowledge of fisheries biology and stock assessment.

### **III. Modalidad de funcionamiento:**

#### *a) Función de los países*

Los miembros del Grupo de trabajo desempeñarán un papel protagonista en sus actividades a través de las siguientes tareas y compromisos:

- Participar en las actividades acordadas del Grupo de trabajo, y garantizar la participación de los expertos adecuados;
- Implementar, a nivel nacional, el trabajo identificado en el plan de trabajo aprobado por la COPACO (según proceda);
- Informe sobre la implementación de las medidas de conservación y ordenación acordadas
- Ayudar a la movilización de recursos para las actividades del Grupo de trabajo;

- Facilitar la organización de las reuniones del Grupo de trabajo en los idiomas de la Comisión
- Ser anfitrión de las reuniones del Grupo de trabajo de forma rotativa.
- Facilitar la identificación del Convocante del Grupo de trabajo.

#### *b) Función del Convocante*

El Convocante del Grupo de trabajo desempeñará un papel de liderazgo durante la organización de las reuniones y el posterior seguimiento con la Secretaría de la COPACO, coordinando las aportaciones de los miembros del Grupo de trabajo. El Convocante deberá:

- Buscar expertos entre los miembros de la COPACO, ponerse en contacto con posibles organizaciones asociadas y suscitar su interés por formar parte del Grupo de trabajo; y
- Convocar reuniones, según proceda;
- Realizar las acciones necesarias para que las contribuciones técnicas se reciban a tiempo y en el formato adecuado;
- Garantizar que los resultados se entreguen según lo acordado durante cada reunión;
- Colaborar estrechamente con la COPACO FAO y otras organizaciones subregionales y regionales, según proceda;
- Ayudar en el proceso de preparación y publicación de las actas de la reunión del Grupo de trabajo;
- Participar (en persona o virtualmente) en las reuniones del Grupo Asesor Científico (GAC) para presentar los proyectos de documentos de trabajo y ofrecer las aclaraciones necesarias;
- Facilitar la revisión por parte de los miembros del Grupo de trabajo, dentro de un período de tiempo razonable (máximo 15 días), de las ediciones o modificaciones sugeridas que se consideren necesarias para abordar las observaciones del GAC y la devolución del documento revisado a la Secretaría de la COPACO para su distribución y consideración por parte de la Comisión;
- Participar en las sesiones de la Comisión (de forma presencial o virtual) si es necesario, para apoyar a la Secretaría en la aclaración o fundamentación de algunos puntos de los proyectos de documentos de trabajo;
- Asistir en los procesos pertinentes para recopilar información en apoyo de la búsqueda de fondos para implementar las actividades prioritarias del Grupo de trabajo.

#### *c) Elección y función del Convocante del Grupo de trabajo*

- El Grupo de trabajo elegirá un Convocante de entre sus miembros para un período de dos años. La duración del mandato de Convocante podrá prorrogarse por un período adicional de dos años, según se considere oportuno. En el caso de que no se disponga de otro Convocante cualificado, el mandato de Convocante podrá renovarse por un período adicional de dos años hasta que se seleccione otro Convocante.

#### *d) Funciones de la Secretaría de la FAO/COPACO*

La Secretaría de la FAO y la COPACO desempeñará un papel de apoyo en las actividades del Grupo de trabajo mediante:

- Coordinar las actividades del Grupo de trabajo, entre los miembros de la COPACO y los que no lo son, a nivel regional más amplio (lo que incluye facilitar el obtener fondos);

- Ayudar en la organización logística para la convocatoria de las reuniones del Grupo de trabajo;
- Proporcionar asistencia técnica, como un secretario técnico o apoyo a la investigación, si es necesario y según lo permitan los recursos
- Mantener contacto con otros Organismos Regionales de Pesca (ORP) activos en la región del Gran Caribe y zonas vecinas para que participen en la medida de lo posible en la labor del Grupo de Trabajo; estos ORP incluyen, entre otros, a OSPESCA, CRFM, CFMC, CICAA, OPAN, CPANE, CPACO, COPPESAALC, etc.
- Estar en contacto con otras organizaciones regionales pertinentes, según proceda, como la Comisión del Mar de los Sargazos, el Protocolo SPAW, etc.
- Coordinar la formulación y adopción de recomendaciones y/o resoluciones e informes/documentos por parte del Grupo de trabajo para facilitar el proceso de toma de decisiones por parte de la Comisión.
- Asegurar la vinculación estratégica entre la labor del Grupo de trabajo y los programas y proyectos acogidos para apoyar el marco de pesca y ecosistemas saludables de la región del CLME+ y cualquier fase futura de este proyecto. Facilitar la capacitación y la colaboración de los Estados miembros de la COPACO y de las instituciones subregionales de formación, según proceda y sobre la base de los recursos disponibles.

*e) Funciones de otras Organizaciones subregionales (p.ej. CFMC, CRFM, CICAA, **OSPESCA**, PNUMA/CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECD, etc.)*

Las Organizaciones subregionales tienen un importante papel que desempeñar para ayudar a sus países miembros a participar plenamente en las actividades del Grupo de trabajo. Por lo tanto, se les puede invitar a:

- Proporcionar conocimientos, asistencia técnica y apoyo;
- Facilitar la obtención de financiación cuando sea posible;
- Colaborar en la implementación de las actividades del Grupo de trabajo;
- Colaborar con la Secretaría de la COPACO y las organizaciones subregionales en la coordinación de las actividades del Grupo de trabajo
- Facilitar el proceso de toma de decisiones a nivel subregional.

#### **IV. Resultados**

En el desempeño de sus funciones, el Grupo de trabajo obtendrá los siguientes resultados:

- Planes de trabajo bienales;
- Informes de evaluación del estado de las poblaciones de peces;
- Proyectos de planes de ordenación pesquera;
- Proyectos de Planes de acción regionales;
- Propuestas de Recomendaciones y Resoluciones a la Comisión,
- Revisión de los TdR según sea necesario

#### **V. Comunicación**

Un mecanismo de comunicación continua entre los miembros del Grupo de trabajo (videoconferencia, Skype, reunión de zoom y correo electrónico), resulta esencial para garantizar

que el trabajo del grupo se mantenga entre las reuniones. Debe incluir a todos los miembros del Grupo de trabajo y las herramientas de comunicación deben ser accesibles a todos sus componentes.

El buen funcionamiento del Grupo de trabajo también requiere que cada país miembro y organización/agencia identifique un nodo nacional o punto focal, que será contactado a través del Punto Focal Nacional de la COPACO y coordinará técnicamente a nivel nacional todos los asuntos relacionados con el Grupo de trabajo. Los resultados del Grupo de trabajo se comunicarán mediante informes a la COPACO, la OSPESCA, el CFMC, el CRFM, el PNUMA-CEP (siglas en inglés de *Caribbean Environment Programme*), el IFREMER y las administraciones pesqueras nacionales a través de la Secretaría de la COPACO.

## **VI. Reuniones del Grupo de trabajo y costo**

El Grupo de trabajo debe reunirse de forma presencial o virtualmente de forma regular según un calendario- que deciden los miembros, pero como mínimo una vez cada dos años. Las reuniones deberían tener una duración de entre 2 y 5 días. Las reuniones deberán utilizar alojamientos e instalaciones oficiales económicos y, cuando sea posible, aprovechar otras reuniones en la región. Las reuniones serán presididas por el Convocante del Grupo de trabajo. Los informes de las reuniones se presentarán formalmente a la OSPESCA, la COPACO, el CFMC y el CRFM, la CITES, el PNUMA-CEP, la CICC, el IFREMER, la Red de Institutos de Pesca del Golfo y del Caribe, etc.

## **VII. Modificaciones de los Términos de referencia**

En cada reunión bienal de la Comisión se podrán modificar estos Términos de referencia para que los Grupos de trabajo los implementen en el siguiente período entre sesiones.

## **VIII. Plantillas para recomendaciones y resoluciones**

Las plantillas estandarizadas garantizarán un entendimiento común de lo que debe incluirse en los proyectos de recomendaciones y resoluciones, facilitar la notificación de los resultados, además de facilitar su revisión por parte de otros órganos de la COPACO, según proceda. Los Grupos de trabajo deberían incluir los siguientes elementos al preparar los proyectos de recomendaciones y resoluciones que se presentarán a los miembros de la COPACO o a otros órganos de la COPACO (p.ej. el Grupo Asesor Científico u otros Grupos de trabajo de la COPACO).

