

July 2022

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منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)

### EIGHTEENTH (VIRTUAL) SESSION

Managua, Nicaragua, 26-29 July 2022

### Report by the Secretary on the financial and administrative affairs of the Commission

This document aims to report on administrative and financial issues related to the actions taken during the 2019-2021 intersessional period. For context, the document should be read in conjunction with working document WECAFC/XVIII/2022/7 (Intersessional activities and progress made by members and working groups in implementing the 2019-2021 work programme). It includes issues such as staffing, meetings, publications, the membership of the Commission, contributions by FAO, members and others to the Programme of Work (2019-2021) of the Commission and expenditures made.

#### Suggested Actions for the Commission

The Commission is invited to review this administrative and financial report and provide general guidance, particularly on issues relating to the strengthening of the Secretariat and implementation of the Programme of Work (2022-2024).

The Commission is particularly invited to (i) discuss the trends observed over years on the dwindling responses to the Secretariat's communications and lack of contribution to intersessional activities from part of some members, (ii) consider investigating the reasons for this apparent disinterest, and (iii) advise how to spur commitment that advances the Programme of work.

The Commission is further invited to take into account the current financial situation when discussing the Programme of Work 2022-2024 (document WECAFC/XVIII/2022/21), and to provide guidance to the Secretariat and Executive Committee, as appropriate, on how and where to mobilize resources for implementation of the Programme of Work.

## **Administrative issues**

### *Regular activities*

1. During the intersession, the Secretariat coordinated and actively contributed to the implementation of the activities and meetings agreed by the Commission, namely eleven meetings of seven Working Groups and the eleventh session of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG). Communication was kept to the extent possible with the conveners of the Working Groups and WECAFC national focal points. There is however room for improvement, as are concerned feedbacks, especially follow up on the Secretariat's messages to national authorities and timely information to the Secretariat, when a convener of a working group or a member of SAG is no longer in the position to serve.

### *Executive Committee of the Commission*

2. During the intersessional period, liaison was maintained at a good level of coordination and consultation with the Executive Committee of WECAFC. The chairperson of WECAFC has supported the initiation of the reform of SAG (interim TORs) and held with the vice-chairpersons six meetings from 2021 until May 2022, more than ever in the history of this body. These meetings served in providing advice and suggestions to the Secretariat for the advancement of key intersessional processes, such as the strategic planning and the revision of the rules of procedure.

### *Secretariat to the Commission*

3. During the intersessional period, the Secretariat consisted of a part-time Secretary, Dr Yvette Diei Ouadi, and a part-time Programme Assistant, Ms Sonya Thompson. An Administrative and Operational Assistant of FAO's Subregional Office for the Caribbean in Barbados provided support in meetings and procurement matters during the months of October and November in 2021. Some temporary junior consultants were hired on a When Actually Employed basis within the available budget to strengthen the secretarial team.

### *Framework programme activities*

4. As specified in document WECAFC/XVIII/2022/7, most activities under the programme of work were carried out (fully or partly) in the intersessional period. Surveys and workshop in anticipation of the Second Preparatory meeting of the transformation of WECAFC in an RFME/A, in addition to joint working group meetings, were convened to address specific issues and recommendations from the 17<sup>th</sup> Plenary. As part of the actions contributing to WECAFC's programme of work, was the participation to partners' meetings/conferences, such as the annual meetings of COPPESAALC, ICCAT, NAFO, GCFI, workshops under the aegis of the Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat, and meetings of CRFM Forum. Apart from the 26<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of ICCAT in November 2019, all the others were attended virtually.
5. Extensive information on the WECAFC intersessional activities (meetings, cooperation, publications and other issues) are presented in Working Document WECAFC/XVIII/2022/7.

