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FISHERY COMMITTEE FOR THE EASTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC

Twenty-second Session

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**Independent cost-benefit assessment: directions for improved functioning of
CECAF**

SUMMARY

This session paper summarizes the outcomes of an independent cost benefit assessment aimed at identifying the various options to improve CECAF functions. Building on the recommendation of the Twenty-first session, this assessment takes in consideration the needs of CECAF member countries, CECAF's capacities and presents options to improve the functioning capacity and financial application dimensions of CECAF to promote the sustainable management and utilization of fisheries resources in CECAF member countries.

The Committee is asked to reflect on the outputs of the cost-benefit assessment and provide supporting information from a national perspective on the means to apply the necessary actions.

INTRODUCTION

1. During the Twenty-first Session (Dakar, Senegal, 20-22 April 2016), the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) the Secretariat and its Members approved a cost benefit assessment (CBA) to identify options for the improved functioning of CECAF in the pursuit of its mandate.
2. This document summarizes the outcomes of the preliminary CECAF CBA analysis, sharing key observations and highlights the recommendations.

SUMMARY OF THE INDEPENDENT STUDY TO IDENTIFY DIFFERENT OPTIONS IN SUPPORT OF AN IMPROVED FUNCTIONING OF CECAF

3. The general conclusion of the CECAF CBA is that with financial and organisational enhancements, the economic costs of related to a strengthened CECAF should be much less than its benefits. The highlighted observations and recommendations and are broken down into 9 sections. They are:
4. Initial Strategic Perspective on CECAF:
 - a. The proportional extent of direct interest (or ‘stake’) in fisheries near to or within the CECAF region generally, varies strongly from country to country, and overall is quite low. Thus, challenges pertaining to fisheries management are more or less meaningful to different governments within CECAF. It is therefore likely that the proposition that CECAF should rely more on member-state contributions is one that only a few of the coastal CECAF member states (and other CECAF member) are likely to warm to.
 - b. Experience from other RFMOs show the importance of having a lead country or a champion to drive the process forward. Unlike in some other African RFB cases, there is as yet in the CECAF region no obvious ‘lead coastal country’ with both the aggregate economic muscle and tax base, and the level of stake in fisheries, that has taken up this role.
 - c. The CBA highlighted that there appeared to be amongst CECAF members (not the only coastal ones) a classic so-called collective dilemma, as defined in economic terms. That is, CECAF members may have common interests in maintaining healthy fisheries, but imprecise property rights specifications and associated rights and responsibilities preclude rational, collective problem-solving actions. This is complicated by real and perceived geo-political cleavages.

- d. CECAF emerges as having a regional comparative advantage in the fields of research, scientific advice and information for fisheries management and consequently the CBA and options analysis will need to focus more specifically on economic costs and benefits in this respect, and possible CECAF roles and funding models in this regard.

5. Economic Forces and the Nature of CECAF as an Organisation

- a. In understanding the nature of CECAF as an organization, a distinction needs to be made between CECAF's formal and functional characteristics. This includes formal issues in terms of legal definition, membership, mandate, etc., CECAF is an Article 6 body of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, with a regionally derived Committee of thirty-four country members at its policy-making helm. However, this formal character of CECAF in practice only fully asserts itself through the sessions of the Committee and the Scientific Sub-Committee that ideally should meet for 3-4 days every alternate year, as well as through the meetings of the Working Groups.
- b. Functionally, in terms of what CECAF actually preforms on a day-to-day basis, and with whom CECAF interacts with more frequently, the Secretariat with its small staff based in Accra supported by the assigned technical support staff and other fisheries experts at FAO Headquarters, regional and sub-regional offices, lie at the organizational core. There are also a number of projects and organizations that also support and/or intersect with CECAF on a fairly frequent basis, this includes programme and projects such as the FAO implemented EAF-NANSEN Programme and the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem project (CCLME), as well as other regional and sub-regional fisheries bodies such as the Regional Fisheries Committee for the Gulf of Guinea (COREP), Fisheries Committee for the Western Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC), Subregional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) and the Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation among African States Bordering the Atlantic (COMHAFAT), for example.
- c. Key activities of CECAF and inter-organizational or partner interactions relate to the generation of knowledge on resources and fisheries in support of knowledge-based decision making for fisheries management, which focus upon policy-sensitive parameters of sustainable fisheries.
- d. The formal definition of CECAF is of course important, and the question for example, of whether it should remain an Article VI body of the FAO or should become an Article XIV allowing for an independent budget remains a critical one.

