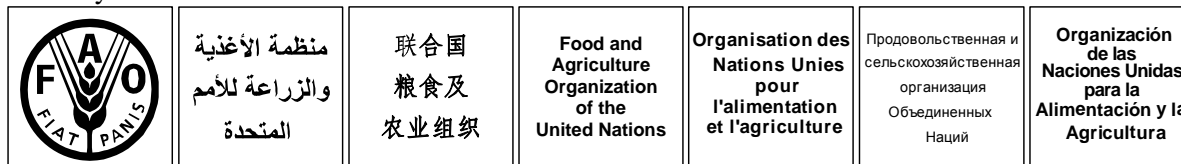


February 2014



Regional Conference for Europe

TWENTY-NINTH SESSION

Bucharest, Romania, 2 - 4 April 2014

Summary report of the recommendations from the various fisheries commissions in the Region and the importance of fisheries for the Europe and Central Asia Region

I. Introduction

1. The European and Central Asia Region is one of the most heterogeneous regions in the world in terms of the development of fisheries and aquaculture.
2. One of the oldest fisheries organizations in the region is the International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES) which has elaborated a system for providing fisheries management advice, while one of the youngest organizations is the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish). In general, the region's marine stocks are fully- or overexploited, while the demand for wild caught fish is increasing against the background of fish being a fundamental part of many countries' heritage and culture. Both the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea are seriously overexploited and there urgently needs to be more institutionalized cooperation among countries on the management of threatened stocks and other human activities.
3. Aquaculture is the fastest growing food production sector in the world. However, with the exception of a few countries, the region is lagging behind, and with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the production and consumption of fish has dropped considerably in most former soviet countries. Many countries have a long tradition of research and production of carp, but the production systems have not really developed technically for many years. The processing of fish products has not developed much either. In addition, the industry faces intense competition from fish production in South-east Asia.
4. With ample water resources, both warm and cold, there is huge potential for the development of aquaculture production in Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia; both in terms of industrial, semi industrial and smallholder production. Many countries in these sub-regions are gross fish importers and demand for fish has not yet reached saturation.
5. FAO is working in the region, among other things, on facilitating regional cooperation on research and management of marine and freshwater stocks, harmonization of fisheries laws and regulations, certifications for exports of fisheries and aquaculture products, training and capacity building in the fishing industry and training of inspectors and aquaculture farmers. Also, a considerable number of training and production manuals for the aquaculture industry have been produced.
6. A historical break-through in the cooperation among Black Sea littoral states happened in January 2014, when the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia coordinated the final Validation

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Meeting on the Project: “Identification and formulation of a regional project to strengthen scientific, technical and institutional cooperation to support responsible fisheries in the Black Sea”, BlackSeaFish, in Kiev, Ukraine. The preparation project was funded by the Turkish government. Delegates from all the Black Sea littoral States were in attendance; namely, Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine.

7. The outcome of the Validation Meeting in Kiev in January 2014 – which was the culmination of the two year process described below – was a historic project document which the delegates adopted by consensus, with eight outputs to be prioritized by the countries over the next five years, and a total budget of USD 15 million, which will boost the scientific, technical and institutional cooperation and knowledge of the fisheries resources around the Black Sea.

8. Prior to the meeting, comprehensive joint work was carried out, involving national overview reports prepared by national consultants from the six countries, a consolidated review which synthesized the six reports, country visits by the project development team and a project concept note based on the consolidated review, as well as visits and official positions stated by some countries. A workshop was held in the FAO Regional Office in October 2013 to consider the concept note and agree on a project framework. The final draft project document was prepared, based on the agreed framework, and circulated to the six countries for review and comment. It formed the basis of the final project document developed in Kiev.

