



**2023 ASFA Advisory Board Meeting**

Bangkok, Thailand

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**ASFA/2023/5**

**FAO ASFA Secretariat report**

# FAO ASFA Secretariat Report

This report presents to the ASFA Advisory Board the activities of the FAO ASFA Secretariat for the intersessional period 2022/23 (1 September 2022 – 31 August 2023). A summary of key areas for ASFA is presented with links to documents which contain further information. Items on which the Advisory Board is required to vote are highlighted throughout the report.

Whilst improvements have been made to areas such as software and technologies, the overall future of ASFA is not secured. Input from Partners is insufficient to justify the ongoing maintenance costs of OpenASFA and financial situation means the ASFA Trust Fund is unlikely to sustain current levels of expenditure beyond 2025. The 2023 Advisory Board Meeting represents a final chance for Partners to shape ASFA in a way that will secure its long term future. A failure to make necessary changes risks the future of ASFA beyond 2025, therefore all ASFA Partners, Collaborating Centres and Associates are encouraged to participate in either virtual or in person meetings to ensure their ideas, needs and skills help to shape a successful future for ASFA.

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## ASFA Partnership

### 1.1 ASFA Partners, Collaborating Centres and Associated Institutions

This section provides an overview of the ASFA Partnership and changes that have taken place during the intersession period.



The current ASFA Partnership, as of August 2023, is comprised of 148 institutions that are categorized into UN co-sponsoring partners (4), international partners (10), national partners (51), publishing partner – ProQuest (1), collaborating centres (49), and associated institutions (33).

Out of 62 international and national ASFA partners, only 32 (52 percent) partners were active during the period from July 2022 to June 2023) – by active it is meant that the partner is registered on OpenASFA and submitted input, participated in the working groups and training sessions, responded to the surveys or contributed to the ASFA Magazine.

Five international partners and 20 national ASFA partners were inactive during the intersessional period, most of these partners are not registered on OpenASFA (for the details see document ASFA/2023/4).

As of August 2023, the total number of ASFA **collaborating centres** is 49, which includes two collaborating centres in Africa (1 in Kenya; 1 - Senegal); 16 – in Asia and the Pacific (7 in Philippines, 2 – Indonesia, 2 – SEAFDEC, 2 – Japan, 2 – Malaysia, 1 – India); 21 – in Europe (13 in Russia, 4 – Poland, 2 – AdriaMed (in Croatia & Montenegro), 1 – France, 1 – Ukraine); and 10 – in Latin America (3 in Chile, 3 – Ecuador, 3 – Cuba, 1 – Brazil). More than a half of the collaborating centres were inactive during the intersessional period with only 19 centres (ADRIAMED (1), France (1), India (1), Malaysia (1), Philippines (3), Poland (2), Russia (9), and Senegal (1) created records.

There are two new collaborating centres in Ecuador which are yet to be trained in creating the OpenASFA records: (1) Universidad del Pacifico and (2) Universidad Península de Santa Elena (UPSE). Two other collaborating centres in Ecuador, Oceanographic Institute of the Navy (INOCAR) and Pontificia Universidad Católica/Extension Bahia de Caráquez, have been removed from the list in 2023.

Iranian collaborating centre - Kish International Campus, Tehran University – has also been removed from the list at the request of IFSRI.

New ASFA Focal Points were nominated at WorldFish Center (Mr Chua Seong Lee, yet to be trained); Fisheries Resources Institute (Japan Fisheries Research and Education Agency, FRA, Japan (Mr Shinichiro Oka retired in March 2023; New ASFA Focal Point – Mr Kotaro Yokawa) and at Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) (Mr Elijah Mokaya; Mr Raphael Okeyo retired from KMFRI-Kisumu).

The total number of **ASFA Associates** (as of August 2023) is 33. A survey to evaluate the success of the ASFA Associates Scheme was conducted in April 2023 and completed by 12 (36 percent) of ASFA Associates. Comparing with the similar Survey conducted by the ASFA Secretariat in 2022

(completed by 55 percent of ASFA Associates), this year's survey revealed lower reporting activity by Associates but indicated some increase (from two in 2022 to four in 2023) in Associates using OpenASFA to create records. The following four associated institutions have registered on OpenASFA and created records:

1. Sakhalin Branch of VNIRO, Russia – 32 OpenASFA records created
2. Centre National de Recherche et de Développement de la Pêche et de l'Aquaculture (CNRDPA ), Algeria – 18 OpenASFA records created
3. NIIEV - Krasnoyarsk branch of VNIRO, Russia – 3 ASFA records created
4. Kerch State Maritime Technological University, Russia - 9 OpenASFA records created

Due to the low response to the surveys and overall low activity of the Associated institutions, the scheme will be discontinued in its current form. All current, active ASFA Associates will be changed to either Collaborating Centres, at the National Partners approval, or encouraged to sign the new Partnership Agreement when it is ready. Inactive and any new Associates will no longer receive complimentary access to the ASFA database on ProQuest and will be required to be active on OpenASFA (submitted at least 20 records) before access to the ASFA database on ProQuest will be granted.