6. Cost-benefit Analysis and Precedents: The WECAFC Case

- a. A cost-benefit analysis has recently been carried out for another FAO RFB- the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC), in the context of a possible transformation into a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO). However, for CECAF the realistic prospects for such a transformation are likely weak. not only because of politics but because of the current organizational foundations being too weak
- b. The CBA highlighted that problematic intra-regional dynamics could emerge in the CECAF case, especially if institutional transformation is linked to country-by-country consultations within West Africa, or sub-regional fishery body consultations that are done in advance of regional economic community alignments and agreements.
- c. Consequently, the main priorities ought to be those of upgrading CECAF's existing research and monitoring competencies.

7. Assigning Initial Responsibilities for Regional Fisheries Research

- a. The CBA highlighted that, if agreed that contemplating the transformation of CECAF into a RFMO would be a step too far, the focus must then fall on CECAF's existing functions.
- b. CECAF's research and scientific advice capabilities¹ are its strongest assets, but several commentators² and the CBA suggests that CECAF's administrative and budgetary capacities in support of these outputs are current key weaknesses. In addition, data collection is considered by participants/members as the main weak link in respect of overall analytical capabilities.
- c. The policy questions then become (i) who should shoulder the responsibilities for remedying such weaknesses, and (ii) in accordance with what formulae? The CBA suggests that a *shift in the concept of responsibility for research and capacity enhancements from fish production (more precisely harvesting) to consumption and fiscal capacity take place* (a different argument to the funding of an RFMO).

¹ Research in the sense of supporting the compilations of data and information needed to perform analysis of stocks and fisheries and to provide scientific advice to fisheries management and to make advice on related research, information and data needs

² According to CECAF's Seventh Session of the Scientific Subcommittee held in Tenerife, Spain, 14-16 October 2015, (henceforth Seventh Session) para. 85 "The most critical problems encountered are typically insufficient management and scientific capacity, the need to engage stakeholders more effectively, and conflicts between the long-term goals of sustainability and short-term social and economic needs".

8. Role of partnerships

- a. FAO partners with a number of other organisations in enhancing regional fisheries research capacities, in the CECAF region most notably is the EAF-Nansen Programme, funded by the Norwegian agency for development cooperation (Norad) and executed by FAO in close collaboration with the institute of Marine Research (IMR) of Norway.
- b. If CECAF remains conceived essentially in research and capacity development terms, there are common features in organisational evolutions towards what many have termed ‘learning regions’³ – a term that may well be appropriate for conceptualising the alternative future trajectories for CECAF. Traditionally, the learning region concept has been applied to geographical territories somewhat smaller than that of CECAF, but given that CECAF focuses on a single dimension of sustainable economic development (fisheries) and is not multi-sectoral in scope, the aggregate level of complexity in the dynamics of change are likely to be fairly similar.
- c. These common features of organisational change towards enhanced learning regions are:
 - i. Relatively diminished roles for the state and state bureaucracies in directing regional dynamics (partly due to lack of capacity and/or interest)
 - ii. Convergence of multiple interest groups with common concerns about the trajectories of sustainable development within a given geographical area, and their active and material contributions towards regional economic development
 - iii. The common recognition amongst such participating interest groups that innovation, knowledge and learning enhancements focused on the region of concern are vital to the economic future of the region.
- d. The CBA assumes that if CECAF, FAO and the EU – as initial starting points – are currently at a stage of pre-feasibility for operationalising a possible CECAF learning region, then the above-mentioned conclusions direct CECAF to the most obvious organisational change starting points. The CBA further assumes that, starting within CECAF, filtering hypotheses from that consultation (and modifying them where necessary) via the EAF Nansen Programme and FAO Headquarters, then testing detailed funding appetite within the EU and securing add-on support from ECOWAS before proceeding to more ‘outlying’ major potential partners, such as other fishing nations or other donors.

³ The learning region concept is one that has been used and developed a good deal by the EU in respect of development collaboration across national borders. See for example A Langendijk and J Cornford, Regional institutions and knowledge – tracking new forms of regional development policy, *Geoforum*, 31, 209-218.