II. Outcome of the 27th Session of the EIFAAC

9. The 27th Session of the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) was held in Hämeenlinna, Finland, from 24 to 26 October 2012. The Session reviewed EIFAAC’s intercessional achievements since the last Session in 2010, which included inter alia the approval by the FAO Council of the change of name from EIFAC to EIFAAC to include aquaculture and of the revised Statutes of EIFAAC, finalization and adoption of the amended EIFAAC Rules of Procedure. Progress made on technical and scientific issues through the EIFAAC projects were presented through following reports:

- Report from the Joint EIFAAC/ICES Working Group on Eel
- Prevention and Control of Bird Predation
- Managing the Threat of Freshwater Invasive Species in Europe
- Development of Guidelines on the Design of Nature-Like Fish Passes
- Welfare of Fishes in Aquaculture

10. A Symposium, “Towards a responsible future in inland fisheries” was held in conjunction with the 27th Session of EIFAAC.

11. The Symposium made the following recommendations:

- Fisheries are impacted by other water users. Fisheries, as stakeholders in shared inland aquatic resources, need to be considered and respected by all water users. Research, including ecosystem approaches, is required to support this goal.
- The legislative framework and implementation rules regulating aquaculture differ between member countries. Stakeholder consultations are required to support the sustainable development of aquaculture.
- Fish stock assessments should be undertaken to support the management of fisheries (commercial and recreational) in a sustainable manner.
- Alternative fishing management measures and practices (e.g. slot length instead of minimum length) should be evaluation and considered.
- Crayfish should be included in management schemes for finfish where appropriate.

12. Three main topics were proposed for consideration as the EIFAAC Work Plan for the intersessional period:

- Continue the work of the projects;
- Realization of the Strategy Plan 2012-2016, mindful that some outcomes may be realized during the forthcoming intersessional period;
- Implement the recommendations of the Symposium.

13. EIFAAC and Inland Fisheries of Ireland (IFI) hosted a conference for scientists, managers and policy makers from across the European Union in April 2013. Entitled "Freshwater Invasives: Networking for Strategy (FINS)", the conference took place in Galway, Ireland from 8-12 April 2013. Consensus was reached at the conference on the 20 most pressing policy issues related to aquatic invasive species in Europe. This "top 20" list was written up as a policy document following the conference and presented to the European Union by EIFAAC in December 2013.

14. Other ongoing projects are the Joint EIFAAC/ICES Project on Eels; the Project on Developing Advice on Sustainable Management Actions on Cormorant Populations; the Project on Development of Guidelines on the design of nature-like passes; and the Project on the EIFAAC Symposium on "Recreational Fishing in Inland Waters" (which is organizing the Symposium that will precede the 28th Session of EIFAAC).

15. EIFAAC plans to hold a Workshop on Stock Enhancement in Hull, UK, in July 2014, as part of the International Symposium "Integrated Perspectives on Fish Stock Enhancement" organized by several partners in collaboration with the Fisheries Society of the British Isles (FSBI).

16. The 28th Session of EIFAAC will be held in Norway in June 2015.

III. The 37th Session of the GFCM

17. The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) held in Split, Croatia, from 13-17 May 2013, the 37th Session of the Commission, the 7th Session of the Committee on Compliance and the 4th Session of the Committee on Administration and Finance.

18. Among reports presented, the following are worth mentioning:

- Report on the intersessional activities 2012-2013;
- Report on the activities under the first phase of the GFCM framework programme (FWP) to support task force actions;
- Proposals for the amendment of the GFCM agreement and associated procedural and financial rules and other issues related to the functioning of the commission;
- Management of Mediterranean fisheries and aquaculture;
- Programme of work for the intersessional period 2013-2014;
- Report of the 7th Session of the compliance committee;
- Report of the 4th Session of the committee on administration and finance.

19. The fourteenth session of the Scientific Advisory Committee was held in Sofia, Bulgaria from 20-24 February 2012. The following sessions were held at FAO HQs, Rome, Italy on 23-26 January 2012:

- The 12th Session of the Sub-Committee on Statistics and Information (SCSI);
- The 13th Session of the Sub-Committee on Stock Assessment (SCSA);
- The 12th Session of the Sub-Committee on Economic and Social Sciences (CESS);
- The 12th Session of the Sub-Committee on Marine Environment and Ecosystems (SCMEE).