### **Recomendaciones y resoluciones**

Los proyectos de recomendaciones y resoluciones que se presenten a otros órganos de la COPACO y a los miembros de la COPACO deberán incluir los siguientes elementos:

- **Nota de acompañamiento:** Para ayudar a los revisores, debe proporcionarse una breve nota de acompañamiento para los proyectos de recomendaciones y/o resoluciones. Esta nota debe incluir una explicación clara, directa y transparente de:
  - a) por qué se desarrolló la acción
  - b) en qué reunión del Grupo de trabajo se debatió,

- c) una breve descripción de cómo el Grupo de trabajo llegó a la decisión de presentar la medida
  - d) cómo afectará a las futuras actividades de la COPACO, incluyendo, en su caso, cualquier posible cambio en los requisitos de recursos o carga de trabajo para los miembros o la Secretaría de la COPACO
  - e) las implicaciones de \*no\* aprobar la medida recomendada.
  - f) una visión global del contexto de la medida recomendada.
- **Preámbulo:** Debe proporcionar los elementos esenciales para destacar el contexto y la intención de la medida propuesta en un formato conciso de viñetas. El texto del preámbulo debe incluir sólo los elementos históricos fundamentales y debe incluir referencias a las decisiones o medidas relacionadas.
  - **Texto de la medida:** Debe indicar claramente la(s) medida(es) que el Grupo de trabajo está adoptando, o que está pidiendo a los miembros de la COPACO que adopten, a nivel nacional, subregional y/o regional, incluyendo los marcos temporales específicos a los que se ceñirá(n) la(s) medida(s).

Teniendo en cuenta que cada Grupo de trabajo puede tener más de una reunión, y más de un tema a tratar durante cada período entre reuniones, los Grupos de trabajo pueden producir varios informes/documentos o proyectos de resolución/recomendaciones. Para facilitar el análisis por parte de la Comisión, cada Grupo de trabajo preparará un único conjunto de recomendaciones y/o resoluciones organizadas por pesquería o por tema, incluyendo todos los temas tratados en las reuniones entre sesiones. En este sentido, la Comisión considerará un único conjunto de proyectos de recomendaciones y/o resoluciones para la langosta, el caracol rosado, los peces voladores y el dorado, los dispositivos de concentración de peces, los datos y estadísticas pesqueras etc.

Los Grupos de trabajo remitirán las recomendaciones y resoluciones pertinentes de carácter científico al GAC para su revisión científica al menos un mes antes de la reunión del GAC, con el fin de que la Secretaría y los miembros del GAC tengan tiempo suficiente para revisarlas antes de la reunión. Esto mejorará la eficacia de las revisiones durante las sesiones del GAC.

## 5. Draft Work Plan of the WG for the intersessional period 2022-2024 (WECAFC/SAG/11)

This section presents the activities considered by the conveners as priorities, based on a review of the group's background, and its work plans. Due to the fact that the group has not been able to meet during this intersessional period, a complete plan has not been established and approved by the group.

### The CSL-WG will carry out the following activities in the 2022-2023 period:

| Activity         | Calendar   | Responsible entity | Group/ Topic          |
|------------------|------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Organisation and | Later than | WECAFC + OSPESCA   | Implementation of the |

|   |               |         |  |
|---|---------------|---------|--|
| holding of the 3rd meeting of the Caribbean Spiny Lobster Regional Working Group. | December 2022 |         | regional management plan in the countries.<br><br>Presentation of the PROCARIBE+ project and the role of the group and WECAFC in it. |
| Preparation and approval by the group members of the CSL-RWG work plan.           | December 2022 | CSL-RWG | Generate a complete work plan approved by the group.   |

**Working Group on the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries**  
**Convener: Jorge E. Paramo Granados**

**WORKING GROUPS TERMS OF REFERENCE TEMPLATE**  
**Working Group on the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries**

**[insert date of endorsement of ToRs by Commission]**

**CONTENTS**

**Table of Contents**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Working Group on the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries   | 152 |
| I. Background and justification   | 153 |
| II. Role of the Working Group   | 154 |
| a) Scope of the Work  | 154 |
| b) Goal   | 154 |
| c) Tasks/ functions   | 154 |
| d) Membership   | 155 |
| III. Mode of Operation:   | 156 |
| a) Role of Countries  | 156 |
| b) Role of Convener   | 156 |
| c) Election and role of Convener of the Working Group   | 157 |
| d) Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat  | 157 |
| e) Roles of other Subregional organizations (e.g. CFMC, CRFM, ICCAT, OSPESCA, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECS, etc.) | 157 |
| IV. Outputs   | 158 |
| V. Communication  | 158 |
| VI. Working Group meetings and cost   | 158 |
| VII. Amendments to the Terms of Reference   | 158 |
| VIII. Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions   | 158 |



## I. Background and justification

Fishery management advice and recommendations, based on the best available scientific information, are provided to WECAFC member countries for their implementation by dedicated Working Groups, established by the Commission.

The Working Groups that were established or confirmed in the subsequent sessions since the 14th session of the Commission in 2012 are the following:

1. OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Caribbean Spiny Lobster
2. CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch
3. WECAFC Working Group on the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries
4. WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries
5. CRFM/WECAFC/JICA/IFREMER Working Group on Fisheries Using fish aggregating devices (FADS)
6. CRFM/WECAFC Working Group on Flyingfish in the Eastern Caribbean (established since the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC as the flyingfish- Dolphinfish WG)
7. WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Northern Brazil-Guianas Shelf
8. CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations
9. Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (RWG-IUU)
10. WECAFC Working Group for the Conservation And Management of Sharks in the Wider Caribbean Region
11. WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group (FDS-WG)

Most Working Groups are joint working groups with other regional partner institutions, such as the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), the Organization of Fisheries for the Central American Isthmus (OSPESCA), the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC), the French Research Institute for Exploration of the Sea (IFREMER), etc. Fishery scientists, experts, managers and decision-makers of member countries, Regional partner organizations including academia and NGOs participate in the Working Groups, which have specific terms of reference that are time bound. The data used by the Working Groups to assess the status of fish stocks, to conduct fishery assessments and to generate fishery management advice and recommendations to the Commission are collected by the participating countries and NGOs.

The key drivers behind the establishment of these working groups are the need to collaborate and cooperate in the assessment and management of shared resources; need to standardize data collection and reporting systems to enable assessment of stock status using data and information from a range of countries that target the stock/species/resources throughout their distribution range; need to standardize conservation and management measures for effective management, need for training and capacity building to improve data collection and assessment of the status of fisheries/fish stocks; etc.

In undertaking its work, the Working Group will pay due attention to the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its related guidelines, including the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries especially in regards to livelihoods and food security of communities and value chain stakeholders dependent on sustainable management of these natural resources, as well as their contribution to achieving the targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, namely SDG 1 and 2; 5, 8; 12, 13 and 14, as well as any other agreed international or regional instruments for the conservation and management of fisheries, and the principles of precautionary, participatory and ecosystem approaches to fisheries management. The activities of the WG are also guided by any specific regional or international fisheries management or related obligations and initiatives or instruments of

relevance to the respective resources associated with the specific WG – e.g. any FMPs, Declarations, agreed CMMs, regional strategies, regulations, etc.

## **II. Role of the Working Group**

### **e) Scope of the Work**

The scope of each Working Group is to provide scientific and management advice for the sustainable management, conservation and development of living marine resources in the area of competence of WECAFC. This includes the development and support to national and regional plans of action in order to regulate target and bycatch fisheries, as well as manage existing populations within the region. Using a multidisciplinary approach, the working group will contribute to the sustainable management by providing management advice to Members of WECAFC based on the best available scientific knowledge/evidence and traditional/local ecological knowledge

In pursuing this goal, the Working Group will contribute to the fulfilment of national and regional responsibilities for the marine environment and for the management of Deep-sea fisheries and related or interacting species or fisheries in the WECAFC Region.

### **f) Goal**

The goal of each Working Group is to inform and provide guidance for the management of living marine resources in WECAFC members in such a manner as to promote transformation to responsible fisheries that provide economic opportunities, food security and human nutrition, secure social wellbeing while ensuring the conservation of living marine resources and the protection of marine biodiversity.

### **g) Tasks/ functions**

The Working Group will:

- Collect, review and share the existing (past and present) data and information on the fishery in the WECAFC area, involving the fishers and private sector, especially women and youth, in addition to identifying the potential for sustainable management and development of such fisheries in the region.
- Analyze the data and information collected from capture fisheries and aquaculture production and make recommendations for the sustainability of the fisheries in the WECAFC region.
- Monitor changes in distribution and abundance of species of Deep-sea Fisheries in the WECAFC region.
- Develop common and feasible methodologies for assessment and monitoring of the fish stock especially in data poor fisheries.
- Seek partnerships with other institutions that could provide assistance in the monitoring, evaluation, and recommendations for management for sustainable use, protection and conservation of the resources.
- Monitor and provide advice on the management and implementation of regional strategies, regulations and management plans to protect the fish resources.