9. Cost-benefit Analysis and the Value of Research and Innovation

- a. The added value that can most realistically come out of a regional body like CECAF therefore would be that information or data which is very difficult to gather or monitor remotely. In particular, details pertaining to smaller-scale coastal and artisanal fisheries in West African states is something that CECAF for example has distinct comparative advantages in (at least potentially). Whilst this information on coastal and artisanal fishing communities still relates only to a minority share of the overall fish catch within the CECAF area of responsibility, it is a share that is rising.
- b. Moreover, the ‘political capital’ associated with coastal and artisanal fisheries is very substantial, as is evidenced for example by growing international media coverage of public disputes over the perceived illegitimacy of near-shore fishing in parts of West Africa by some international fishing operators. This also needs to be factored into further Cost-benefit Analysis for CECAF.
- c. Illustratively in relation to the possible opportunity costs of not realising political capital, the legitimate sale of fishing rights by CECAF coastal member states to responsible international fishing fleets could come under review if the growing controversies between fishing countries referred to earlier escalate. These are conflicts which can be mitigated through better information; and the consequences of not mitigating them would be negative both for the governments issuing priced fishing rights, and for the countries paying for them⁴. Another case might be the possible need to spend a lot more on policing and litigating in respect of conflicts of interests in of fishing in the CECAF area, because weak information bases make it difficult to prove the legal bases for the required changed behaviours.

10. Responsibilities to Pay for the Initial Investment and Associated Practical Considerations

- a. A case could be made now to divide responsibilities for paying for the abovementioned investment at country level (at least those countries who are members of CECAF). The likely administrative costs of such a complex revenue collection strategy amongst countries with very small if any fisheries budgets however, are likely to exceed the benefits. This is quite apart from delays over likely political fallouts over precise definitions especially within the coastal CECAF countries, which are likely to erode most of the potential gains.
- b. Statistics on both these dimensions are currently imprecise, and one justifiable purpose of any initial fund’s augmentation to CECAF, we would recommend, is a

⁴ This is a classic instance of the so-called benefits of trade – the responsible fishing company is able to efficiently make use of the resources and get them to the best end-user markets at low cost, and is willing to pay the host country a fee for this; whereas the host country lacks the tools to achieve the same and indeed it would be inefficient to do so; so it would rather have the cash to pay for other aspects of its needs/priorities.

project dedicated to providing greater precision and inclusiveness on just these points. Thus, after say a three-year commitment by EU and ECOWAS to fund initial augmentation, there would be a review of the augmented funding formula based upon CECAF activities that clarified the rationale for more inclusive and legitimate funding ratios than the initial simplified formulation.

- c. There may also be a need to review initially anticipated scales of augmentation, since the CBA research indicates that whilst a million Euros per annum would be sufficient as an intermediate step to improve the functioning of CECAF, targets should be higher at a later point.

11. Pointers Towards More Refined Formulae

- a. By suggesting a number of possible parameters according to which augmented regional fisheries research ought to be funded, not only for CECAF but similar bodies elsewhere in the world, there is a possibility of developing more inclusive funding options.
- b. The diminishing ability of FAO to fund such bodies as CECAF therefore deserves tackling in its own right, perhaps via a campaign to enhance major fishing and fish-consuming country contributions to global fisheries research (preferably channelled via FAO). As such, CECAF could be argued to be just one of about a dozen cases of similar bodies world-wide which are deserving of greater multi-national support.
- c. The CBA proposes medium to longer term funding augmentation initiatives for CECAF, to be tested and further developed once our already proposed EU/ECOWAS initiative hopefully commences:
 - i. Based upon calculations from the FAO ocean regions, the Eastern Central Atlantic (region 34) comprises about two percent of these total oceans; thus, arguably⁵, some fraction of two percent of the major fish producing and consuming country fisheries budgets (which are in any case increasingly committed to researching sustainability matters) could – in-principle - be set aside for enhancing CECAF fisheries research. However;
 - ii. Independent nation-states are likely to argue that it is the responsibility of nations closest to ocean sub-regions to fund sustainability research relating to such regions. The counter-argument, of course, is the interdependence of oceans and fish consumption globally. A funding formula balance therefore should perhaps be struck between proximity, and the scale of fisheries activities and/or consumption by countries world-wide. In terms of such a balance, at least two-thirds of a country's fisheries budget could legitimately

⁵ Actually, because the Eastern Central Atlantic is one of the more productive fishing regions, its surface area could be argued to understate its importance.

be spent exclusively on the region/s closest to them, but some remainder allocated to the rest of the oceans, in decreasing proportions to those further away.

- iii. In the case of CECAF, most of (the very limited) fisheries research budgets should/could be committed by countries whose coastlines are contiguous with the Eastern Central Atlantic; declining to one tenth of one percent of overall fisheries budgets for those major fisheries budget countries much further away (e.g. China, Japan). Hence, we would suggest that fisheries budgets of major fishing nations could form a starting point for enhanced funding of CECAF and also serve as a model for the funding of other regionally based fisheries research.
- d. It is recognised of course first that the precise details of such projected contributions/management will require further refinement and calibration (and indeed policy debate); and, second, that some of the largest projected contributions, under such a scenario, are expected to come from countries not currently represented in CECAF (like China).