20. The GFCM 36th Session of the Committee was held in Marrakech, Morocco from 14-19 May 2012 and included the 6th Session of the Committee on Compliance (CoC) and the 3rd Session of the Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF).

21. Recent GFCM recommendations include:

- Res. GFCM/37/2013/1 on area based management of fisheries, including through the establishment of Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRAs) in the GFCM convention area and coordination with the UNEP-MAP initiatives on the establishment of SPAMIs;
- Res. GFCM/37/2013/2 on Guidelines on the management of fishing capacity in the GFCM area;
- Rec. GFCM/37/2013/1 on a multiannual management plan for fisheries on small pelagic stocks in the GFCM GSA 17 (Northern Adriatic Sea) and on transitional conservation measures for fisheries on small pelagic stocks in GSA 18 (Southern Adriatic Sea) and
- Rec. GFCM/37/2013/2 on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom-set gillnet fisheries for turbot and conservation of cetaceans in the Black Sea.

22. In December 2013, a new multi-stakeholder platform for sustainable aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea was formed. This regional platform was formed as a result of a discussion and consultation process started in May 2013, when GFCM recognized the urgent need to tackle environmental and socio-economic concerns linked to the sustainable development of aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

23. In November 2013, the first GFCM Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea was held in St Julian's, Malta.

IV. 2nd Session of the CACFish

24. The Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish), a regional fisheries body established in 2010 under Article XIV of FAO Constitution, is gradually becoming a recognized body for the governance of fisheries and aquaculture, as well as for the development of regional scientific and technical cooperation in the Central Asian and Caucasus region. The Commission currently has only one subsidiary body; namely, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC, has, among other things, the following key roles in: (i) generating technical and scientific advice to support the development, enforcement and monitoring of management and conservation recommendations by the Commission; (ii) supporting effective implementation of the work programme of the Commission; (iii) providing technical oversight, monitoring and evaluation of projects and programme of work activities; and (iv) providing information on fisheries and aquaculture production and other data relevant to the functions of the Commission.

25. The second Session of the CACFish was held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on 16-17 April 2013. The Session was attended by representatives of four Members: Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey. The Session was also attended by observers from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkmenistan and Ukraine. The Commission adopted the scientific and technical advice and recommendations on the following issues which were submitted to the Commission for its consideration by the Technical and Advisory Committee (TAC):

- Environmental impact assessment in aquaculture (EIA);
- Regional principles for responsible aquaculture in Central Asia (Appendix 7);
- Responsible introduction and transfers of fish in Central Asia and the Caucasus;
- Improved collection, analysis, and dissemination of fisheries data and information.

26. The Commission agreed to consider the establishment of subsidiary bodies under TAC once it has more members and more programmes in place. The Commission discussed its five-year Regional Work Programme (2011-2015) and endorsed the 2013 work programme of the TAC. The CACFish Secretariat gave a briefing on the key works and activities that were conducted during the intersessional period. The Commission adopted its 2013 autonomous budget of USD 180 000. The importance of the external financial and technical contribution to the five-year Regional Work Programme of CACFish was underlined by the Session.

27. The Central Asia Regional Programme for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (FishDev – Central Asia), is a regional programme undergoing implementation under the FAO – Turkey Partnership Programme (FTPP) since the last quarter of 2009. The program aims to promote the development of inland fisheries and aquaculture in the Central Asian and Caucasus region. Azerbaijan,

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkey are the programme partners. However people from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan have also been invited to participate in the activities of the programme, which will be finalized in June 2014. The programme has successfully delivered many outcomes involving key stakeholders of the region. Many regional workshops, national workshops, ad-hoc trainings, expert workshops and study tours have been organized under the programme in support of region-wide institutional capacity building. The programme has also undertaken various work on policy and strategy development for fisheries and aquaculture as well as on updating national fisheries legislation. The programme has provided notable support and contribution to the establishment of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish). The FishDev – Central Asia is also providing support to the five-year Work Programme of the Commission. The second phase of the programme is expected to be operational under the upcoming extended FAO – Turkey Partnership Programme.