***Vote: ASFA Advisory Board to vote on changes to Associates scheme: Associates will no longer have complimentary access to the ASFA database on ProQuest but will instead join the ASFA mailing list and be invited to participate in trainings and meetings. Only when a minimum of 20 OpenASFA records are created by an Associate institute, will the institute be invited to become either a Partner or Collaborating Centre, and access to the database therefore be granted.***

### 1.2 Regional networks

The ASFA partnership is organized into five ASFA regional networks comprised of the ASFA centres (partners, collaborating centres and associated institutions) in: Africa, Asia & Pacific, Europe, Latin America and Caribbean and North America. There is also a separate group of UN co-sponsoring partners which includes FAO, UN/DOALOS, UNESCO-IOC, and UNEP. The ASFA Secretariat has compiled regional compendiums for Africa, Asia & Pacific, Europe, Latin America & Caribbean and North America networks. These compendiums are to be presented to the Advisory Board for feedback and provide discussion points for each group in what the priority areas and activities should be for each network. Depending on feedback, the compendiums can be published at FAO later in 2023/early 2024.

Each regional network had a virtual meeting in 2023 to review the progress with the regional input into the OpenASFA and to discuss other regional initiatives and activities. At those meetings the ASFA Secretariat provided a summary of activity levels across the region and highlighted the ways for the network participants to contribute to ASFA, such as: (1) suggesting a repository for harvesting for those struggling to maintain manual input, (2) contributing to the ASFA Vocabulary; and (3) contributing to the OpenASFA Impact study.

Africa and Latin American and Caribbean networks have an elected chairperson (Africa – Alice Endra and Saida Messaoudi; Latin America – Gabi Silvoni). Asia and the Pacific – Daryl Superio (Northern Iloilo State University, Philippines); European network continues to function without the Chair;

At the 2023 Advisory Board meeting, a summary of activity levels across each region will be presented. As Africa and Latin America and Caribbean has seen the lowest levels of activity, the FAO ASFA Secretariat proposes to make these target regions in 2024 and proposes the following:

- Chairpersons of both Africa and Latin America and Caribbean networks to be hired on ten-day contracts to support the work of the FAO ASFA Secretariat in: recruiting new centres; promoting ASFA in the region; conducting training and outreach with relevant institutions; support project work in the region. These short-term consultancies will be designed to increase the number of ASFA centres and number of records created by each region. The success of this programme will be

measured against agreed targets and if targets can be reached, similar consultancies can be extended to Asia, Europe and North America networks.

***Vote: Advisory Board to vote on whether to approve 10-day consultancies for Chairs of the Africa and Latin America and Caribbean networks which will support the work of the ASFA Secretariat and increase ASFA's presence in the regions.***

ASFA Trust Fund projects: the FAO ASFA Secretariat proposes three Trust Fund projects. The first, to be conducted in Europe will focus on building a collection of resources related to European freshwaters; the second and third will see an extension of the FAO-SEAFDEC project to collect research and datasets related to SDG indicator 14.4.1 – proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels. For further details on these projects, see documents: ASFA/2023/12, 13 and 14.

### *1.3 Working Groups and Committees*

ASFA has three established working groups:

**Impact and Strategies Committee:** M. Montes (UNAM) - Chair; E. Kulakova (VNIRO) – Co-chair; Members: S. Messaoudi (INSTM); A. Endra (NaFIRRI); P. McCoy (ProQuest); M. Shahrulnizam (UMT); I. Fey (NMFRI); G. Silvoni (INIDEP); N. Gaibor (IPIAP); A. Pacey (NAFO); D. Superio (NISU); V. Hau (CIS); I. Pettman (FBA); T. Vicary (FAO); P. Pissierssens (UNESCO/IOC-IODE); The group had a meeting in April 2023 and was tasked to (1) provide a feedback on two surveys (The survey on aquatic sciences and fisheries information user needs and the survey on benefits to participating in ASFA) drafted by the ASFA Secretariat; (2) to assist with reviewing translated versions of the surveys and disseminating the surveys at their institutions and networks; (3) to provide input to assessing options for merging with AquaDocs or sharing services.

#### *Survey on user needs*

ASFA first conducted a survey on the information needs of the fisheries and aquatic sciences sector in November-December 2018. This survey received 568 responses from 49 countries. A major conclusion of the survey was that ASFA can improve on its provision of full text and grey literature, as well as finding ways to increase access to the database.

The decision to update and recirculate this survey was taken in order to see what progress ASFA had made in meeting user needs and what impact the covid pandemic had on how users searched for information. The survey was translated into four other official FAO languages (Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish) and disseminated in June 2023. The survey resulted in 154 responses, significantly down on the 2018 total. Results of the survey are summarised in the document ASFA/2023/8 and used to inform changes to ASFA's Business Model.