12. Building capacity

- a. The CBA conducted a specialist field report drawing upon extensive African regional knowledge and expertise has been prepared. Its main conclusions are as follows:

i. Strengthening science capacity of CECAF

Research facilities

In order to support the Scientific Sub-Committees with practical implementation of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, which provides principles and standards applicable to the conservation, management and development of all fisheries, FAO put in place the 'ecosystem approach to fisheries' (EAF). In the CECAF region as Africa as a whole, FAO has been providing support for implementation EAF mainly through the EAF-Nansen Project (now the EAF-Nansen Programme).

ii. Capacity building

The CBA suggested that urgent actions are needed in order to improve the capacity of CECAF member states. The following are some of the areas:

Research capacity

Research institutions in the member states need capacity development in the following areas:

- (i) basic computing,
- (ii) basic fisheries statistics,
- (iii) fishery data collection,
- (iv) data analysis, and
- (v) report writing and reporting.

It was clear from the interviews (and CECAF technical reports) that most member states are using different research methodologies, consequently, it is not easy to pool data from countries and use a single analysis methodology. Therefore, it will be important for CECAF to conduct training related to the below areas or work.

- (vi) Catch assessment and frame surveys;
- (vii) Data storing;
- (viii) development of associated manuals;
- (ix) identification and evaluation stocks; and
- (x) development of fisheries management plans, especially for shared stocks.

Research vessels from a number of nations have conducted acoustic surveys in the region in the past (Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Russia and Norway) (*FAO 2016; FAO 2018; FAO 2018b; FAO 2019*); but in recent years, coordinated surveys with the national research vessels have not been carried out and of the coastal countries only Morocco has conducted regular surveys. Therefore, it is important for FAO to:

- (xi) mobilize all the current non-African members of CECAF (e.g. Russia) and ensure that they continue to stock assessment surveys, as well as recruitment surveys.
- (xii) relaunching coordinated regional surveys to estimate abundance throughout the species' distribution, undertaking recruitment surveys along the species' range.
- (xiii) strengthening of age reading and validation methods, continuation of size frequency analysis, and more comprehensive fishing effort series and bio sampling programs (*FAO,2019*).

Management capacity

Through the CBA it was apparent that most national universities in the region do not offer specialised fisheries management courses at the Bachelor's degree level. This means that most fisheries officer come from either agricultural, engineering or veterinary backgrounds, and later go for specialized courses at Master's degree levels.

Therefore, it will be important for FAO and partners to work with some of the universities in the region (e.g. University of Anta Diop in Dakar; University of Ghana and University of Douala, to mention but a few) to design and implement a fisheries management course at a Bachelor's degree level.

CECAF should strengthen its collaboration with FCWC, COREP and SRFC in order to provide links to the management recommendations of CECAF, as well as support countries to apprise themselves of the recommendations and reflect these in relevant national fisheries management plans.

The Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (Commission Sous-Régionale des Pêches, CSRP) that includes Cabo Verde, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone has led efforts to assess and manage the small pelagic stocks in the region jointly with Morocco. An advisory committee for the small pelagic was created under the CSRP; and a project was in place to characterize, monitor and develop a strategic plan for the mentioned fisheries and resources. However, the degree to which these efforts have progressed is unclear. Therefore, it will be important for CECAF to draw lessons from SRFC for the management of transboundary small pelagic stocks in the rest of CECAF.

CECAF and other RFBs together with ECOWAS/ECCAS should press managers to implement a recovery strategy for other target species in this multi-species fishery to ensure that all such species are at least above biologically-based limit reference points (or proxies for the point of recruitment impairment), especially for Cunene horse mackerel, Atlantic horse mackerel, and round sardinella.

iii. Capacity of Chairs of SSC

It is critical for CECAF to ensure that Chairs of SSC are empowered to be “**CECAF Champions**” at national and regional levels. They should be provided with technical and financial support to ensure that they can advocate for CECAF at all levels and be able to influence the process of preparation of Fisheries Management Plans in the member states.

The Chairs should also act as “**Friends of the Secretariat**”. In this case, they should support the Secretary of CECAF during intersessional periods to ensure that there is

constant communication between the Secretariat and member states as well as other stakeholders, especially Non-State Actors and Artisanal Fisheries Associations.

ACTIONS REQUESTED BY THE COMMITTEE

The Committee is asked to reflect on the outputs of the cost-benefit assessment and provide supporting information from a national perspective on the means to apply the necessary actions.