28. In the Central Asian region, national plans for agriculture and rural development generally include fisheries and aquaculture. However, state efforts to promote the development of fisheries and aquaculture are usually hampered by financial and technical challenges. Although fish production in these countries has increased slightly over the last decade; fisheries in the Central Asian countries have not evolved to levels that contribute significantly to food security and rural development. Governance of the exploration and conservation of fisheries resources, on the other hand, is crucial to meeting UN millennium development goals, particularly those of poverty reduction and conservation of natural resources.

29. Participatory decision-making processes based on scientific advice have not been appropriately incorporated into national fisheries management regimes of the Central Asian and Caucasus (CAC) states. In light of this, TAC is aiming to produce objective, transparent and practical scientific and technical advice and guidance for the Commission, within the framework set forth by international fisheries instruments, including FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and key approaches (i.e. the precautionary approach, the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and the Ecosystem Approach to Aquaculture). In this regard, the TAC outputs are expected to contribute to the management of fisheries and aquaculture within the competence of CACFish. The establishment and maintenance of collaborative relationships with respective governmental institutions and other key stakeholders (i.e. fishers, farmers and their associations; NGOs and research institutions) are seen as useful collaboration tools for the formulation of scientific and technical advice by TAC.

30. At its Inaugural Session, CACFish also adopted the following scientific and technical recommendations: (i) Guidelines for sturgeon hatchery practices and hatchery management for release; (ii) Recommendations of the regional study on the "Feasibility of Restocking and Culture-based Fisheries in Central Asia"; (iii) Better management practices for carp production in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia; and (iv) Recommendations of the regional workshop on fishery and aquaculture statistics, information and trends: Improving Data Collection, Analyses and Dissemination.

31. At its second session, held from 15-17 April 2013 at Dushanbe, Tajikistan, the Commission adopted scientific and technical advice and recommendations on the following issues, which were submitted to the Commission for its consideration by the Technical and Advisory Committee (i) Environmental impact assessment in aquaculture (EIA), (ii) Regional principles for responsible aquaculture in Central Asia, (iii) Responsible introductions and transfers of fish in Central Asia and the Caucasus and (iv) Improvement of collection, analysis, and dissemination of fisheries data and information.

32. The five-year Regional Work Programme of the Commission (2011-2015) foresees dynamic collaboration with the TAC in terms of implementation and monitoring of the work programme in addition to other regional technical cooperation projects and activities. In this context, the TAC identified priority areas of the work programme and associated activities for implementation. It also identified mid-term key priority areas for its work. These included, among other things, data and information on fisheries, technical fishing regulations, intensive aquaculture techniques and methodologies, fish health management, fish breeding and broodstock management, trade-related

management measures and environmental security. The Commission agreed to explore ways of securing external financial resources for the full implementation of the RWP, which was found to be an effective regional instrument in the development of an overall capacity building programme for improved fisheries and aquaculture in the CACFish competence area.

33. Strengthened institutional capacities, resource mobilization and associated regional efforts are expected to contribute to the effective translation of Commission-adopted recommendations for the management and conservation of fisheries resources into practice. This will be done in addition to the implementation of the five-year Work Programme of the Commission. In the course of extending its competence by having more Members, the Commission would be able to contribute more to adding value and capacity development in the wider context of food security in the Central Asian and Caucasus Region, while at the same time creating structures that enable the Commission to cope with challenges and capacity gaps that impede its work. CACFish aims to further strengthen regional capacity for inland fisheries and aquaculture development in its competence area.

34. The Commission would focus on the following technical issues during its 2014-15 Work programme: (i) Small-scale fisheries; (ii) fisheries data and information; (iii) aquatic fish health management; (iv) fish breeding and broodstock management; (v) inland stock assessment; and (vi) climate change.