

FIRMS Steering Committee Meeting
Eleventh Session
Rome, Italy 13-14 and 18 May 2019
SUMMARY OF TWG6 RECOMMENDATIONS
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BACKGROUND

Three TWG meetings were held during the intersessional period, two e-meetings (TWG 6.1 and TWG 6.2), and TWG 6 jointly held with the BlueBRIDGE TWG3 on GRSF which was held between the 7 February and 9 February 2018 in Rome, Italy.

The following themes were presented and discussed during the three sessions:

- TWG 6 (7-9 February 2018):
 - The Global Record of Stocks and Fisheries (GRSF) value proposition and development status
 - Business model
 - Governance and Business plan to be presented at the FIRMS Steering Committee FSC11
 - Response to FSC10 concerns
- TWG 6.1 (online, 14 December 2017):
 - Revising FIRMS standards and definitions
 - FIRMS Stocks & Fisheries map viewer, seeking feedback for improvements
 - Informing about the upcoming meeting on the Global Record of Stocks and Fisheries (GRSF) in February 2018
- TWG 6.2 (online, 2 April 2019):
 - Revising FIRMS standards and definitions
 - Informing about the upcoming FIRMS Steering Committee FSC11 and the pilot release of the Global Record of Stocks and Fisheries (GRSF)

REVISING FIRMS STANDARDS AND DEFINITIONS (TWG 6.1, TWG 6.2)

1. **Recommendation#1:** The descriptor “**Considered a single stock** = Yes/No” was recalled as it is leading to inconsistencies in the database.
Two separate descriptors, “Biological stock = Yes/No/Unknown” and “Assessment unit = Yes/No” will be used for search purposes in the database. The Secretariat will update the existing fact sheets with the revised terms and definitions.
2. **Recommendation#2:** The definition for “**Biological stock** = Yes/No/Unknown” was revised as: “**A subset of a species having similar biological characteristics (e.g. growth, reproduction, mortality), inhabiting a particular geographic area and showing negligible genetic mixing with adjacent subsets of the same species**”.

3. **Recommendation#3:** The definition for “**Assessment unit** = Yes/No” needs to connect the notion of Assessment Unit with the notion of Biological Stock. The current connection with Management Unit should not be so binding, considering that the “**Management Unit** = Yes/No” descriptor is complementing the biological stock/assessment unit descriptors. The FIRMS Secretariat is mandated to reformulate the definition and circulate to TWG members for feedback, possibly prior to FSC11.
4. **Recommendation#4:** Controlled terms for the descriptor “**Jurisdictional distribution**” were revised and it was decided that the controlled terms “**Highly migratory**” and “**Straddling between high seas and EEZ**” are to be kept separate with updated definitions.
 - **Highly migratory:** Marine Resource capable of migrating relatively long distances, which is likely to occur both within EEZs and high seas. These are technically straddling stocks, but given their peculiar characteristics they are often managed by specific management bodies, and are here kept as a separate category.
 - **Straddling between high seas and EEZ:** Marine Resource whose distribution overlaps EEZ(s) and areas beyond national jurisdiction
5. **Recommendation#5:** Controlled terms for the descriptor “**Spatial scale**” were revised and the TWG6.2 improved the definition to: “**Geographic level/resolution at which the Marine Resource or Fishery is being reported in FIRMS**”.
6. During TWG6.2 e-meeting (2 April 2019), the Secretariat was mandated to reformulate the definition for Assessment Unit and circulate for off-line comments to be eventually presented at the coming FSC11 meeting. Updated revisions were circulated electronically on the 5th of May 2019 and can be found in **Annex 1** – Further revision of definitions for Biological Stock, Assessment Unit and Management unit descriptors.

REVISING THE FIRMS STOCKS & FISHERIES MAP VIEWER (TWG 6.1)

<http://firms.fao.org/firms/stocks-fisheries-map-viewer>.

7. **Recommendation#6:** It was recommended to omit the term “**Owned by Partner X**” when referring to stocks and fisheries in the pop-ups, and to use “**Reported by Partner X**” instead. [Already implemented]
8. The current mechanism for zooming into selected stock/fishery area requires improving. [Yet to follow-up]
9. Possible indicators of the FIRMS data coverage were presented to be displayed as complementary information within the Stock and Fisheries map viewer. [Yet to follow-up]

THE GLOBAL RECORD OF STOCKS AND FISHERIES (GRSF) (TWG 6)

The following TWG6 recommendations and comments are here reported only for recording purposes since the whole matter is discussed in the meeting document FSC11/2019/5 “The Global Record of Stocks and Fisheries (GRSF)”.