- Establish communication between the members of the Working Group, other Working Groups and relevant parties on issues of common interest in order to strengthen regional collaboration in the assessment and management of living marine resources.
- Report to the Commission and contribute to communication and visibility of the deliverables of the Working Group as may be needed.
- Identify needs of communities dependent on the fishery resources and investigate alternative livelihoods from fisheries and aquaculture (recreational fishing, hospitality and tourism, etc.)
- Carry out research on conservation of fishing resources both commercial and non-commercial fish and crustaceans which are found between 200 and 1000 m of depth which comprise highly complex and dynamic assemblages and diversity of the WECAFC countries.
- Contribute towards the conservation of deep sea communities and their habitats which supply resources for fishing by considering these the focal point of exportation of materials and energy towards neighboring ecosystems.
- Favor the conservation of the deep sea resources considering their individual conditions of low resistance and high vulnerability (for example: deep-sea Chondrichthyes due to the extremely low resilience to fishing exploitation)
- Do not allow fishing of any kind beyond 600 m depth to protect the reproductive adult population and biodiversity.
- Carry out research on the reproductive biology of commercially important deep-sea crustacean species in the WECAFC countries for management and sustainable use.
- Promote the use and training of marine robotic technologies for ecological monitoring: Cameras, underwater Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROV), integrated Optic-Acoustics studies of deep-sea ecosystems.
- Carry out research on biodiversity conservation and assessment of the fishing potential of fisheries resources in the deep waters of the WECAFC countries based on an ecosystem approach (for example to identify Marine Protected Areas).
- Promote the use of gear and fishing methods that do not alter the habitat, with the active participation of fishermen from the design and construction of the fishing gear: traps (traps) for the selective capture of crustaceans and fish, and artisanal longlines with curved hooks to avoid bycatch of non-target species, fishing methods with a low impact on underwater life and ecosystems.
- To get funding for a Project about "Biodiversity conservation and assessment of the fishing potential of fisheries resources in the deep waters of the countries of The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) based on an ecosystem approach"

## **h) Membership**

Membership of the Working Group shall consist of all Member States of CRFM and WECAFC, OSPESCA, including overseas territories and Departments.

### **III. Mode of Operation:**

#### **a) Role of Countries**

The members of the Working Group will play a leading role in its activities through the following activities and commitments:

- Participate in agreed activities of the Working Group, and ensure the participation of appropriate experts;
- Implement, at the National level, the work identified in the WECAFC endorsed work plan (as appropriate);
- Report on implementation of agreed conservation and management measures
- Assist with mobilization of resources for the activities of the Working Group;
- Facilitate the organization of Working Group meetings in the languages of the Commission
- Host Working Group meetings on a rotational basis;
- Facilitate the identification of the Convener of the Working Group.

#### **b) Role of Convener**

The Convener of the Working Group will play a leading role during the organization of the meetings and subsequent follow up with the Secretariat of WECAFC by coordinating the inputs of the members of the Working Group. The Convener should:

- Seek experts from among the WECAFC Members, contact potential partner organizations, and solicit their interest to join in the Working Group;
- Call for meetings as appropriate;
- Ensure that technical contributions are received in a timely manner and in the appropriate format;
- Ensure that outputs are delivered as agreed during each meeting;
- Collaborate closely with FAO-WECAFC and other sub-regional and regional organizations as appropriate;
- Assist in the preparation and publication process of the proceedings of the Working Group meeting;
- Participate (in person or virtually) at the SAG meetings to present the draft working documents and provide any clarifications as required;
- Facilitate the review by the Working Group membership within a reasonable period of time (max. 15 days) on suggested edits or modifications as considered necessary to address the comments of the SAG and the return of the revised document to the WECAFC Secretariat for distribution and consideration by the Commission;
- Participate in the Commission's sessions (physically or virtually) if required, to support the Secretariat in clarifying or substantiating some points of the draft working documents;
- Assist in the relevant processes to gather information in support of seeking funds to implement priority activities of the Working Group.

### **c) Election and role of Convener of the Working Group**

- The Working Group shall elect a Convener from among its Members to serve over a two-year period. The term of office of the Convener may be extended as determined appropriate. In the case where another qualified Convener is not available, the Convener's term may be renewed for an additional two-year term until another Convener is selected.

### **d) Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat**

The FAO/WECAFC Secretariat will play a supporting role in the activities of the Working Group by

assisting in:

- Coordinating activities of the Working Group, among WECAFC and Non-WECAFC Members, at the wider regional level (including facilitate procurement of funding);
- Assisting with logistical arrangements for the convening of meetings of the Working Group;
- Providing technical assistance, such as a technical secretary or research support, if needed and as resources permit;
- Liaising with other Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) active in the Wider Caribbean Region and neighboring areas for their engagement as much as possible in the work of the Working Group; these RFBs include amongst others OSPESCA, CRFM, CFMC, ICCAT, NAFO, NEAFC, CECAF, COPPESAALC, etc;
- Liaising with other relevant regional organizations as appropriate, such as the Sargasso Sea Commission, SPAW Protocol, etc;
- Coordinating the formulation and adoption of recommendations and/or resolutions and reports/documents by the Working Group so as to facilitate the decision-making process by the Commission;
- Ensuring the strategic linkage between the work of the Working Group and programmes and projects hosted to support the fisheries and healthy ecosystems framework of the CLME+ and any future phase of this project;
- Facilitating training and collaboration of WECAFC Member States and sub-regional training institutions as appropriate and based on available resources.

### **e) Roles of other Subregional organizations (e.g. CFMC, CRFM, ICCAT, OSPESCA, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECS, etc.)**

Sub-regional organizations have an important role to play in assisting their member countries to participate fully in the activities of the Working Group. Therefore, they may be invited to:

- Provide expertise, technical assistance and support;
- Facilitate procurement of funding when possible;
- Collaborate in implementing the activities of the Working Group;
- Collaborate with the WECAFC Secretariat and sub-regional organizations in coordinating the activities of the Working Group;
- Facilitate the decision-making process at the Sub-regional level.

#### **IV. Outputs**

In discharging its duties, the Working Group will deliver the following outputs:

- Biennial Work Plans;
- Reports on assessment of the status of fish stocks;
- Draft Fisheries Management Plans;
- Draft Regional Plans of Actions;
- Proposed Recommendations and Resolutions to the Commission,
- Revised TORs as needed

#### **V. Communication**

A mechanism for on-going communication among Working Group members (video conference, Skype, zoom meeting and email), is essential to ensure that the work of the group is sustained between meetings. It must include all Working Group members and the communication tools must be accessible to all Working Group members.

The successful functioning of the Working Group also requires that each member country and organization/ agency identify a national node or focal point who will be contacted through the WECAFC National Focal Point and technically coordinate at national level all matters pertinent to the WG. The outputs of the Working Group will be communicated through working group reports to WECAFC, OSPESCA, CFMC, CRFM, CITES, UNEP-CEP, ICCAT, IFREMER, and national fishery administrations via the WECAFC Secretariat.

#### **VI. Working Group meetings and cost**

The Working Group should meet physically or virtually on a regular basis, the timing of which is decided by the members, but at a minimum once every two years. The meetings should be of 2-5 days' duration. The meetings should use cost effective accommodations and institutional facilities and where possible take advantage of other meetings in the region. Meetings shall be chaired by the Convener of the Working Group. The reports of the meetings will be formally submitted to OSPESCA, WECAFC, CFMC and CRFM, ICCAT, CITES, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Network, etc.

#### **VII. Amendments to the Terms of Reference**

Amendment of these terms of reference may be done at each biennial meeting of the Commission for implementation by the working groups in the subsequent intersessional period.

#### **VIII. Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions**

[Standardized templates will ensure a common understanding of what should be included in draft recommendations and resolutions, ease the reporting of deliverables as well as facilitate their review by other WECAFC bodies, as appropriate. Working Groups should include the following elements when preparing draft recommendations and resolutions to be presented to the WECAFC membership or other WECAFC bodies (e.g. the Scientific Advisory Group or other WECAFC Working Groups).

