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pour  
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et  
l'agriculture

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## **FISHERY COMMITTEE FOR THE EASTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC**

### **Twenty-second Session**

**Libreville, Gabon, 17-19 September 2019**

**Improvement of data quality and assessment models for working groups**

### **SUMMARY**

As part of the suite of activities under the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) working groups, dedicated efforts have been set to support the improvement of data quality and assessment models of CECAF working groups supported through different initiatives.

The committee is requested to take note of and consider the proposed work aimed at strengthening the quality and of the assessments and the advice provided through the CECAF working groups which will be followed by the Scientific Subcommittee of CECAF.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. In 1998, CECAF established a Scientific Sub-Committee (SSC) with the main function of the SSC to provide advice to the Committee for improved regional fisheries management backed with fisheries data.
2. Working Groups were established to achieve this overarching goal whereby the Working Groups of small pelagic and demersal resources were created. Further, these Working Groups are divided into two sub-groups, North (Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, and the Gambia) and the South (includes countries from Guinea-Bissau to Angola; this also includes Island states of Cabo Verde, and Sao Tome and Principe).
3. CECAF Working Groups meet annually, or every two or three years depending the Working Group and on funding availability. A standard approach has been developed for the assessments, and to ensure consistency, a set of assessment methods have been identified and applied, depending on the data and information available.
4. However, the Working Groups are faced with various challenges with respect to the information and data available for applying the standard assessment models, as well as to the human and financial capacity to conduct the necessary analysis and the Working Groups, and follow up on Working Group recommendations, particularly for the Southern sub-groups.
5. The capacity for stock assessment is in general weakened in the CECAF region and there is a need to strengthen members capacity in this domain including to critically review the quality of the underlying data, but also to develop a better scientific understanding to support the advice process.
6. To address the above issues, support to implement targeted activities has been sought and confirmed from various sources, including from the EAF-Nansen Programme and the CECAF-PESCAO project. Furthermore, the European Union has agreed to support a specific initiative in this regard as described below.

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT OF DATA QUALITY AND ASSESSMENT MODELS**

7. The overall objective is to improve the quality of assessments and management advice produced by the Working Groups for consideration by the Scientific Sub-Committee, and subsequently lead to improved management of fish stocks and ecosystem health across the CECAF region.
8. This series of activities analyses the current gaps in data and information as identified by the CECAF Working Groups. They provide an overview of the current stock assessment capacity in the region and elaborate strategies to how information can be improved in the future and look into more harmonization and standardized research programmes to support assessments, including surveys. A tool for improved data management of the existing Working Group data will also be developed. These activities will be presented to pre-Working Group “trainings” for the southern sub-groups of small pelagics and demersal, as well as to the northern- subgroup for demersal resources.

9. The trainings will aim to improve the understanding of the data requirements and needs for current assessment methods, including with respect to data quality. Alternative methods will also be discussed (including data-poor assessment) and it is expected that the actions may lead to a revised list species/stocks assessed in the Working Groups, and the types of assessment models used.
10. Annex A provides an overview of the activities planned under this initiative.

## **APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY**

11. FAO and the CECAF Secretariat manages this project's activities and presents, in close coordination with other activities supporting CEACF works. Outputs and results will be presented to the 9th Session of the Scientific Sub-Committee and the 23rd Session of the Committee (planned for 2020 or 2021).
12. The activities planned are closely connected with the conduct of the work of the respective working groups and will allow the organization and implementation of these as agreed by the 8th session of the CECAF Scientific Sub-Committee: The demersal South and North Working Groups are both planned for the 4th quarter of 2019 in Cabo Verde and Mauritania respectively and the Small Pelagics South Working Group is planned for early 2020 in Côte d' Ivoire.
13. In conjunction with the conduct of the Working Groups, three capacity-building workshops are planned for the two southern Working Groups of CECAF (Small Pelagics and Demersal resources) and for the Demersal North Working Group. Support will be provided for the preparation of all needed documentation for the meetings, preparation of training material and finalization and dissemination of reports and results. The participations to these training workshops will be the members or the respective Working Groups, and the lessons learned will be implemented during the Working Groups for the provision of management advice to the CECAF Scientific Committee.
14. The activities will be planned and implemented in close coordination with other projects that are supporting the assessment working groups of CECAF, such as the CECAF-PESCAO project and the EAF-Nansen Programme to ensure synergies and optimum benefits for CECAF countries. The results will be presented to the 9<sup>th</sup> session or the SSC and the subsequent provision of management advice to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Committee for the formulation of management recommendations.
15. It is expected that this initiative will result in improved recommended management advice on the main transboundary stocks and fisheries in the CECAF area.

## **ACTIONS REQUESTED BY THE COMMITTEE**

The committee is requested to take note of and consider the proposed work aimed at strengthening the quality and of the assessments and the advice provided through the CECAF Working Groups which will be followed by the Scientific Sub-committee of CECAF.

## Annex A - Improvement of data quality and assessment models for Working Group outputs and activities

OUTPUTS	ACTIVITES
1. Analysis on the current gaps in data and information as identified by the Working Groups or Small Pelagics-South, Demersal-South) and Demersal-North,	1.1 Interviews/questionnaires with Working Group Chairs to consolidate current gaps in data and information as identified by the Working Group meetings. 1.2 Provide an overview of key constraints related to Working Group member capacity for providing data in appropriate format, conducting assessments, and providing management advice to the CECAF Scientific Sub-committee.
2. Technical review of possible models and methodologies for data-poor fisheries and low capacity regions by an assessment expert with knowledge of the CECAF region.	2.1 Integrated findings from Output 1 of this proposed action and of Output 1.3 of the PESCAO funded project and elaborated strategies for how information can be improved in the future and look into more harmonized and standardized research programmes including surveys. 2.2 Revise species/stocks assessed in the Working Groups, and the types or assessment models used (including data-poor assessments).
3. Develop a standardized input format for relevant information for the Working Groups and a procedure for managing and storing this information to be easily retrievable and available to working group members.	3.1 Integration of the recommendations from Output 2 of this proposed action into data collection procedures with a format easily accessed by the Working Group members.
4. Relevant data for the assessment of both North and South demersal species and the south Small pelagics submitted by members to the Working Groups.	4.1 Countries supported to provide all data available for the assessment of demersal species, both North and South, and the Small Pelagics South made available and presented to the Working Groups in an agreed format.
5. Trainings on the use alternative assessment models and approaches, and their data requirements, conducted and reports made available in English and French. This Output 5 will be integrated with Output 1.3 of the PESCAO funded project.	5.1 Conduct three training meetings with Working Groups: Demersal North, Demersal South, and Small Pelagics South.  5.2 Meeting reports finalized, translated and made available to the Working Groups in English and French.  5.3 Working Group sessions utilize the results from Output 1-4 of this proposed action.