Whilst virtual meetings of the Impact and Strategies Committee were productive with insightful discussions held on these topics and ASFA's overall direction, progress on each of the above matters has been carried out by the ASFA Secretariat, with little input from Committee members. Given the changes being proposed in the Partnership Agreement and the replacement of the Advisory Board with a smaller Steering Committee, it is proposed that the Impact and Strategies Committee cease with its responsibilities undertaken instead by the Steering Committee.

***Vote: Advisory Board to approve the cessation of the Impact and Strategies Committee with responsibilities passed to the ASFA Steering Committee.***

#### *Summary of discussion at the group meeting.*

Following the 15-minute presentation a useful discussion was held. The main points can be summarised as:

- Impact assessment (and surveys) should consider new features users would find useful from OpenASFA. These could include bespoke collections, for example all records created by a certain institution or on a particular topic.
- The question ‘What would happen if ASFA ceased to exist?’ should again be asked, in particular to institutions in regions where ASFA input is low. Difficulties in gaining long-term, continuous contribution from institutions is experienced by AquaDocs and ASFA. In many cases institutions are active whilst receiving funding for a project but then activity ceases when funding is no longer available. In some ways, ASFA has funded work of partners in the past by rewarding active partners with funded travel and attendance at the meeting however this is no longer sustainable so other incentives for contributing are needed.
- Incentives for contributing could be formulated by UN ASFA partners (IODE, FAO, UN DOALOS and possibly UNEP) who are in a position to explain the necessity of investing in information management at an institutional level, in terms of SDG reporting commitments and also to ensure free flow of information. Joint work from UN partners could also help to raise the profile of librarians which is a challenge at many institutions. A toolkit or other resources to enable librarians to demonstrate their value and raise their profile could be developed. UNEP could be re-contacted regarding this work.
- The UN Ocean Decade presents the opportunity for AquaDocs and ASFA to demonstrate their value. The over 300 Decade actions should deposit documents on AquaDocs. Existing resources on AquaDocs and OpenASFA (e.g. SDG 14.4.1 collection) are further ways to demonstrate the value of these system and lead to market opportunities/ further work in this area. As such, the Decade is a useful test case for OpenASFA and AquaDocs to position and market themselves as the products to use to make ocean/ aquatic science research freely available and avoid creation of products designed to meet specific/ short term information requirements.
- Likewise countries’ reporting commitments on SDGs are to make their information available and OpenASFA / AquaDocs could be platforms for doing so.
- Marketing efforts are time consuming and require expertise ASFA Secretariat does not necessarily have, therefore combining efforts with AquaDocs may result in a stronger position. Marketing and resources of ASFA Secretariat should also be considered in the impact assessment. The Ocean Decade may also have expertise for assisting with marketing and communications support.

**(2) ASFA Vocabularies Working Group:** G. Silvoni (INIDEP) – Co-chair, D. Superio (SEAFDEC/NISU) – Co-chair, T. Vicary (FAO), I. Pettman (FBA), P. McCoy (ProQuest), E. Kulakova (VNIRO) and B. Bazi (INRH);

Alignment with AGROVOC has been completed and the Working Group is now focusing on updating the thesaurus with new concepts. The Group meets regularly to review suggested subject keywords. Around 30 new concepts are being added to the ASFA Thesaurus each month. The ASFA Secretariat has started to publish monthly updates on the ASFA website highlighting new terms added, with the aim to explain the importance of key fisheries and aquaculture terms being added. A toolkit for Working Group is being prepared to ease participation and explain importance of vocabulary work.

Tamsin Vicary (FAO) attended 6th Annual AGROVOC Editorial Community Meeting in July 2023 with presentation “Engaging AFSA partners and subject matter experts to update the ASFA Thesaurus”.

**(3) ASFA Software Working Group:** A. Pacey- Chair (NAFO); T. Vicary (FAO); G. Silvoni (INIDEP); P. McCoy (ProQuest); I. Pettman (FBA); D. Superio (NISU).

The group members were involved in testing new features of the OpenASFA and met on an as needs basis to review new features and provide feedback on OpenASFA. A meeting in November 2023 highlighted improvements to the management of authors and editors as a priority area for the group however it has not yet been possible to find time to work on this. Whilst the work has a chair and

members, meetings are open to all OpenASFA users to attend and in that sense, it can be said the group has adopted a fluid membership.