### *WECAFC Reorientation*

6. The implementation of the Roadmap for progressing towards the development of a model for a regional fisheries management entity or arrangement in the WECAFC area was under the oversight of the Ad hoc Intersessional Working Group (IWG) established by WECAFC17. The

Virtual Meeting of the IWG to prepare for the Second Preparatory Meeting for the Strategic Reorientation of WECAFC, held on Friday, 23 October 2020 instituted a drafting group tasked with developing specific text options related to the mandate and objectives of the RFME/A. This process was supported by regular programme funds of FAO and an EU-funded project.

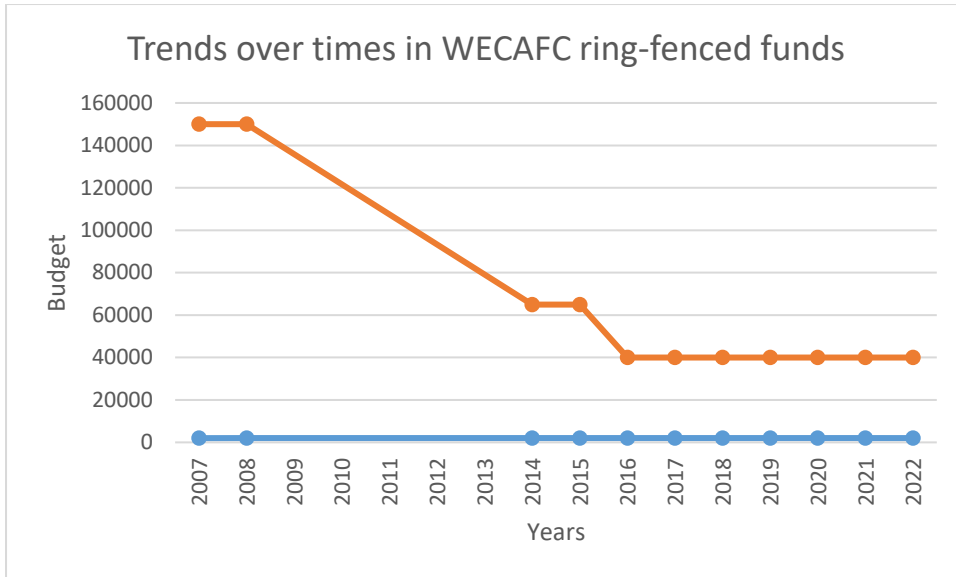
### *Membership*

7. No changes to the membership have taken place since WECAFC 17. WECAFC has 34 members, including 33 countries and the European Union (Member Organization). However, the trends observed over years on the dwindling responses to the Secretariat's communications and lack of contribution to intersessional activities from part of some members may deserve a critical review. The Commission may consider to investigate the reasons for this apparent disinterest and discuss how to spur commitment that advances the programme of work.

### **Financial issues**

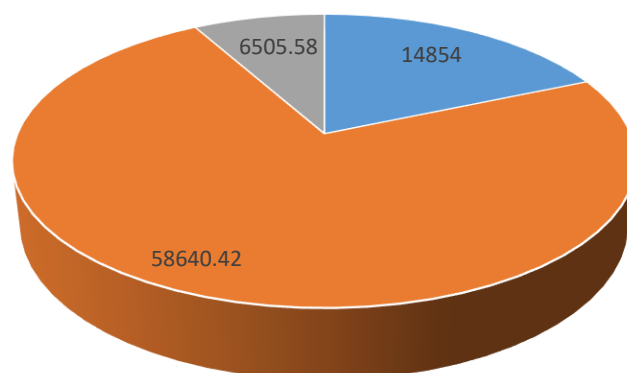
#### *FAO regular Programme*

8. WECAFC activities of the 2019-2021 were funded from the FAO Regular Programme (ring-fenced funds of the Commission), extrabudgetary funding and in-kind by other organizations, as described below. The total estimated budget required under the approved WECAFC Work Programme for the period 2019-2020 was some USD 18 million.
9. An estimated 75 percent of the activities listed under the work programme were actually implemented to a greater or lesser extent. Much of the funding provided under the regular programme went to activities connected to the core work of the advisory bodies, including publications of proceedings and had to be complemented by substantial in-kind support.
10. The ring-fenced funds have undergone significant reductions over years. It should be recalled that until 2007-2008 when the allocation for WECAFC came directly from the FAO Fisheries (and Aquaculture) Department at Headquarters, the Commission received around USD 300 000 per biennium in support of its work. However, with the funds received now confounded with the overall subregional office for the Caribbean (SLC) budget, the allocation shrunk from USD 110 000 for the biennium (2014 – 2015) to USD 80 000 for each biennium since the 2016-2017 biennium (See Figure 1 below).