## **Recommendations and Resolutions**

Draft recommendations and resolutions for review by other WECAFC bodies and the WECAFC membership should include the following elements:

- **Cover Note**: A brief cover note for draft recommendations and/or resolutions should be provided to assist reviewers. The cover note should include a clear, candid, and transparent explanation of:
  - s. why the action was developed;
  - t. at which Working Group meeting it was discussed;
  - u. a brief overview of how the Working Group arrived at its decision to put the action forward;
  - v. how the action will impact future WECAFC activities, including, where relevant any possible changes in resource or workload requirements for Members or the WECAFC Secretariat;
  - w. the ramifications of \*not\* approving the recommended action;
  - x. the full picture of the context for the recommended action.
- **Preambular Text**: This should provide essential elements to highlight the context and intent of the proposed action in a concise bulleted format. The preambular text should include only the core historical elements and should include references to related decisions or measures.
- **Action Text**: This should indicate clearly what action(s) the Working Group is taking, or is asking the WECAFC Membership to take, at a national, subregional, and/or regional level, including specific timelines to which the action(s) will adhere.

Considering that each Working Group can have more than one meeting, and more than one issue to address during each intersessional period, the Working Groups can produce several reports/documents or draft resolutions/recommendations. In order to facilitate analysis by the Commission, each Working Group shall prepare a single set of recommendations and/or resolutions organized by fishery or by theme, including all the topics addressed in the intersessional meetings. In this regard, the Commission would consider a single set of draft recommendations and/or resolutions for spiny lobster, queen conch, flying fish and dolphinfish, FADs, FDS, etc.

The Working Groups shall refer relevant recommendations and resolutions of a scientific nature to the SAG for scientific review at least one month before the meeting of SAG, in order to provide adequate time to the Secretariat and SAG members to review them before the meeting. This will improve the efficiency of the reviews during the SAG sessions.

# **WECAFC/CRFM/JICA/IFREMER Working Group on Fisheries using Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)**

**Convener: Jullan Defoe**

## **Table of Contents**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| WECAFC/CRFM/JICA/IFREMER Working Group on Fisheries using Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)                                   | 152 |
| 1. Introduction and Background  | 162 |
| 2. Objectives   | 162 |
| 3. Main Accomplishments during the Intersession Period (2019-2022)  | 163 |
| 4. Challenges   | 163 |
| 5. Conclusion   | 164 |
| Appendix 1: Recommendations   | 165 |
| Appendix 2: Updated TOR   | 172 |
| I. Background and justification   | 173 |
| II. Role of the Working Group   | 174 |
| a) Scope of the Work  | 174 |
| b) Goal   | 174 |
| c) Tasks/ functions   | 174 |
| d) Membership   | 175 |
| III. Mode of Operation:   | 175 |
| a) Role of Countries  | 175 |
| b) Role of Convener   | 176 |
| c) Election and role of Convener of the Working Group   | 176 |
| d) Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat  | 176 |
| e) Roles of other Subregional organizations (e.g. CFMC, CRFM, ICCAT, OSPESCA, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECS, etc.) | 177 |
| IV. Outputs   | 177 |
| V. Communication  | 178 |
| VI. Working Group meetings and cost   | 178 |



|   |     |
|---|-----|
| VII. Amendments to the Terms of Reference                                   | 178 |
| VIII. Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions                         | 178 |
| Appendix 3: Draft Work Plan 2022-2024 Intersession Period for WECAFC/SAG/XI | 179 |

## **1. Introduction and Background**

In 2001, recognizing the need to exchange information, practices and experiences in the management and exploitation of large pelagic using Moored Fish Aggregating Devices (MFADs), the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) ad hoc Working Group on the Development of Sustainable Development of MFAD fishing in the Lesser Antilles was established and its first meeting held in Martinique. Moored FAD fisheries began to develop in the Caribbean Islands at the end of the 1980s. This activity is still developing in several States. Moored FADs allow small-scale artisanal vessels easier access to offshore large pelagic fishes by aggregating such fishes at fixed locations. The Joint Working Group met for the third time in May 2019 in Puerto Rico and new Terms of Reference (ToR) were proposed, which subsequently endorsed during the 17th Session of WECAFC in July 2019. The 17<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission also endorsed the 3<sup>rd</sup> Working Group (WG) 2019-2020 work plan. This document outlines intersessional activities accomplished by the CRFM/WECAFC/JICA/IFREMER Working Group since the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC (WECAFC17) held 15-18<sup>th</sup> July 2019 in Miami, USA. The current Convener of the Working Group is Mr. Jullan Defoe, the Chief Fisheries Officer from the Commonwealth of Dominica.

These intersessional activities were largely a continuation of Working Group's work plan endorsed by the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC which is supported by an EU-funded project "Support to the Secretariat of WECAFC in implementing targeted actions of the 2019-2020 Workplan on improved regional fisheries governance". Additionally, in February 2021, a review of the ToRs of all the working groups, including the FAD WG was initiated under the coordination of the Secretariat of WECAFC. This led to standardized ToRs endorsed by the Commission members in June which was fulfilled during this period.

## **2. Objectives**

This document summarizes achievements, challenges and lessons learned by the MFAD WG during the period 2019-2021. Implementation of activities was within the context of its Terms of Reference (TOR as enshrined in the report of the Third Meeting of the MFAD WG held held on April 30th- May 2nd 2019 To review data on MFAD fisheries and conduct analyses of pelagic fish resources including through collaboration with the Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group

- To provide technical advice and guidance based on the outputs of the JICA-CARIFICO Project and the Billfish Project
- To collaborate with IFREMER, academia, and other research institutions to encourage pluridisciplinary research on MFADs including ecological, socioeconomic, and governance issues, and to consolidate information on MFAD fisheries in order to accurately characterize MFAD fisheries in the region.
- To develop and finalize manuals on best practices on (1) fishing and business strategies for sustainable MFAD fisheries, (2) safety and working conditions of MFAD fishers, and (3) governance of MFAD fisheries. These manuals should be presented during training sessions with fishers

- To collaborate on co-management within MFADs fisheries, noting the successful examples in Grenada, Dominica, and Bonaire, and strengthen ties with the Recreational Fisheries Working Group
- To collaborate on use of low-cost Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for improved monitoring of MFAD fisheries, noting the promising examples of Dominica and Monserrat and strengthen ties with Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group
- To facilitate the sharing of data, information, and experiences related to MFAD fisheries in the region in collaboration with the Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group
- To facilitate the sharing of information and experiences related to MFAD designs in the region and outside the region
- To facilitate the sharing of data, information, and experiences related to MFAD fisheries in the region in collaboration with the Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group
- To facilitate the sharing of information and experiences related to MFAD designs in the region and outside the region

### **3. Main Accomplishments during the Intersession Period (2019-2022)**

- Third Meeting of the Joint CRFM/WECAFC/JICA/IFREMER Working Group on Development of Sustainable Moored Fish Aggregating Device (MFAD) Fishing
- Fourth Meeting of the Joint CRFM/WECAFC/JICA/IFREMER Working Group on Development of Sustainable Moored Fish Aggregating Device (MFAD) Fishing was held virtually on 14-16 February 2022.
  1. The objectives of the meeting included updating Members on the implementation status of the 2019-2020 workplan prepared by the 3rd WG meeting then got mainstreamed in WECAFC 2019-2020 workplan as endorsed by the 17th Session of the Commission held 15-18 July 2019, Miami, USA.
  2. The objectives of the meeting also included identifying regional needs and priorities, highlight areas for potential collaboration, generate tailored TOR, a work plan and recommendations for the future work of the WG.
  3. The meeting was also an opportunity to share recent development on the MFAD fishery in key member states and share experiences from other regions
  4. Finally, the meeting was also an opportunity for Members to provide input into important background documents before they are submitted to SAG and thereafter WCAFC18. These documents included the WECAFC Regional Caribbean Moored FAD fishery management plan, a guide on local management plan development, and a guide for monitoring of MFADs.

### **4. Challenges**

The prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 did have a negative impact on the development of key deliverables of the working groups such as the WECAFC Regional Caribbean Moored FAD fishery management plan and the guide for monitoring of MFADs. The consultant was unable to conduct in-

country visits which are generally advantageous in providing context to actual situations on the ground. Additionally, the fourth working groups meeting was meant to held in Dominica February 15-16, 2022 face to face or a hybrid however, due to the persistence of the pandemic a decision was taken to hold the meeting virtually. Additionally, finalization of MFAD manuals on best practices on (1) fishing and business strategies for sustainable MFAD fisheries, (2) safety and working conditions of MFAD fishers, and (3) governance of MFAD fisheries were not achieved and will be addressed in this new cycle. Finally, the exit of IFREMER from a leadership role in coordination of the WG is notable. IFREMER had played a leading role since the inception of the WG in 2001 hence, the absence of the vast experience, technical expertise and resources of this agency has created a void.