**For full information and details on the ASFA Partnership, see the following papers:**

Full list and contact details of all ASFA Partners	<b>ASFA/2023/Info-1</b>
Summary of the Associates Survey	<b>ASFA/2023/7</b>
Summary of the Survey on aquatic sciences and fisheries information user needs	<b>ASFA/2023/8</b>
2022 Africa regional compendium	<b>ASFA/2023/16</b>
2022 Asia & Pacific regional compendium	<b>ASFA/2023/17</b>
2022 Europe regional compendium	<b>ASFA/2023/18</b>
2022 Latin America regional compendium	<b>ASFA/2023/19</b>
2022 North America regional compendium	<b>ASFA/2023/20</b>

## 1. Input by Partners and Reporting

Input prepared by ASFA partners during the periods January to December 2022 and January to June 2023 is presented in the meeting document ASFA/2023/4. In 2022, a total of **11 473** OpenASFA records were created, of which 10 263 was a regular input and 1 210 – records created by FAO-SEAFDEC project participants. In the first half of 2023 (January-June), a total number of OpenASFA records created was **5 573** which is slightly higher than a number of records created for the same period in 2022 (5 059). Records created by ASFA partners are freely available to search on the FAO platform.

The records are exported to the ASFA database on ProQuest platform, based on the List of Serial Titles agreed between the ASFA Secretariat and ProQuest (as of August 2023, a total of 798 Serial titles are included in this list). A total number of OpenASFA records added to ProQuest DB is 21 509 (8 928 – journal article records, 11 554 – book records, and 1 027 – chapter records) – as of 05 September 2023.

The FAO ASFA Secretariat continues to monitor monthly input by the regions and includes regional input statistics in the Secretariat's updates. In general, input activity decreased in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and North America but increased in Europe and Latin America. Europe remains the most active region, however mainly thanks to the UK partner (2 260 OpenASFA records were created by FBA, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in 2022 and 1 219 – in January-June 2023).

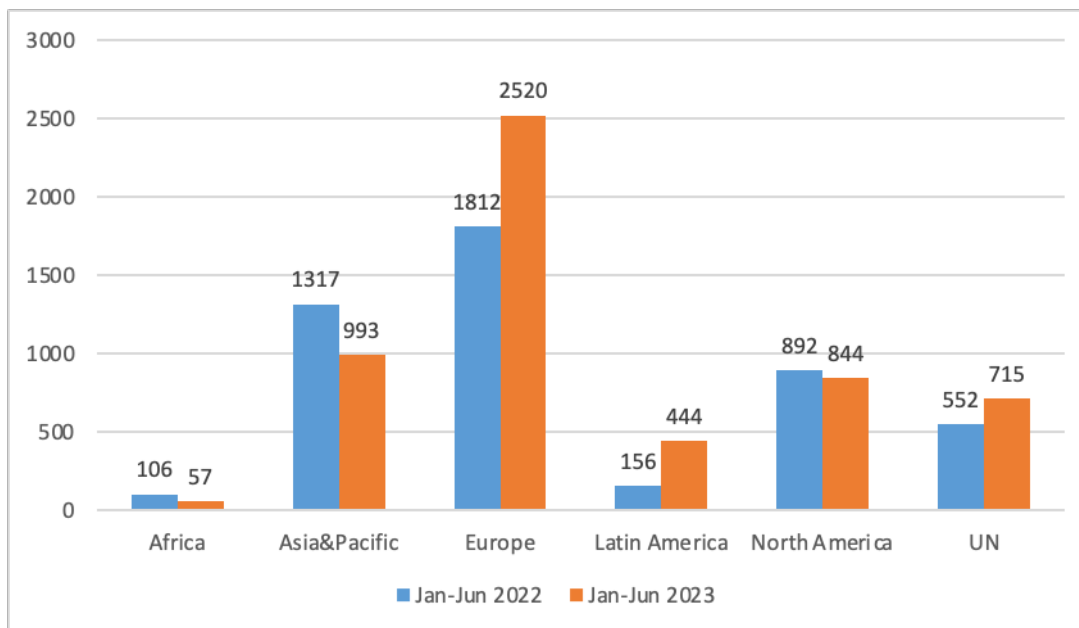


Figure... Input by regions in 2022 and 2023 (first 6 months)

In the first half of 2023, input activity in Africa remained extremely low - 57 records created by three national partners (Nigeria, Tunisia and Uganda) and one associated institution in Algeria (Centre National de Recherche et de Développement de la Pêche et l'Aquaculture (CNRDPA)). Of 16 national and international ASFA partners in Africa, eight are inactive (50 percent) – meaning they are not registered on OpenASFA and therefore not producing any input.

Input from Latin America has seen an increase compared to 2022 (from 156 records created in January – June 2022 to 444 records created in the same period 2023), however several previously active partners in the region – Chile, Cuba, Ecuador – have not created any records or created just a couple of records (Argentina). Two out of nine (22 percent) national and international ASFA partners in Latin America are not registered on OpenASFA.

Input from Asia and the Pacific, comparing to the same period in 2022, is down from 1 317 in January–June 2022 to 993 in January–June 2023, with Japan and China remaining most productive ASFA partners in terms of a number of OpenASFA records they create. Six out of 17 (35 percent) national and international ASFA partners in Asia and Pacific are inactive.

