

20 REPORT ON THE MEETING OF FISHERIES DIRECTORS

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Directors present: Italo Jose Vieira (Brazil), Anatole Charuau (French Guiana), Ruben Charles (Guyana), Rene Lieveld (Suriname), Ann Marie Jobity (Trinidad and Tobago), Gustavo Lagarde (Venezuela).

Ms. Jobity of Trinidad was selected as Chairperson.

The Agenda was adopted unchanged.

REGIONAL APPROACHES TO MANAGEMENT OF SHARED STOCKS

***Ad hoc* Working Group funding**

It was pointed out that the funding from CFRAMP for the activities of the *Ad hoc* Working Group would end after 2000 and funding from FAO would end after 2001. The necessity for continuing the cooperation that had existed over the last three years, at both the technical and management levels, had been clearly demonstrated and it was agreed that the member countries were committed to continuing the activities. The Directors agreed to explore the possibilities of financing their participation in workshops from 2002. At the same time they requested FAO to continue providing the secretariat, through WECAFC and technical assistance that will be required for the group.

For the next two meetings, the Directors agreed to review the logistics and format of the meetings with the objective of increasing efficiency and reducing costs.

Using current information in management

A question was raised as to how the information being generated by the *Ad hoc* Working Group was to be applied in management at both the national and regional levels. In response, it was pointed out that already the TAC for shrimp in northern Brazil had been set on the basis of assessments undertaken at *Ad hoc* Working Group workshops.

It was suggested that the first step in application of the results of the technical assessments must be to disseminate the knowledge to the stakeholders and to make them aware of the status and possible management strategies for their fisheries. This would have the effect of generating awareness and support for the necessary management actions and requires that reports from the technical workshops are also prepared in a manner suitable for distribution to a non-technical audience.

It was suggested that the technical reports from workshops should be provided to the managers in advance of the managers' meeting, to allow time for a thorough study before discussions. This approach would require that the technical meetings were separated from the managers' meeting.

GROUND FISH FISHERY

Snapper Task Group report

The report of the Snapper Task Group was accepted and the recommendation was supported that the proposed Snapper Task Group should prepare a review and

synthesis on snapper fisheries and on the available knowledge and data on snapper and snapper fisheries in the region.

Management of fleet capacity

This agenda item was intended to generate discussion on possible approaches to managing fleet capacity in the light of assessment results from the *Ad hoc* Working Group indicating over-exploitation in many groundfish stocks.

The problem of shrimp vessels switching to groundfish fishing, but still using shrimp gear was highlighted as a problem in Guyana. Amongst signs of difficulties, reports were frequently received in several countries from fishermen on declining catches and catch rates, supporting the assessment results. However, particularly in the artisanal fisheries, new entrants were continuing to join, mainly because of social and economic reasons.

It was stated that the results from the Working Group assessments were extremely useful evidence, which could be used to assist in motivating changes.

A suggestion was made that while it would be politically very difficult to reduce effort in the artisanal fisheries, it may be more acceptable in some instances to freeze effort at current levels, at least preventing further growth in effort. This approach was being pursued or considered in some countries for both industrial and shrimp fisheries.

Review of priority species

At the 1998 Director's Meeting, a list of 10 high priority groundfish species was drawn up for the region and it was agreed that emphasis should be given to undertaking up-to-date assessments of these species in the region. However, little progress had been made on this in the inter-sessional period. Countries were urged to give greater attention to this in the following inter-sessional period, to broaden the existing knowledge on the status and management of groundfish stocks.

Cooperative studies

Results from this Workshop had highlighted the generally poor estimates of some parameters for fish species, especially growth parameters, which had large impacts on estimates of natural and fishing mortality. It was agreed that the countries should work cooperatively in improving these estimates by dividing tasks amongst themselves. For example, different countries could undertake growth studies on different species and then exchange results. The CFRAMP project with the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) for otolith reading was brought to the meeting's attention and CFRAMP member countries were urged to make use of it by sending otoliths to IMA.

Assessments on groundfish were identifying gear types that have undesirable selection characteristics for fish and some research would be required to consider alternative designs or mesh sizes. Again, regional cooperation would be beneficial in addressing this.

SHRIMP

Bycatch and discards

It was pointed out that 50% of the value of catch in Venezuela shrimp fisheries was bycatch, as shrimp catches had fallen considerably. It was suggested that this was happening in many countries and that the fishing industry was adjusting itself to falling shrimp catches and rising prices for groundfish. However, in Suriname the bycatch tended to belong to the crew. Suriname proposed that experiments should be conducted using different types of net to determine the economic feasibility of targeting fish and catching shrimp as a bycatch. A study undertaken in Brazil, showed that 72 species occurred in the bycatch, but 70% of the bycatch was made up of *M. ancylodon*.

For every kilogram of shrimp taken, 7.7 kg was bycatch of which 4.4 kg was useful for human consumption. Suggestions for using this bycatch included having a boat collecting bycatch at sea but this was rejected as being too expensive. A second proposal was that boats should be equipped with a second hold in which to keep the fish, but this would have involved a 2 m increase in width of the boats. At present equipping boats with BRDs (bycatch reduction devices) based on an Australian design was being considered.