## **5. Conclusion**

The period in review 2019 – 2022 undoubtedly was overshadowed by the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic notwithstanding, the Working Group was able to produce some key deliverables, namely the WECAFC Regional Caribbean Moored FAD fishery management plan and the guide for monitoring of MFADs. These documents which are aimed towards improving MFAD fishery management in the WECAFC region were well received when presented at the Fourth meeting of the WG held virtually in February 2022. These two key documents are to be submitted to the SAG and WECAFC 18 subsequently. Additionally, hosting of the fourth Working Group meeting provided a platform for members to adequately review and comment on matters pertaining to the working group including the 2022-2024 TOR, workplan and recommendations for WECAFC 18.

## **Appendix 1: Recommendations**

### **(draft) Recommendation WECAFC/XVIII/2022/XX amendment to Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/21 “On the sustainability of fisheries using Moored Fish Aggregating Devices (MFADs) in the WECAFC area”**

#### **Cover note**

The use of Moored Fish Aggregating Devices (MFADs) by small-scale commercial and subsistence fishers has rapidly grown over the last thirty years in the insular Caribbean, contributing to improve fisher livelihoods and incomes and food security by facilitating the capture of large oceanic and coastal pelagic species. However, the development of the MFAD fishery has also brought important challenges at the governance, socio-economic, biological and ecosystem levels, which threaten the long-term profitability of the fishery and the sustainable exploitation of regionally shared stocks.

The proposed action draws largely from previous recommendations from the Joint Working Group on MFADs<sup>12</sup> and from the recent findings of the draft Regional MFAD Fishery Management Plan and the 2015 CRFM Subregional MFAD Fishery Management Plan for the Eastern Caribbean. It seeks to help address some of the most urgent challenges. In particular, it seeks to strengthen the current (formal and informal) national and regional governance frameworks as it recognizes that effective progress on this ground will also facilitate addressing many of the challenges affecting the other dimensions (socio-economic, biological, ecosystem). It also seeks to strengthen national fishery data collection systems and to increase harmonization and integration of data across the region to facilitate assessment of the stock status at the appropriate (regional) scales to better guide management. Finally, it recognizes the need for increased research collaboration across the region to address some of the most pressing issues on MFADs, including developing better MFAD designs to minimize losses, rigorously testing the rarely challenged assumption that MFAD fishing leads to a reduction in coastal fishing pressure, and obtaining fishery-independent data on MFADs that could help supplement fishery-dependent data to generate more reliable estimates of stock abundance for management. Relative to previous actions, this action will likely require an increase in resources and workload allocated to the research component by both WECAFC members and the WECAFC secretariat. Failing to approve this three-pronged action will contribute to promote the *status quo*, which is in practice a largely unregulated MFAD fishery across the region. The *status quo* could lead to an excessive multiplication of MFADs across the region, resulting in increases in marine debris, dilution of economic benefits of MFADs in the race for fish, increases in conflicts among MFAD users, lack of adequate data to help assess stock status, and unsustainable levels of fishing pressure on several species that are already considered to be overexploited.

---

<sup>12</sup> WECAFC (2019) Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/21 amendment to Recommendation WECAFC/15/2014/2 “ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF FISHERIES USING MOORED FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES IN THE WECAFC AREA”

**(draft) Recommendation WECAFC/XVIII/2022/XX amendment to Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/21 “On the sustainability of fisheries using Moored Fish Aggregating Devices (MFADs) in the WECAFC area”**

The use of Moored Fish Aggregating Devices (MFADs) to facilitate the capture of large oceanic and coastal pelagics in the WECAFC region has increased over the last three decades. This has been particularly the case in the insular Caribbean, where MFADs are being primarily used to improve the revenue and livelihoods of small-scale fishers and food security. Recent estimates point to 3,600+ MFAD units deployed across the region, mainly privately owned by fishers, which are being used by 6,200+ fishers and 2,700+ fishing vessels for commercial and/or subsistence purposes<sup>13</sup>. However, the use of MFADs remains largely unregulated across the region, raising challenges in governance and prompting concerns about their impacts on fish stocks and the ecosystem<sup>2</sup>. Challenges in governance include lack of adequate MFAD regulatory frameworks and management plans, potentially leading to conflicts among MFAD users and to the dilution of economic benefits through excessive multiplication of MFADs. Concerns about MFAD impacts on stocks include lack of catch and effort and biological data, disproportionate catches of juvenile tuna and target species considered overexploited (e.g. blue marlin), and the fact that catch per unit effort on MFADs is not a reliable index of stock abundance. Concerns about MFAD impacts on ecosystems include potential accumulation of non-biodegradable marine debris due to MFAD losses and potential incidental entanglement of marine animals.

In response to such concerns, the WECAFC ad hoc Working Group on the Development of Sustainable Development of MFAD fishing in the Lesser Antilles was established in Martinique in 8-10 October 2001 with the main goal of increasing the exchange of information, practices and experiences across the region in the management and exploitation of large pelagics using MFADs.

The second Working Group meeting took place in Guadeloupe in 5-10 July 2004, during which IFREMER shared the results of the DOLPHIN project that described fish aggregations around MFADs in the French Antilles. This meeting led to the later execution of the MAGDELESA project by IFREMER between 2011 and 2014, which generated considerable new knowledge on the MFAD fishery.

Around that same period (2010-2012), JICA and CRFM joined forces to execute a pilot project "*Formulation of a Master Plan on sustainable use of fisheries resources for coastal community development in the Caribbean*" in St Lucia and Dominica. This project sought to build capacity to manage large pelagics fished on MFADs and increase MFAD productivity by focusing on technical aspects of MFAD design, construction, deployment and maintenance. It also promoted a co-management approach to fisheries in which fishers were expected to increase their participation and responsibility in decision making and provision of fisheries data.

In 2012, during the 14<sup>th</sup> WECAFC Session Commission in Panama, the decision was made to continue with the Working Group as a Joint Working Group with IFREMER. In 2013, the experience of the JICA-CRFM pilot project led to the execution of the JICA-CRFM Caribbean Fisheries Co-Management (CARIFICO) Project, which over a five-year period sought to further support the development a co-management approach to MFAD fisheries in Dominica, St Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Grenada. This project contributed to the CRFM-JICA CARIFICO/WECAFC-IFREMER MAGDELESA Workshop on FAD Fishery Management in St Vincent in 9-11

---

<sup>13</sup> Draft Caribbean Regional Management Plan for the Moored Fish Aggregating Device (MFAD) Fishery

December 2013, where it was proposed that the Working Group expand to a Joint Working Group with possible participation of JICA, IFREMER, CRFM and WECAFC.

In 2015, recognizing the need for increased coordination, harmonization, and cooperation across the insular Caribbean on MFAD use, the CRFM led the development of a Sub-regional Management Plan for the MFAD fishery for the Eastern Caribbean.

In April 30<sup>th</sup> -May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019, the Joint JICA, IFREMER, CRFM and WECAFC Working Group on MFADs met for the third time in Puerto Rico; its Terms of Reference (ToR), which were formalized during the Seventeenth Session of WECAFC in July15-18 2019, included the review of the CRFM Sub-Regional Management Plan to adapt it to the broader WECAFC region. As such, in 2021, with the support of the GCP/SLC/217/EC project “*Support to the Secretariat of WECAFC in implementing targeted actions of the 2019-2020 Workplan on improved regional fisheries governance*”, the WECAFC Secretariat coordinated the drafting of the Regional MFAD fishery Management Plan.

Of further relevance, in April 2017, the ICCAT-IATTC-IOTC Joint Tuna-RFMO FAD Working Group met in Madrid and provided significant technological and scientific insights on the use of FADs in tuna fisheries. In June 2020 ICCAT’s 19-02 recommendation entered into force, which amended the Recommendation on a Multi-annual Conservation and Management Program for Bigeye and Yellowfin tunas, and which binds a number of WECAFC and CRFM members in terms of FAD fisheries by industrial fleets catching these tunas.

WECAFC Members recognize that the implementation of adequate MFAD regulation is necessary for sustainable management of the fish stocks and that this should lead to increased employment opportunities and income for their fishing industry and local communities and to better social outcomes by reducing conflicts, improving equity in access to pelagic resources, and safety at sea.

Reaffirming the need for further action by all interested parties to ensure the long-term sustainable use and management of the offshore pelagic fisheries resources in the region based on an ecosystem approach to fisheries that considers proper dimension of regional MFAD fisheries development under conditions of fully utilized resources availability in the WECAFC region, and

Recalling that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by WECAFC members, the following guidance is provided to the Commission.