Input from Europe has increased, comparing to the same period in 2022: 1 812 OpenASFA records created in January–June 2022; 2 520 – in January–June 2023, mainly, thanks to ADRIAMED, ICCAT, and CFRI, Turkey. FBA, UK (1 219 records created in January–June 2023) and VNIRO, Russia (501 records created in January–June 2023) remain biggest contributors to the OpenASFA in the region. Seven out of 17 (41 percent) national and international ASFA partners in Europe are inactive.

North American input is maintained at the same level with 892 records created in January–June 2022 and 844 – in January–June 2023;

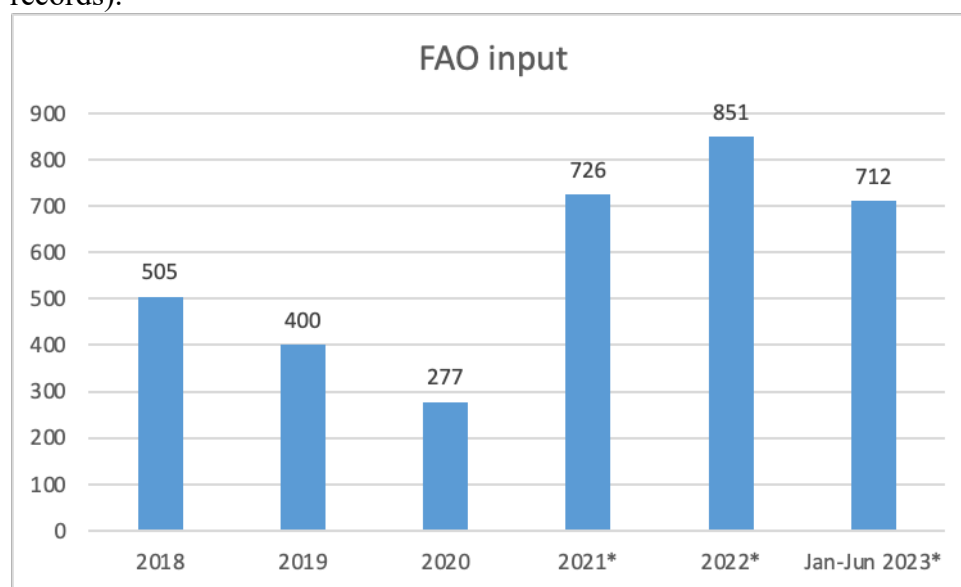
UN input has slightly increased (from 552 records created in January–June 2022 to 715 – in January–June 2023).

Region	Number of OpenASFA records created						Total
	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	
Africa	11	8	6	7	13	12	57
Asia & Pacific	76	132	223	167	171	224	993
Europe	548	377	400	376	650	169	2 520
Latin America	161	62	54	79	39	49	444
North America	179	121	121	150	134	139	844
UN	58	121	103	147	183	103	715
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1033</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>907</b>	<b>926</b>	<b>1190</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>5573</b>

### 2.1 Input by FAO

The total number of records created by FAO during the intersessional period is 1 066 (incl. 354 records created during the period July–December 2022 and 712 records - during the period Jan-Jun 2023). The Secretariat also reviewed, updated and approved records created by Bangladesh, Colombia, India, Iran and Kenya.

The input by FAO has increased and, in addition to regular input covering publications by FAO, included records created for special projects and collections, such as CECAF-PESCAO (442 OpenASFA records). CARICOM (84 OpenASFA records), ALDFG collection (61 OpenASFA records).



*Input by FAO during the period 2019-2023 (\*total number includes regular input and records created for special projects)*

All ASFA partners, collaborating centres and associated institutions were invited to report on their intersessional activities by completing the survey which was open from 16 August to 15 September 2023. The survey also included questions on benefits to participating in ASFA. The summary of the ASFA Partner Reports is provided in document ASFA/2023/6.

**For full information and details on the ASFA Partnership and Partners' input and reporting, see the following papers:**

Summary of ASFA Partner Reports	ASFA/2023/6
Contributions by ASFA partners	ASFA/2023/4

## 2. ASFA Policy and Strategies



This section deals with ASFA Policies, funding and administrative changes that have taken place during the intersession period, foremost of which are the ASFA Business Model, the new Partnership Agreement and the new Publishing Agreement. The below sections outline progress the FAO ASFA Secretariat has made in each of these areas. For full details, see the papers at the end of this section.

### 3.1 New Partnership Agreement

Following approval by the ASFA Advisory Board in 2022 of the revised Partnership Agreement, FAO ASFA Secretariat began consultations with FAO Legal on approval of the new agreement. FAO Legal raised several objections to the revised agreement, including the role of the Advisory Board and ASFA Secretariat. Discussions between the Secretariat and Legal resulted in a new agreement being formed, based on the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) Terms of Reference. At the 2023 Advisory Board Meeting, the FAO ASFA Secretariat is presenting Terms of Reference to replace the Partnership Agreement. Full details are presented on the paper (ASFA/2023/9 and 9a) however major differences can be summarized as:

- The FAO ASFA Secretariat will no longer exist. Instead, FAO shall provide administrative and technical support for the running of ASFA.
- The Advisory Board will be replaced by a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee shall be formed of up to 25 partners who are elected to the Committee every four years. FAO and other UN partners are to be permanent members of the Steering Committee.