Venezuela reported that experiments undertaken by them showed consistent increases in catches of fish in nets with BRDs, as a result of under-sized fish not blocking the bag and causing the doors to close. Thus, while the shrimp catch decreased by only 6%, fish catch increased by 30%.

With reference to the GEF project, the intention was to undertake widespread consultations to arrive at regional or country-group agreements on particular problems and priorities. With this in mind, an open consultation was planned for January 2000 to attempt to develop project proposals. All relevant countries would be invited to participate in this meeting and to bring ideas and proposals, preferably generated during national consultations including stakeholders.

REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR IMPROVED MANAGEMENT

Trinidad and Tobago – Venezuela cooperation.

The cooperation between these two countries during the workshops had been very positive and beneficial to both countries. It was suggested that this success could provide a stimulus to activate the Protocol on Joint Research established under the 1985 Agreement that may still be valid and could be started under the current 1997 Cooperation Agreement between Venezuela and Trinidad. Participants from both countries agreed on the need for a forum on research issues of common concern, including sharing of data.

Venezuela suggested that a representative from Trinidad could attend the national workshop for the dissemination of the results of the working group.

Other bilateral or multilateral initiatives

Interest in fostering cooperation between Venezuela and Suriname was also expressed.

It was reported that Suriname and Guyana were preparing a concept agreement on fishing, to cover Guyana's artisanal fishing activities in Suriname.

Guyana and Trinidad are currently discussing a possible agreement to enable vessels from Trinidad and Tobago to fish for snapper resources and associated species in Guyana.

It was strongly recommended that some protocol on collection of detailed data on landings and effort, including size structure of catches, should be an integral part of such agreements to enable the host country to undertake assessments of the status of the stock.

It was reported that during the CFRAMP extension, the programme would be working with the CARICOM countries to establish a regional fisheries mechanism to provide the services determined by these countries.

INTER-SESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Priorities for intersessional work

There was considerable discussion on allocating responsibilities for undertaking growth studies on the key fish species. It was agreed that CFRAMP would initiate contact between CEPNOR (Brazil) and IMA (Trinidad) on cooperation in age and growth studies on selected groundfish species.

Most of the 10 priority species had been, were being, or would be, studied by at least one of the countries, as indicated on the list below, where the letters indicate the first letter of each country that has, is or will be working on the species.

Whitemouth croaker	<i>Micropogonias furnieri</i>	T; V
King weakfish	<i>Macrodon ancylodon</i>	B;V;G
Acoupa weakfish	<i>Cynoscion acoupa</i>	B
Jamaica weakfish	<i>Cynoscion jamaicensis</i>	T
Green weakfish	<i>Cynoscion virescens</i>	V; S
Smalleye croaker	<i>Nebris microps</i>	V; S
Gillbacker sea catfish	<i>Arius parkeri</i>	
Crucifix sea catfish	<i>Arius proops</i>	
Lane snapper	<i>Lutjanus synagris</i>	T; V
Southern red snapper	<i>Lutjanus purpureus</i>	B; V

The Directors agreed to use the above list to identify others working on species of common interest, so as to exchange data and expertise and to avoid duplication as far as possible. In this way it is hoped that as many species as possible will be covered during this inter-sessional period.

Another inter-sessional activity already referred to was the Snapper Task Group.

Dissemination of results to stakeholders

It was suggested that dissemination of results to stake holders could be done through national workshops and that FAO, through the FISHCODE Project and possibly CFRAMP could send one or more representatives to participate in this and discuss the aims of the project and aspects of fisheries management. This would require that the workshops were held in sequence to minimise travel costs for those from outside the region.

The difficulties of translating technical information into terms that could be understood by the fishers were emphasised, as well as the difficulties associated with reaching the widely dispersed artisanal fishers. Producing a video of appropriate talks and presentations and the use of posters and pamphlets were suggested as possible means of reaching wider audiences.

It was agreed that FAO would liaise with the countries and attempt to organise a regional series of national meetings/workshops involving all the countries who wished to participate. It would be left up to each country to decide on the format of the meetings and the participants. It was agreed that this would be arranged for March 2000.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Review of current data collection programmes The series of workshops, along with CFRAMP's activities in some of the countries had led to substantial increases in data collection. This had been invaluable in making progress in the assessment of the stocks and fisheries. However, it was important periodically to review the data collection systems and to ensure that they were cost-effective and appropriate for the assessment and management needs. It was important that data collection systems were self-sustainable and not dependent on external funding.
- It was suggested that one or more presentations on the bio-economic analyses undertaken at this workshop should be given at the GEF Meeting in Costa Rica in January 2000. Joel Prado, FAO, would co-ordinate this.
- It was pointed out that many participants at this workshop had been unable to complete the preparations requested of them and had reported that lack of time in the lead up to the workshop had prevented them from achieving this. The Directors undertook to examine the workload of the participants and ensure that they had adequate time for intersessional activities.
- Venezuela made a preliminary offer to host the 2000 Workshop, subject to approval from the appropriate authorities. They indicated that they would be able to provide a definite answer within two months. The CFRAMP and FAO organisers expressed their thanks to Venezuela for this expression of interest.
- The Directors thanked FAO and CFRAMP for the work done at the workshop and for the good progress made assessing the resources and fisheries of the Brazil-Guianas shelf, as well as for providing this opportunity for them to meet and discuss issues of common concern.