## **1. Fisheries governance**

*RECOGNIZING* that sustainable development of MFAD fisheries in the WECAFC area provides new opportunities for income generation, livelihoods, and contributes to food security;

*NOTING* the issues on access to resources via MFADs fisheries, and property rights claims and disagreements on MFAD aggregated resources;

*NOTING* that the MFAD fishery in the Lesser Antilles has grown substantially in the last ten years, apparently increasing catches of pelagic species but also catches of vulnerable and already overexploited stocks of species; and adding the need to regulate MFAD numbers and MFAD density to avoid adverse economic consequences;

*ACKNOWLEDGING* the good efforts of various WECAFC members to license MFADs fishers, prepare legislation for MFAD fishery, ensure disaggregated data collection and analysis in terms of MFAD fishery, encourage best-practice design and training in MFAD construction and use, promote safety-at-sea when fishing with MFADs, reduce conflicts over the use of MFAD, notify maritime authorities of MFADs locations, establish co-management regimes for MFAD fishery and promoting the proper maintenance of MFADs;

*REAFFIRMING* also its commitment to promote the use of co-management and other participatory approaches involving all affected parties in the development and implementation of relevant policies and programmes;

*RECOGNIZING* the significant contribution of the CRFM 2015 Sub-regional Management Plan for FAD Fisheries in the Eastern Caribbean and its integration into WECAFC Caribbean Regional Management Plan for the Moored Fish Aggregating Device (MFAD) Fishery, emphasizing on objectives and works necessary to improve MFAD fisheries management in the Caribbean;

*RECOGNIZING* the need of implementing WECAFC Regional management plan for FAD fisheries with critical considerations on the status of exploitation of the targeted resources as dictated by ICCAT and CRFM resource assessments;

*NOTING* the economic impact of natural phenomena, such as strong hurricanes, on the destruction of MFADs and the lack of reporting of MFAD numbers, locations, lifespan and replacement;

*NOTING* the potential of low-cost Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to improve Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) in the MFAD fishery

*ADOPTS* in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the RECOMMENDATION that:

- WECAFC Members prepare (if relevant) national level MFAD fisheries development and MFAD management plans that consider status of exploitation of targeted and bycatch species as determined by ICCAT and CRFM stock assessment results.
- WECAFC Members adopt appropriate legislation in support of a sustainable MFAD fishery adhering to the FAO Code of Conduct if insufficient technical and scientific data are available for proper management of MFADs at this time.
- WECAFC secretariat, CRFM, and OSPESCA, support the regional harmonization of national MFAD technologies and fishing protocols that will secure compatible fishery regulations contained in national fishery management plans and related legislation, in accordance with the best available information (including scientific evidence and local and traditional knowledge) and consistent with international best practices, and present the progress made to the respective regular sessions of these RFBs.

## **2. Data collection and information-sharing**

*NOTING* that the exchange of information between researchers, fisheries managers and fishers on MFADs fishery has improved in recent years and needs to be strengthened;

*FURTHER RECOGNIZING* the need to improve data and information to reduce uncertainties to stock assessment methodologies currently used and to monitor the long-term impacts of these fisheries on



the stocks especially recognizing that MFAD catch rates (CPUE) are indicators of biomass aggregation by MFADs, which may not reflect relative abundance of the wild stocks;

*NOTING* the ongoing effort of the CRFM through its pelagics fisheries Working Group meetings and in collaboration with the CLME+ project, to improve conservation and management of the offshore pelagic resources;

*NOTING* the concerns of the WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries about the billfish stocks in the Caribbean and the untapped value of this resource in terms of catch-and-release fisheries; and considering the noticeable dominance of blue marlin as the most impacted species in MFAD fisheries in the region;

*ACKNOWLEDGING* the potential of low-cost Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to improve fishery data collection and Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) in the MFAD fishery and the good efforts of various WECAFC members to integrate ICT in their MFAD fisheries

*ADOPTS* in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the RECOMMENDATION that:

- WECAFC Members aim to collect and analyze biological, ecological, social and economic data and other scientific literature and information to inform decision making processes on MFAD fisheries;
- WECAFC Members standardize as far as possible MFAD protocols that could generate compatible MFAD fishery statistics using standard terminology (as determined by the Working Group on MFADs) for the different varieties of MFAD fisheries in the WECAFC area and report in an agreed format on their total catch (i.e. landings and discards) and effort data in FAO Area 31 to the Working Group on MFADs in support of ongoing research, decision making and management processes at national and regional level;
- WECAFC members explore integrating the use of ICT systems in their fishery statistic systems to facilitate collection and standardization of catch and effort and biological data;
- WECAFC secretariat, CRFM, and OSPESCA, support a regional MFAD characterization of the impacts and impacts mitigation measures of MFAD fishing in the different regions (within the WECAFC area), and building that regional knowledge into the management decision-making.
- WECAFC support its Members, in the establishment of stakeholder- and public outreach and communication campaigns, in the area including addressing the need to enhance and increase communication of research findings and best practices on MFAD to the fishers and facilitate inputs from stakeholders.

### **3. Research**

*CONSIDERING* the need to conduct more research related to the potential impact of MFADs on the migration patterns, size/age/sex structures and compositions of stocks, change in yields per recruit and other biological effects due to the conspicuous presence of juvenile tuna species in MFADs, as well as on the currently used concept of CPUE for stock assessment and management purposes, co-management options, social and economic aspects, environmental and climate change, fishing techniques and technologies;

CONSIDERING that species diversity associated with MFADs varies according with regions within the WECAFC area as well as seasonality of the catch rates of target and bycatch species<sup>14</sup>;

NOTING research efforts on FADs in other regions to generate fishery-independent data to help provide a more reliable picture of the abundance and composition of stocks;

CONSIDERING that high rates of losses of current MFAD designs likely constitute a significant source of marine debris;

NOTING the increasing uncertainty surrounding the question of whether MFADs help reduce fishing pressure on coastal resources;

ADOPTS in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the RECOMMENDATION that:

- WECAFC members be encouraged to participate in regional research programs to help generate fishery-independent data on key species of interest associated with MFADs;
- WECAFC members be encouraged to partake in research seeking to develop fishing techniques and technologies minimizing impacts on vulnerable and overexploited fish groups;
- WECAFC members be encouraged to partake in research seeking to improve MFAD designs to reduce marine debris, while adhering to minimum standards to reduce entanglement of marine animals;
- WECAFC members be encouraged to partake in research seeing to assess potential links between MFAD fishing and fishing pressure on nearshore/coastal resources.

---

<sup>14</sup> Reviewed in CRFM (2015) 2015 Draft Sub-Regional Management Plan for FAD Fisheries in the Eastern Caribbean (Stakeholder Working Document). CRFM Technical & Advisory Document 2015/ 05



## Appendix 2: Updated TOR

### WORKING GROUPS TERMS OF REFERENCE TEMPLATE

CRFM/WECAFC/JICA/IFREMER Working Group on Moored Fish Aggregating Device (MFAD) fisheries  
[insert date of endorsement of ToRs by Commission]

#### CONTENTS

|       |   |    |
|-------|---|----|
| I.    | <a href="#">Background and justification</a>  | 14 |
| II.   | <a href="#">Role of the Working Group</a>   | 3  |
|       | a) <a href="#">Scope of the Work</a>  | 3  |
|       | b) <a href="#">Goal</a>   | 3  |
|       | c) <a href="#">Tasks/ functions</a>   | 3  |
|       | d) <a href="#">Membership</a>   | 4  |
| III.  | <a href="#">Mode of Operation:</a>  | 4  |
|       | a) <a href="#">Role of Countries</a>  | 4  |
|       | b) <a href="#">Role of Convener</a>   | 4  |
|       | c) <a href="#">Election and role of Convener of the Working Group</a>   | 5  |
|       | d) <a href="#">Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat</a>  | 5  |
|       | e) <a href="#">Roles of other Subregional organizations (e.g. CFMC, CRFM, ICCAT, OSPESCA, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECS, etc.)</a> | 6  |
| IV.   | <a href="#">Outputs</a>   | 6  |
| V.    | <a href="#">Communication</a>   | 6  |
| VI.   | <a href="#">Working Group meetings and cost</a>   | 7  |
| VII.  | <a href="#">Amendments to the Terms of Reference</a>  | 7  |
| VIII. | <a href="#">Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions</a>   | 7  |

## I. Background and justification

Fishery management advice and recommendations, based on the best available scientific information, are provided to WECAFC member countries for their implementation by dedicated Working Groups, established by the Commission.