***Vote: Advisory Board to vote on whether to approve the Terms of Reference which shall replace the ASFA Partnership Agreement.***

### 3.2 New Business Model

The need for ASFA to adapt to changing user expectations and advances in information technologies has been a feature of ASFA Advisory Board meetings since 2017. Following a number of feedback gathering exercises, including ASFA Partner reports and survey on user needs, a paper has been drafted by Tamsin Vicary and Florine Lim proposing a new business model for ASFA (ASFA/2023/10). Whilst the Business Model paper covers every section of ASFA's delivery, it will be continually refined and updated as ASFA makes progress towards its goal of ensuring worldwide availability of aquatic science, fisheries and aquaculture research.

### 3.3 New Publishing Agreement (2024-2027)

The present ASFA Publishing Agreement covers the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2023 and thus expires by the end of this year. The ASFA Secretariat negotiated with ProQuest (Paula McCoy) a new Publishing Agreement, to run from 2023-2026. A final version of the new Publishing Agreement is yet to be finalized and cleared by FAO's and ProQuest Legal Departments before it can be circulated for Partners' approval. When the new agreement is finalized, partners will be asked to vote to approve it.

**For full information and details on the ASFA policy and strategies, see the following papers:**

ASFA - Terms of Reference for Cooperation in the Preparation and Publication of the Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA)	ASFA/2023/9
ASFA Bangkok statement	ASFA/2023/9a
ASFA Business Model paper	ASFA/2023/10

## 4. ASFA Technologies

### 4.1 OpenASFA

The OpenASFA developments during the intersessional period included implementation of import and harvesting functions as well as a number of improvements made to the system. The most recent version of OpenASFA is 3.3.1, which includes the option to harvest from OAI-PMH endpoints and import from Excel.

Currently in the final stages of testing are the import of .ISO records and option to upload a file for Journal Articles, Books and Chapters (currently this option is only available for dataset records).

The ASFA Secretariat has reviewed and made available the Help Notes in five official FAO languages – English, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish. As Chinese, French and Spanish Help Notes are created by utilizing the automated translation tool, ASFA partners using these Help Notes are requested to report to the Secretariat of any errors they noticed.

In addition to the ASFA Subject vocabulary, the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS), Geonames, and Marine regions continue to be used to index records on OpenASFA.

#### *4.2 Training Activities*

A total of 10 online individual and group training sessions were conducted by the ASFA Secretariat during the intersessional period 2022-2023. These include training workshops delivered at the IAMSLIC (October 2022) and EURASLIC (May 2023) conferences; training sessions for ASFA regional networks, training session delivered as a part of the FAO NFI seminar, as well as individual and small group training sessions for ASFA partner institutions - University Malaya and Universiti Malaysia Sabah - two collaborating centres of UMT (Malaysia), IFSRI (Iran), and KMFRI (Kenya).

A training session for Ecuador new collaborating centres will be delivered in Spanish by INIDEP and UNAM ASFA partners.

A video tutorial explaining how to create the OpenASFA record has been prepared in July 2023 and made available to the ASFA partnership.

The ASFA Secretariat encourages regional networks to organize training sessions in the region in Spanish, French, or other local languages, when necessary.

## 5. ASFA Trust Fund

The ASFA Trust Fund is managed under the FAO Project - ASFA Information Network and Services. The commercial Publisher of ASFA (ProQuest) remains the only financial contributor to the ASFA Trust Fund. The fund is spent via Trust Fund proposals which are proposed and agreed by the Partnership by vote. The project proposals are intended to maintain/improve the system. The current ASFA project runs until December 2023. With partners approval FAO ASFA Secretariat will seek to extend this project for a further 4-year period (January 2024 - December 2027). ASFA Partners will also be asked to approve a budget for ASFA for coming years. Due to the financial situation, it is forecast that ASFA has funds only until end of 2025, at current expenditure and income levels. This situation and possible closing of ASFA, will be discussed at the Advisory Board Meeting.

### *5.1 Status of the ASFA Trust Fund*

2022 Royalties (received from ProQuest in April 2023) – **81 033.05 US\$**

As of August 2023, the balance of the ASFA TF is - **\$533,997**

### *5.2 ASFA Trust Fund special projects*

During the intersessional period the ASFA Trust Fund was not used to support special projects. In previous years, Trust Fund (TF) project proposals were heard throughout the year with no cycle or

call for proposals implemented by the Secretariat. Feedback on this arrangement was that projects were awarded to a small group of partners and not distributed evenly across the partnership. In attempts to address this, the Secretariat implemented a funding cycle and call for proposals that included specific topics proposals would be welcomed on. This did not address the lack of balance with no new institutions submitting proposals. In order to continue the work of TF special projects, the ASFA Secretariat has decided for 2024 to implement projects in Europe, Africa and Latin America and Caribbean regions. The ASFA Secretariat will administer these projects to ensure the involvement of a wide range of institutions.