11. The balance from the 2018-2019 allocation after the expenses connected to WECAFC17, was exhausted in December 2019 with the support to the preparation of the proceedings of the 17<sup>th</sup> plenary, a travel of the Secretary to the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual meeting of ICCAT and the travel of one participant to the fourth meeting of the Queen conch working group. Records tracking of the WECAFC budget expenditure showed that USD 88 611.59 were actually spent in that biennium, which portrayed an effort of USD 8 611.59 from SLC programme to support the ring-fenced funds of the Commission.
  
12. Given the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 global pandemic no travel and fieldwork occurred since 2020. A total of USD 14 854 for (i) contribution to a contract with a service provider, to lead in two surveys commissioned for the IWG roadmap implementation, the 23 October 2020 meeting report and devising relevant contents elements of the new website of the Commission, and (ii) three consultancies to assist in the development of the RPOA-Sharks; for consolidation and publication of technical documents on parrotfish, and Queen Conch Hatchery techniques. The largest share of the ring-fenced funds was essentially spent on translation, editing and publication of proceedings of working groups meetings, simultaneous interpretation for meetings of the executive committee, SAG members introductory and working groups meetings such as the Sharks, not supported by any trust funds projects. The balance of USD 6 505.58 of the 2020-2021 biennial allocation could not be carried forward to this current biennium as per corporate rules.

## Distribution of the expenses types for the 2020-2021 biennium



- Budget (USD) contract with a service provider, meeting report, new website of the Commission and consultancies
- Budget (USD) translation, editing and publication of proceedings of working groups meetings, simultaneous interpretation for meetings of the executive committee
- Balance(USD) 2020-2021 biennial allocation

13. This first year of the 2022-2024 biennium shows the continued financial burden connected to the preparation and translation of meeting documents and simultaneous interpretation. With the preparation of the documents for the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of SAG meeting, a couple of WECAFC18 working documents, and funds secured for editing/proofreading of planned publications of 2022 not connected to any projects, and simultaneous interpretation (executive committee, preparatory meetings with the host country for WECAFC18), barely less than USD 7 000 remained as balance by May 2022 from the annual USD 40 000 of ring-fenced funds. These would be complemented with advanced funds from the 2023 allocation, to accommodate locally recruited administrative secretary, simultaneous interpretation services for WECAFC18. It is worthwhile mentioning that the costs of the session are to a great extent borne by the host country, Nicaragua contributing to local logistics, including meeting venue and social events.
14. With ever increasing tasks including projects backstopping, new projects formulation and regional governance related activities of the Secretary of WECAFC and Technical officer responsible for assisting 13 CARICOM countries in the management and development of their fisheries and aquaculture sector, SLC kindly agreed to the recruitment of short-term junior consultants. This was translated to supporting with the meso-America office in 2021 of a contract for targeted WECAFC assignments, for a total of USD 18 000. This year, 70% of the Tasks of another junior consultant recruited by SLC for USD 22 000 on a when actually employed basis, are in support of the preparation of SAGXI and WECAFC18. This growing support being lent to WECAFC Secretariat by the FAO SLC represents an increment of 50% to the ring-fenced funds.
15. Moreover, the FAO Regular Programme provides for (in-kind) contribution to the Secretariat in terms of 50 percent of the SLC Fishery and Aquaculture Officer (P4 level)

staff time, which should be valued at USD 138 654 per year and the office, furniture and administrative support infrastructure including ZOOM platform for the numerous online meetings, which can be valued at USD 6 500 per year. FAO Headquarters technical assistance to the Commission other than the co-financing time to WECAFC Secretariat's coordination projects, can be valued at an average of USD 50 000 per year, a drop of about USD 20 000 (29%) compared to the pre-COVID-19 pandemic years.