The Working Groups that were established or confirmed in the subsequent sessions since the 14th session of the Commission in 2012 are the following:

34. OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Caribbean Spiny Lobster
35. CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch
36. WECAFC Working Group on the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries
37. WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries
38. CRFM/WECAFC/JICA/IFREMER Working Group on Fisheries Using fish aggregating devices (FADS)
39. CRFM/WECAFC Working Group on Flyingfish in the Eastern Caribbean (established since the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC as the flyingfish- Dolphinfish WG)
40. WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Northern Brazil-Guianas Shelf
41. CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations
42. Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (RWG-IUU)
43. WECAFC Working Group for the Conservation And Management of Sharks in the Wider Caribbean Region
44. WECAFC/CRFM/OSPESCA Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group (FDS-WG)

Most Working Groups are joint working groups with other regional partner institutions, such as the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), the Organization of Fisheries for the Central American Isthmus (OSPESCA), the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC), the French Research Institute for Exploration of the Sea (IFREMER), etc. Fishery scientists, experts, managers and decision-makers of member countries, Regional partner organizations including academia and NGOs participate in the Working Groups, which have specific terms of reference that are time bound. The data used by the Working Groups to assess the status of fish stocks, to conduct fishery assessments and to generate fishery management advice and recommendations to the Commission are collected by the participating countries and NGOs.

The key drivers behind the establishment of these working groups are the need to collaborate and cooperate in the assessment and management of shared resources; need to standardize data collection and reporting systems to enable assessment of stock status using data and information from a range of countries that target the stock/species/resources throughout their distribution range; need to standardize conservation and management measures for effective management, need for training and capacity building to improve data collection and assessment of the status of fisheries/fish stocks; etc.

In undertaking its work, the Working Group will pay due attention to the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its related guidelines, including the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries especially in regards to livelihoods and food security of communities and value chain stakeholders dependent on sustainable management of these natural resources, as well as their contribution to achieving the targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, namely SDG 1 and 2; 5, 8; 12, 13 and 14, as well as any other agreed international or regional instruments for the

conservation and management of fisheries, and the principles of precautionary, participatory and ecosystem approaches to fisheries management. The activities of the WG are also guided by any specific regional or international fisheries management or related obligations and initiatives or instruments of relevance to the respective resources associated with the specific WG – e.g. any FMPs, Declarations, agreed CMMs, regional strategies, regulations, etc.

## **II. Role of the Working Group**

### **i) Scope of the Work**

The scope of each Working Group is to provide scientific and management advice for the sustainable management, conservation and development of living marine resources in the area of competence of WECAFC. This includes the development and support to national and regional plans of action in order to regulate target and bycatch fisheries, as well as manage existing populations within the region. Using a multidisciplinary approach, the working group will contribute to the sustainable management by providing management advice to Members of WECAFC based on the best available scientific knowledge/evidence and traditional/local ecological knowledge

In pursuing this goal, the Working Group will contribute to the fulfilment of national and regional responsibilities for the marine environment and for the management of [pelagic oceanic and coastal fish resources harvested using Moored Fish Aggregating Devices \(MFADs\) - including large and small tuna, swordfish, billfishes, dolphinfish, and mackerels](#) - and related or interacting species or fisheries in the WECAFC Region.

### **j) Goal**

The goal of each Working Group is to inform and provide guidance for the management of living marine resources in WECAFC members in such a manner as to promote transformation to responsible fisheries that provide economic opportunities, food security and human nutrition, secure social wellbeing while ensuring the conservation of living marine resources and the protection of marine biodiversity.

### **k) Tasks/ functions**

The Working Group will:

- Collect, review and share the existing (past and present) data and information on the MFAD fishery in the WECAFC area, involving the fishers and private sector, in addition to identifying the potential for sustainable management and development of such fisheries in the region.
- Analyze the data and information collected from MFAD fisheries and make recommendations for the sustainability of the fisheries in the WECAFC region.
- Promote the reporting of MFADs fisheries statistics to ICCAT.
- Facilitate the sharing of data, information, and experiences related to MFAD fisheries in the region in collaboration with the Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group and the Recreational Fisheries Working Group.

- Monitor changes in distribution and abundance of species pelagic oceanic and coastal fish species harvested using MFADs, including large and small tuna, swordfish, billfishes, dolphinfish, and mackerels - in the WECAFC region.
- Develop common and feasible methodologies for assessment and monitoring of the fish stock especially in data poor fisheries.
- Collaborate with academia and other research institutions to gain knowledge on the biology of key pelagic oceanic and coastal fish species harvested using MFADs and on relevant socioeconomic and governance aspects of such fisheries to improve management.
- Seek partnerships with other institutions that could provide assistance in the monitoring, evaluation, and recommendations for management for sustainable use, protection and conservation of the resources
- Seek partnerships with other institutions that could aid with the implementation of local/national level MFAD fishery management plans and co-management arrangements.
- Monitor and provide advice on the management and implementation of regional strategies, regulations and management plans to protect the fish resources.
- Establish communication between the members of the Working Group, other Working Groups and relevant parties on issues of common interest in order to strengthen regional collaboration in the assessment and management of living marine resources.
- Report to the Commission and contribute to communication and visibility of the deliverables of the Working Group as may be needed.
- Identify needs of communities dependent on the MFAD fishery resources and investigate alternative livelihoods from fisheries and aquaculture (recreational fishing, hospitality and tourism, etc.)

## I) Membership

Membership of the Working Group shall consist of all Member States of CRFM and WECAFC, OSPESCA, including overseas territories and Departments.

### III. Mode of Operation:

#### a) Role of Countries

The members of the Working Group will play a leading role in its activities through the following activities and commitments:

- Participate in agreed activities of the Working Group, and ensure the participation of appropriate experts;
- Implement, at the National level, the work identified in the WECAFC endorsed work plan (as appropriate);
- Report on implementation of agreed conservation and management measures
- Assist with mobilization of resources for the activities of the Working Group;
- Facilitate the organization of Working Group meetings in the languages of the Commission
- Host Working Group meetings on a rotational basis;

- Facilitate the identification of the Convener of the Working Group.

### **b) Role of Convener**

The Convener of the Working Group will play a leading role during the organization of the meetings and subsequent follow up with the Secretariat of WECAFC by coordinating the inputs of the members of the Working Group. The Convener should:

- Seek experts from among the WECAFC Members, contact potential partner organizations, and solicit their interest to join in the Working Group;
- Call for meetings as appropriate;
- Ensure that technical contributions are received in a timely manner and in the appropriate format;
- Ensure that outputs are delivered as agreed during each meeting;
- Collaborate closely with FAO-WECAFC and other sub-regional and regional organizations as appropriate;
- Assist in the preparation and publication process of the proceedings of the Working Group meeting;
- Participate (in person or virtually) at the SAG meetings to present the draft working documents and provide any clarifications as required;
- Facilitate the review by the Working Group membership within a reasonable period of time (max. 15 days) on suggested edits or modifications as considered necessary to address the comments of the SAG and the return of the revised document to the WECAFC Secretariat for distribution and consideration by the Commission;
- Participate in the Commission's sessions (physically or virtually) if required, to support the Secretariat in clarifying or substantiating some points of the draft working documents;
- Assist in the relevant processes to gather information in support of seeking funds to implement priority activities of the Working Group.

### **c) Election and role of Convener of the Working Group**

- The Working Group shall elect a Convener from among its Members to serve over a two-year period. The term of office of the Convener may be extended as determined appropriate. In the case where another qualified Convener is not available, the Convener's term may be renewed for an additional two-year term until another Convener is selected.

### **d) Roles of the FAO/WECAFC Secretariat**

The FAO/WECAFC Secretariat will play a supporting role in the activities of the Working Group by assisting in:

- Coordinating activities of the Working Group, among WECAFC and Non-WECAFC Members, at the wider regional level (including facilitate procurement of funding);
- Assisting with logistical arrangements for the convening of meetings of the Working Group;



- Providing technical assistance, such as a technical secretary or research support, if needed and as resources permit;
- Liaising with other Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) active in the Wider Caribbean Region and neighboring areas for their engagement as much as possible in the work of the Working Group; these RFBs include amongst others OSPESCA, CRFM, CFMC, ICCAT, NAFO, NEAFC, CECAF, COPPESAALC, etc;
- Liaising with other relevant regional and international organizations as appropriate, such as the Sargasso Sea Commission, SPAW Protocol, etc;
- Coordinating the formulation and adoption of recommendations and/or resolutions and reports/documents by the Working Group so as to facilitate the decision-making process by the Commission;
- Ensuring the strategic linkage between the work of the Working Group and programmes and projects hosted to support the fisheries and healthy ecosystems framework of the CLME+ and any future phase of this project;
- Facilitating training and collaboration of WECAFC Member States and sub-regional training institutions as appropriate and based on available resources.