### **European Inland Waters – up to USD\$15,000**

Aims and outputs:

This project will aim to collate resources related to European Inland Waters and make them available on OpenASFA. As a result of the project, a network of governmental, research and academic institutions who work on European inland waters will be formed who will advise on best practice in sharing of research, including the terminologies used to index resource which will include improved coverage of this topic on the ASFA thesaurus.

The outputs will be:

- a collection of OpenASFA records related to European inland waters. These will be a mix of harvested and manually created records, meaning the project will test, and likely lead to improvements, of the harvesting function of OpenASFA.
- a catalogue of resources related to European inland waters (e.g. repositories, directory of research institutions, programmes and projects);
- improved coverage of freshwater and inland waters areas on the ASFA thesaurus;
- a report summarizing the available resources with recommendations for continuing to build on the OpenASFA collection.

Participants: Participation will be open to ASFA and non-ASFA institutions in Europe who produce research. Interested institutions are invited to contact the Secretariat who will ensure they are kept up to date with the project.

Administration: The ASFA Secretariat will administer this project and act as focal point for participating institutions throughout. Institutions will be expected to contribute initially on a voluntary basis. Up to \$15,000 will be reserved for payments to individuals able to contribute their time in the manual creation of OpenASFA records or the editing of harvested records.

### **Africa regional network project: collection of research and data related to SDG indicator 14.4.1 - \$20,000.00**

Aims and outputs: this project will follow the recently completed FAO-SEAFDEC project which resulted in over 1,000 OpenASFA records being created, which relate to SDG indicator 14.4.1. This project will follow the same search strategy as developed in the FAO-SEAFDEC project. Rather than virtual training, an in person will be held adjacent to the IAMSLIC meeting at which participants will be expected to attend having already prepared resources to collate on OpenASFA. At the training, the ASFA Secretariat will guide participants in using OpenASFA to ensure a minimum of 100 records per participants are created. The outputs of this project will therefore be:

- a collection of OpenASFA records related to SDG indicator 14.4.1;
- participants fully trained on OpenASFA and capable of continuing to contribute;
- a brief report summarizing the collection and making recommendations for continually updating the collection.

Administration: the ASFA Secretariat will work with the Africa regional focal points to administer the project. Focal points shall be responsible for identifying potential institutions to participate in the project. To be eligible to participate, an institution must produce research related to marine fisheries. Each participating institution shall nominate a contact person who will undertake the work of identifying resources produced in their country relevant to SDG indicator 14.4.1. Upon identification of sufficient number of relevant resources, the participant shall be invited to attend a

meeting held in Alexandria, Egypt to receive training and complete OpenASFA records for identified resources. The estimated cost of this project, covering travel and DSAs for ten participants to attend the five day workshop, plus support from Regional focal points, is USD\$20,000.00.

### **Latin America and Caribbean regional network project: collection of research and data related to SDG indicator 14.4.1 - \$16,500.00**

Aims and outputs: as above, this project will follow the recently completed FAO-SEAFDEC project and work with ASFA centres in Latin America and Caribbean to create a collection of resources from the region related to SDG indicator 14.4.1. Rather than the in person meeting proposed for the Africa regional network, a series of virtual training sessions will be held with participants who will be covered for their time. The outputs of this project will therefore be:

- a collection of OpenASFA records related to SDG indicator 14.4.1;
- participants fully trained on OpenASFA and capable of continuing to contribute;
- a brief report summarizing the collection and making recommendations for continually updating the collection.

Administration: the project will be administered by the ASFA Secretariat and regional focal points. Up to ten participants from institutions producing marine fisheries research in the region will be recruited and hired on 10 day contracts to cover their work in identifying relevant resources, attending virtual training and creating records on OpenASFA. Funding for up to 10 days time of the Regional Focal Point will also be allotted.

***Vote: ASFA Advisory Board members to vote on three project proposals.***

**For full information and details, see the following papers:**

Status of the ASFA Trust Fund and budget	<b>ASFA 2023/11</b>
Project Proposal: European inland waters	<b>ASFA/2023/12</b>
Africa regional network project proposal: collection of research and data related to SDG indicator 14.4.1	<b>ASFA/2023/13</b>
Latin America and Caribbean regional network project proposal: collection of research and data related to SDG indicator 14.4.1	<b>ASFA/2023/14</b>

## 6. Collaboration with Other Organizations and Programs

### 6.1 IAMS LIC

ASFA and IAMS LIC share common interests related to the management of aquatic science, fisheries and aquaculture information. A number of activities were completed or in progress during the intersessional period:

- Collaboration between ASFA and AquaDocs – the possibility of merging OpenASFA and AquaDocs is under discussion between the ASFA Secretariat and the AquaDocs Funding Working Group. Whilst such a merger would entail significant change for both OpenASFA and AquaDocs, no decision is expected until 2024 with any merger not likely to take place before 2025.
- Possibilities of further joint actions between ASFA, IOC-IODE and AquaDocs were raised at the IOC-IODE Committee meeting (held 22-24 March 2023, in Paris), where the Committee proposed that: the ASFA Secretariat impact study explores further cooperation between OpenASFA and AquaDocs assessing the impact on user communities and identifying any actions to support SDGs, the Ocean Decade and joint market opportunities. These issues are addressed in both the survey on user needs and ASFA business model paper.

