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<b>WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION</b> Twelfth Session
<b>WECAFC LESSER ANTILLES FISHERIES COMMITTEE</b> Ninth Session
<b>Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 25-28 October 2005</b>
<b>SUMMARY OF THE DRAFT PROJECT PROPOSAL: Promoting Sub-regional Cooperation in Developing Sustainable Moored Fish Aggregating Device Fishing in the Lesser Antilles</b>

## Background

Fishing associated with moored FADs, whose development in the Lesser Antilles has been established for several years, seems a priori to be an efficient tool to reduce poverty in the coastal communities and, therefore, they deserve particular attention. Nevertheless, the sustainable development of this fishing requires a better understanding of the practices and conditions of exploitation of pelagic resources around FADs and also an evaluation of the economic and social costs of this exploitation. The search for alternative management scenarios that aim to reduce the negative effects of exploitation and environmental impacts that can be associated with FAD-fishing has been recognized as urgent.

To accelerate the process of acquiring the required knowledge and to involve fishery managers and stakeholders in a responsible management and operation of fishing activities around FADs, an ad hoc working group was established at the X-WECAFC to coordinate multidisciplinary research on the sustainable development of fishing around moored FADs in the Lesser Antilles. At the second meeting (5-10 July 2004) of the working group specific intersessional activities were identified as priorities for the participating Lesser Antilles countries to implement, separately and jointly to promote sustainability in managing the large pelagic fish resources of the sub-region.

## Project Motivations/Justification

In this context of increasing development and inadequate regulation of the activities associated with the establishment and fishing around moored FADs, a comparative analysis of FADs fisheries would accelerate progress in the appreciation of FADs and prospective positive benefits of this activity in the sub-region. Cooperation in the research of solutions to FAD development issues will also improve the durability of the fishing activities and the sustainability of the resources it aggregates.

The working group identified the following three activities as priorities for cooperation among the participating Lesser Antilles countries and agreed that a sub-regional project should be designed to:

- Continue working on FAD design and construction in order to improve their longevity and their cost effectiveness (for example: choosing the most appropriate materials and devising ways to effect timely maintenance interventions at sea)
- Research and document FAD management practices especially those that empower fishers to take the lead roles the maintenance of the devices and those that encourage the collective exploitation of the aggregated resources particularly in the inshore areas, thereby avoiding:
  - Access conflicts in this frequented area;
  - Negative interaction between devices deployed at insufficient distances apart;
  - The frequent failure (sinking) of devices which translate into an accumulation of FAD material on the seabed, the long term effects of which are not yet known.
- The acquisition and sharing of statistical and biological data on fisheries associated with anchored FADs from around the region to allow for:
  - Comparisons between the islands;
  - Follow up on the development of fisheries associated with anchored FADs;
  - Evaluation of the social and economic impacts of this new kind of fishing and its contribution to the improvement of food security; and
  - Improvement of the regional knowledge on species caught, migration and seasonality of catches.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The specific aims and objectives of the project are to :

- improve their design and define a maintenance schedule through the installation and monitoring of 2 or 3 FADs per island;
- evaluate their impact on fisheries resources associated with FADs (according to the mooring site location);
- attempt a better description of the species migrations and try to identify their spawning and nursery areas by comparing the structure of catches between the islands of the Lesser Antilles and by biological observations of the landings;
- evaluate the uses of the fishing resources, characterize the exploitation structures and user socio-economic status;
- analyze the evolution of fishery fleets in terms of investment, transfer of fishery effort, etc. and identify the key factors of these evolutions, whether they be biological, economic, social or institutional;
- evaluate the management conditions for FAD access for a sustainable development of fishing in the Lesser Antilles; and

- identify the main risks fishermen are exposed and formulate recommendations with the aim of improving safety and working.

## **Project Outputs**

The following outputs are expected:

- Deployment of a number (to be decided) of FAD units in selected Lesser Antilles, member island countries of the WECAFC ad hoc FAD working Group;
- National information and data sets on the monitoring and management of the FADs;
- An integrated sub-regional data base on moored FAD fishing in a format that can satisfy international obligations for reporting to competent authorities such as ICCAT and
- A sub-regional arrangement or mechanism for the cooperative management of moored FAD fishing and especially the associated shared large pelagic fish resources.

It is expected that the project will be implemented jointly/as a partnership between French Antillian institutions – Ifremer&/IRPM - FAO-WECAFC and the participating country fisheries officials and stakeholders.