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Food and Agriculture
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Western Central Atlantic
Fishery Commission



European
Commission



Strengthening national data collection and regional data sharing through FIRMS to support priority regional fishery management plans in the WECAFC area

Prospectus for the WECAFC-FIRMS data Workshop
Convened by the WECAFC

Introduction

The WECAFC aims to convene a workshop in January 2016 that will focus on strengthening national data collection and enhance regional data sharing for use in improving stock assessment and fisheries management in the WECAFC region. The workshop will engage national and regional fisheries researchers and stock assessment analysts on the need of improving fisheries data and information collection. This will enable all to fill those data gaps and deficiencies and capacity needs, which are undermining any significant effort to improve fishery management. Moreover, this will contribute to the dissemination of fisheries status and trends at the regional and national level.

Goals of the workshop

Through the WECAFC-FIRMS partnership, develop the foundations of a regional data base in support to priority fishery management plans (FMPs) implementation and carry out tests through selected pilots (Flyingfish, Queen Conch, Lobster).

The proposed workshop

WECAFC envisions a 3-day workshop of approximately 20 participants including:

- National experts recognized at regional/sub-regional level (~10 - 15) for their involvement in fisheries assessments and monitoring throughout the WECAFC region;
- Regional / sub-regional experts – WECAFC-FIRMS, CRFM, OSPESCA (3)
- WECAFC and FIRMS Secretariats (3 - 4)
- EU DG-MARE officer (project resource partner)

The organizers of the workshop will form a planning committee to identify and solicit key participants, issue invitations with the aim to create balance throughout the geographic regions as to identifying minimum data and capacity needs for improving fisheries data collection in the region. Travel expenses to cover participation of one participant per country will be provided.

Background

At the [WECAFC 14](#) (February 2012) it was noted that reliable and sufficient fisheries data are a critical component of sound fisheries management. Further to improve the state of fisheries data and reduce the gaps and deficiencies in data collection and capacity it was noted that it would be required to carry out a regional workshop on data collection and statistics.

This need was reiterated again during [WECAFC 15](#) (March 2014) and hence it was decided to dedicate one of the four technical Focus Areas in the WECAFC Strategic Plan for 2014-2020 to this subject. Moreover, the current Programme of Work of WECAFC (2014-2015) includes activity 2.4 “Improved fishery and aquaculture data collection, analysis and dissemination at regional and national level”.

As a result, in the same session in 2014, the Commission further endorsed the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) partnership following the partnership proposal and arrangement formulated during the [WECAFC-FIRMS Workshop on Marine Resources and Fisheries Inventories](#) (November 2013).

The partnership with FIRMS would enable WECAFC to tap into the knowledge and experience from a well-established, cost-effective system for the monitoring of fisheries resources status and fisheries activities. FIRMS will play a catalytic role in the development of a regional database in support to the regional fishery management plans. The Commission expressed the need for capacity building on the use of FIRMS and emphasized that the work should concentrate initially on those fisheries and stocks that are commercially most important to the membership. The pilots selected for support by this project are the three priority regional fishery management plans, spiny lobster, flying fish, and Queen conch. In addition other information can contribute to the FIRMS inventories, including billfishes, shrimp and groundfish of Guianas-Brazil shelf as part of the CLME Strategic Action Programme (SAP) and its CLME+ project. Finally, through the WECAFC-FIRMS partnership, the development of a regional database, focusing on data and capacity improvements, data sharing and dissemination will be driven.

Expected Workshop Products

- Review of the capacity of existing data collection systems to respond to the needs of Fishery Management Plans (in place or under development). To be based on a joint assessment with national experts of the existing FIRMS stocks and fisheries status reports.
- Framework implementation plan for optimal data collection by obtaining consensus of countries on the gaps in capacity and minimum data requirements identified through the review.
- A roadmap for establishing a framework for implementation of best practices in data collection, sharing and harmonization; in support of the tangible products of the Regional Database and FIRMS stocks and fisheries status reports; with the overall aim to support WECAFC Fisheries Management Plans.
- Agreed working group TORs on data collection, data sharing, data harmonization, IT requirements for a regional database.

Expected Workshop Outcome (by the end of the project)

- WECAFC inventories on stocks and fisheries in support to three FMPs published in FIRMS;
- Prototype of a Regional DataBase with a small pilot implemented, including a draft data sharing policy document developed for review in WECAFC-SAG and other relevant sub-regional forums (CRFM, OSPESCA, ...), and a capacity building plan;
- A plan for building capacity and strengthening selected national data collection systems;

This workshop and project are generously supported by the European Union DG MARE – FAO collaborative project on “Strengthening national data collection and regional data sharing through FIRMS to support priority regional fishery management plans in the WECAFC area” (GCP/SLC/007/EC).

Follow-up developments are expected to be relayed by other supporting projects, e.g. CLME+