- The ASFA Trust Fund was used in February 2022 to pay IAMSLIC membership fees for 7 ASFA Partner institutions and 2 Collaborating Centers not able to meet the costs of yearly subscriptions. A total number of 3-year membership subscriptions paid from the ASFA Trust Fund is 27.
- Tamsin Vicary and Maria Kalentsits (ASFA Secretariat) attended the 2022 IAMSLIC Conference (Montevideo, Uruguay, 14-21 October) and provided a training session to ASFA partners in Latin America and all interested conference participants. An update of the ASFA business model and FAO-SEAFDEC project were presented at the conference.
- Tamsin Vicary and Maria Kalentsits (ASFA Secretariat) attended the 2023 EURASLIC meeting where further training on OpenASFA was given to participants as well as presentation of recently completed projects and possibility of a project to cover European inland waters. The inland waters project has been further developed since the meeting and is presented in this report under section 5.2.

### 6.2 FAO-SEAFDEC project

The project has been completed in December 2022. Project report prepared by the project team has been submitted for publication.

### 6.3 Agrovoc and Aquatic Genetic Resources (AqGR)

As part of ASFA's participation in Agrovoc, the ASFA subject thesaurus has improved its multilingual coverage with the ASFA vocabulary working group playing an active role in the addition of new terms, translations and definitions. The improvements to the ASFA thesaurus has seen a willingness from FAO fisheries and aquaculture colleagues to collaborate with ASFA to improve the management of relevant terminologies. For example, Aquatic Genetic Resources now have a separate thesaurus on VocBench, which is managed outside of the Agrovoc thesaurus meaning they have full control over definitions and hierarchies.

### 6.4. CECAF-PESCAO project

This project was completed in 2021. Tamsin Vicary has virtually participated in the PESCAO Third regional meeting (3-5 April 2023, Abuja, Nigeria) – see the link to the ASFA poster below.

The English version of the project report “Identification and analysis of marine fisheries research - Case studies from selected countries in the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) area of competence” and nine country infographics (in English and French) has been published by FAO in 2022. French version has been prepared and submitted for publication recently. A Summary report (English and French versions) as well as a bibliometric Analysis for Senegal (English and French versions) are also expected to be published soon.

**For full information and details on the collaboration with other organizations and programs, see the following documents:**

Project report “Identification and analysis of marine fisheries research - Case studies from selected countries in the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) area of competence”	<a href="https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CB8788EN">https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CB8788EN</a>
Poster presented at the PESCAO meeting (3-5 April 2023, Abuja, Nigeria)	<a href="https://data.d4science.net/qArD">https://data.d4science.net/qArD</a>

## 7. Communication and promotion

Ms. Florine Lim is hired by FAO as a consultant to prepare and present at the ASFA Advisory Board meeting the ASFA Communication Strategy document (ASFA/2023/15).

A full list of publications is provided below:

FAO. 2023. ASFA Magazine, Issue 8 (July 2023). Rome.

<https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc6705en>. *French version of the Magazine is in print.*

**FAO.** 2023. ASFA Advisory Board (Virtual) Meeting. 12–14 September and 23 November 2022. Summary report. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4791en>

**Vicary, T. & Kalentsits, M.** 2022. Securing ASFA’s Long Term Future through Transformation of its Business Model to Meet User Needs. *In: Proceedings of the 48th IAMSLIC Conference, 18-21 October, Montevideo, Uruguay.* pp. 120-125.

<https://darchive.mblwhoilibrary.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/70692042-83fd-4f5c-8922-b5dcb5c9b20a/content>

**Superio, D., Vicary, T. & Kalentsits, M.** 2022. Interim Results of FAO-SEAFDEC Project to Assess Research and Data on Fish Stocks in Southeast Asia [Abstract only]. *In: Proceedings of the 48th IAMSLIC Conference, 18-21 October, Montevideo, Uruguay.* p. 110.

<https://darchive.mblwhoilibrary.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/70692042-83fd-4f5c-8922-b5dcb5c9b20a/content>

**Castillo, D.J., Vicary, T., Kalentsits, M., Soomai, S.S., & MacDonald, B.H.** 2023. Ensuring equitable access to ocean and coastal information to advance knowledge and inform decision-making: The global Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts. 231, 106399.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0964569122003751>

**For full information and details, see the following papers:**

ASFA communication strategy	ASFA/2023/15
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