#### **e) Roles of other Subregional organizations (e.g. CFMC, CRFM, ICCAT, OSPESCA, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, NOAA, CARICOM, OECS, etc.)**

Sub-regional organizations have an important role to play in assisting their member countries to participate fully in the activities of the Working Group. Therefore, they may be invited to:

- Provide expertise, technical assistance and support;
- Facilitate procurement of funding when possible;
- Collaborate in implementing the activities of the Working Group;
- Collaborate with the WECAFC Secretariat and sub-regional organizations in coordinating the activities of the Working Group;
- Facilitate the decision-making process at the Sub-regional level.

#### **IV. Outputs**

In discharging its duties, the Working Group will deliver the following outputs:

- Biennial Work Plans;
- Reports on assessment and monitoring of the status of fish stocks;
- Draft Fisheries Management Plans;
- Draft Regional Plans of Actions;
- Proposed Recommendations and Resolutions to the Commission,
- Revised TORs as needed

## **V. Communication**

A mechanism for on-going communication among Working Group members (video conference, Skype, zoom meeting and email), is essential to ensure that the work of the group is sustained between meetings. It must include all Working Group members and the communication tools must be accessible to all Working Group members.

The successful functioning of the Working Group also requires that each member country and organization/ agency identify a national node or focal point who will be contacted through the WECAFC National Focal Point and technically coordinate at national level all matters pertinent to the WG. The outputs of the Working Group will be communicated through working group reports to WECAFC, OSPESCA, CFMC, CRFM, CITES, UNEP-CEP, ICCAT, IFREMER, and national fishery administrations via the WECAFC Secretariat.

## **VI. Working Group meetings and cost**

The Working Group should meet physically or virtually on a regular basis, the timing of which is decided by the members, but at a minimum once every two years. The meetings should be of 2-5 days' duration. The meetings should use cost effective accommodations and institutional facilities and where possible take advantage of other meetings in the region. Meetings shall be chaired by the Convener of the Working Group. The reports of the meetings will be formally submitted to OSPESCA, WECAFC, CFMC and CRFM, ICCAT, CITES, UNEP-CEP, IFREMER, Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Network, etc.

## **VII. Amendments to the Terms of Reference**

Amendment of these terms of reference may be done at each biennial meeting of the Commission for implementation by the working groups in the subsequent intersessional period.

## **VIII. Templates for Recommendations and Resolutions**

[Standardized templates will ensure a common understanding of what should be included in draft recommendations and resolutions, ease the reporting of deliverables as well as facilitate their review by other WECAFC bodies, as appropriate. Working Groups should include the following elements when preparing draft recommendations and resolutions to be presented to the WECAFC membership or other WECAFC bodies (e.g. the Scientific Advisory Group or other WECAFC Working Groups).

### **Recommendations and Resolutions**

Draft recommendations and resolutions for review by other WECAFC bodies and the WECAFC membership should include the following elements:

- **Cover Note**: A brief cover note for draft recommendations and/or resolutions should be provided to assist reviewers. The cover note should include a clear, candid, and transparent explanation of:
  - y. why the action was developed;
  - z. at which Working Group meeting it was discussed;
  - aa. a brief overview of how the Working Group arrived at its decision to put the action forward;

- bb. how the action will impact future WECAFC activities, including, where relevant any possible changes in resource or workload requirements for Members or the WECAFC Secretariat;
- cc. the ramifications of \*not\* approving the recommended action;
- dd. the full picture of the context for the recommended action.

- **Preambular Text:** This should provide essential elements to highlight the context and intent of the proposed action in a concise bulleted format. The preambular text should include only the core historical elements and should include references to related decisions or measures.
- **Action Text:** This should indicate clearly what action(s) the Working Group is taking, or is asking the WECAFC Membership to take, at a national, subregional, and/or regional level, including specific timelines to which the action(s) will adhere.

Considering that each Working Group can have more than one meeting, and more than one issue to address during each intersessional period, the Working Groups can produce several reports/documents or draft resolutions/recommendations. In order to facilitate analysis by the Commission, each Working Group shall prepare a single set of recommendations and/or resolutions organized by fishery or by theme, including all the topics addressed in the intersessional meetings. In this regard, the Commission would consider a single set of draft recommendations and/or resolutions for spiny lobster, queen conch, flying fish and dolphinfish, FADs, FDS, etc.

The Working Groups shall refer relevant recommendations and resolutions of a scientific nature to the SAG for scientific review at least one month before the meeting of SAG, in order to provide adequate time to the Secretariat and SAG members to review them before the meeting. This will improve the efficiency of the reviews during the SAG sessions.

### Appendix 3: Draft Work Plan 2022-2024 Intersession Period for WECAFC/SAG/XI

| Activity   | Timetable | Responsible Entity   |
|--|-----------|--|
| 17. To review data on MFAD fisheries and conduct analyses of pelagic fish resources including through collaboration with the Fisheries Data and Statistics Working | Ongoing   | Convener with CRFM, OSPESCA, WECAFC Secretariat, and IFREMER |
| 18. To provide technical advice and guidance based on the outputs of the JICA-CARIFICO Project and the Billfish Project  | 2022-2023 | WECAFC Members, CRFM, and OSPESCA                            |
| 19. To collaborate with IFREMER, academia, and other research institutions on the use of   | 2022-2023 | Convener with CRFM, OSPESCA, WECAFC                          |

|   |           |  |
|---|-----------|--|
| technology on MFADs (e.g. satellite-linked echosounders) for improved assessment of abundance of key fish stocks associated with MFAD fisheries   |           | <i>Secretariat, and IFREMER</i>  |
| 20. To develop and finalize manuals on best practices on (1) fishing and business strategies for sustainable MFAD fisheries, (2) safety and working conditions of MFAD fishers, and (3) governance of MFAD fisheries. These manuals should be presented during training sessions with fishers | 2022-2024 | <i>Convener with CRFM, OSPESCA, WECAFC Secretariat, and IFREMER</i>  |
| 21. To promote the reporting of MFADs fisheries statistics to ICCAT   | 2022-2024 | <i>CRFM, WECAFC Secretariat, and IFREMER</i>   |
| 22. To develop and finalize manuals on best practices on (1) fishing and business strategies for sustainable MFAD fisheries, (2) safety and working conditions of MFAD fishers, and (3) governance of MFAD fisheries. These manuals should be presented during training sessions with fishers | 2022-2024 | <i>WECAFC Members</i>  |
| 23. To promote the reporting of MFADs fisheries statistics to ICCAT   | 2022-2024 | <i>OSPESCA, CRFM, and WECAFC Secretariat</i>   |
| 24. To collaborate on co-management within MFADs fisheries, noting the successful examples in Grenada, Dominica, and Bonaire, and strengthen ties with the Recreational Fisheries Working Group   | 2022-2024 | <i>CRFM with assistance of CFMC, OSPESCA, and relevant fisherfolk organizations and National Fishery Authorities</i> |
| 25. To collaborate on use of low-cost Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for improved monitoring of MFAD fisheries, noting the promising examples of Dominica and Monserrat and strengthen ties with Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group                                  | 2022-2023 | <i>WECAFC Secretariat and Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group</i>  |

|  |                  |   |
|--|------------------|---|
| <p><b>26. To facilitate the sharing of data, information, and experiences related to MFAD fisheries in the region in collaboration with the Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group</b></p>                                | <p>2022-2023</p> | <p><i>CRFM with assistance of CFMC, OSPESCA, and relevant fisherfolk organizations and National Fishery Authorities</i></p> |
| <p><b>27. To facilitate the sharing of information and experiences related to MFAD designs in the region and outside the region</b></p>  | <p>2022-2023</p> | <p><i>WECAFC Secretariat and Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group</i></p>  |
| <p><b>28. To review and finalize the Regional Management Plan for MFAD Fisheries in the Caribbean, the guide for improved monitoring of MFADs, and the guide for implementation of local MFAD fishery management plans</b></p> | <p>Q2 2022</p>   | <p><i>WECAFC Secretariat</i></p>  |
| <p><b>29. To support Members' efforts to develop (sub-) national FAD (co-)management plans and improved monitoring systems for MFADs</b></p>   | <p>2022-2023</p> | <p><i>OSPESCA, CRFM, and WECAFC Secretariat, WECAFC members</i></p>   |