16. In total, the FAO contribution to the WECAF Commission can be valued between 235 000 and 250 000 USD per year.

#### *WECAFC Trust Fund*

17. Although (at the request of the 14<sup>th</sup> session) a dedicated WECAFC Trust Fund was established, in support of the WECAFC Work Programme, with a lower Project servicing fee (only 5.9%), not a single contribution was received so far into this fund.

#### *Other FAO - WECAFC Trust Fund projects*

18. On the Extrabudgetary efforts, EU is by far the largest donor in support of the core work of the Commission, followed by two GEF-funded projects contributing to the implementation of the workplan of two working groups (IUU and Shrimps and Groundfish), and the in-kind and financial support (through the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC)) by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Marine Fisheries Service of the Government of the United States of America.
19. Working document WECAFC/XVIII/2022/6 (Intersessional activities and progress made by members and working groups in implementing the 2019-2021 work programme) discusses the trust fund projects under WECAFC umbrella (direct support to the Secretariat, climate finance projects hosted by WECAFC Secretariat) and global or interregional projects in support of selected members.
20. In the former case, five projects including three new after WECAFC17, are under the direct coordination of the Secretariat. One of them was operationally closed in March 2020, while four are ongoing. These are all EU-funded projects, with a total of USD 641 607 as grant from the three new projects since the 2020-2021 biennium.
21. The other category of projects supported either the Shrimps and GroundFish Working Group or provided assistance to specific beneficiary countries. The "UNJP/RLA/217/OPS - Support to the implementation of an EAF for the Shrimp and Groundfish Fishery and regional fisheries governance Co-implementation within the CLME+" (project of 1,352,400 USD) contributed USD 9 000 in 2020 to the contract with a service provider on the Strategic Reorientation work (IWG Roadmap) and supported the development of the Regional Strategy on the Management of Bycatch and Discards in Latin American and Caribbean bottom trawl fisheries, jointly with project "Sustainable management of bycatch in Latin America and Caribbean trawl fisheries" (REBYC-II LAC, GCP/RLA/201/GFF - 5.8 million USD). These two projects together with the "Climate Change Adaptation in the Eastern Caribbean Fisheries Sector (CC4FISH) (GCP/SLC/202/SCF, 5.4 million USD) and "Developing Organizational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-Scale Fisheries" (Stewardfish project) (GCP/SLC/211/GFF - USD 1,776,484), funded by the Global Environment Fund were hosted by the WECAFC Secretariat.

*In-kind support by partner agencies*

22. An estimated combined total of USD 180 000 to 200 000, were received. This drop of 20% in the 2018-2019 biennium, is a direct impact of the curbed field activities and meetings imposed by the COVID-19 global pandemic. The most noticeable (top three) in-kind contributions were from:

- NOAA-Fisheries/CFMC– 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> (virtual) Meetings of the Spawning Aggregations Working Group, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> (virtual) meetings of the Queen Conch Working Group, a study on parrotfish as a response to a recommendation of WECAFC17, translation into Spanish of the draft Regional Fish Spawning Aggregation Fishery Management Plan: Focus on Nassau Grouper and Mutton Snapper. Estimates of USD 75 000- 100 000/biennium.
- CRFM – Convener role exercised for three WGs by two staff of the Secretariat of CRFM, for the IUU-RWG which met once after WECAFC17 and had several documents submitted to SAG, the queen conch and the new Flyingfish-Dolphinfish WGs. The intersessional time allocated estimated USD 50 000/biennium.
- IFREMER– Shrimps and Groundfish Working Group:

*FAO TCP projects*

23. No TCP this biennium under the umbrella of WECAFC, though there has been national level fisheries and aquaculture TCPs backstopped by the SLC Fisheries and Aquaculture Officer.