10. GRSF may be used by countries or RFBs as their own repository.

11. GRSF will assign Universally Unique Identifiers (UUIDs) to stocks and fisheries after a thorough quality control of data collated from Fisheries and Resources Monitoring Systems (FIRMS), RAM Legacy Stock Assessment Database and FishSource.
12. It was identified that there is a need to introduce SDGs to RFBs by increasing the capacity building and guidance on how to estimate and report SDG Indicator 14.4.1.
13. It was recommended that the RFBs partners continue to provide data to FIRMS, which in turn will be used by the GRSF.

a) *Business model*

14. The Public/not-for-profit Private partnership business model was selected under the form of a FIRMS-GRSF expanded Partnership, being preferred over a Public-only partnership.
15. A specific collaboration arrangement together with updates in the documentation on the FIRMS governance can be the way to accommodate the integration of the GRSF partners and FIRMS.
16. Selected countries can be part of the FIRMS-GRSF if not covered by RFBs, or as champions for SDG purposes to coordinate the work in their regions and to reduce data harmonization needs between countries.

b) *Governance and Business plan*

17. The FIRMS Rules of Procedures could be the tool to adapt the integration of the GRSF activities in FIRMS like delimiting some committees in the FIRMS TWG.
18. RFBs and countries keep the entire control of the publication of their data in GRSF. In case of issues, they remain the ultimate validator.
19. The TWG suggested that the GRSF should include the SDGs status and SOFIA stock status when published by the countries and the FAO.
20. The FIRMS database and the GRSF knowledge base could constitute a single unique FIRMS-GRSF platform, which is consistent with the fact that the RFBs serve the same data to FIRMS, RAM and FishSource.

c) *Response to FSC10 concerns*

21. Concerns were raised about the proposal including: sustainability of technology choices, control over the process, sustainability and resources to face an increasing interaction with more actors, and possible compromises/lack of neutral position. It was agreed that Infrastructure technology, Content and data sharing issues and Governance including standards be dealt with distinctly.
22. The Board of GRSF will be the FSC under the current FIRMS Partnership Agreement. It is not expected that the latter has to be amended to implement the GRSF ownership. Rather, the Rules of Procedures may be invoked to rule some aspects of the organization to include the data provision/dissemination and technical discussions involving GRSF.
23. According to the FIRMS Partnership Agreement, FSC will take decisions on the FIRMS TWG's advices.
24. The data standards and content management are totally under the control of FIRMS, guided by its TWG. GRSF partners can join the FIRMS TWG through specific collaborative arrangements and be invited to the relevant Technical Committees as data providers or domain experts.
25. The FIRMS Secretariat will be in charge of negotiating Memorandums of Understanding and Service Level Agreements with the technology providers (currently CNR and FORTH) to ensure the proper collaboration, and further developments will

be guided by the FIRMS TWG. Any provision of additional products and services to external users by the GRSF partners are conducted outside the FIRMS Partnership.

26. To address the issue of record validation and publication, the responsibility of data publishing was given back to the primary provider. In the case of issues, data are stored in a restricted part of the GRSF VRE and in the GRSF Admin VRE, only accessible by the administrators (FIRMS Secretariat), until the issue is properly addressed by a consensus.
27. FIRMS will be the owner of the GRSF VRE and the GRSF Admin VRE, and will be under the operational control of the FIRMS Secretariat.

ANNEX 1 – FURTHER REVISION OF DEFINITIONS FOR BIOLOGICAL STOCK, ASSESSMENT UNIT AND MANAGEMENT UNIT DESCRIPTORS.

FAO's inputs, the feedback from the TWG6.2 and the new revisions are reported here as they were electronically circulated on the 5th of May 2019 for off-line comments to be eventually presented at the coming FSC11 meeting.

Colour legend:

Blue highlight = FAO's inputs to the TWG6.2

Red font = feedback from TWG6.2

Revision = this latest proposal in response to feedback

Biological stock

"A group of individuals of a species that occupies a well-defined spatial range, independent of other stocks of the same species. These stocks may live solely within a country's waters, or may span multiple country jurisdictions."

"A subset of a species having similar biological characteristics (e.g. growth, reproduction, mortality), inhabiting a particular geographic area and showing negligible genetic mixing with adjacent subsets of the same species."

Revision:

"A subpopulation of a species inhabiting a particular geographic area, having similar biological characteristics (e.g. growth, reproduction, mortality) and negligible genetic mixing with other adjacent subpopulations of the same species."

Assessment unit

"A group of individuals of one (or more) species that is the object of a stock assessment and/or any other analysis aiming to investigate stock status. The assessment unit is usually consistent with biological stock or management unit, depending on the purposes of assessment and the nature of the fishery concerned."

Feedback: 1) the definition needs to connect the notion of Assessment Unit with the notion of Biological Stock, 2) the current connection with Management Unit should not be so binding nor implying the existence of management measures

Revision:

"A group of individuals of one (or more) species that is the object of a stock assessment and/or any other analysis aiming to investigate stock status. The assessment unit is ideally consistent with the biological stock extent, but can be established on other basis according to the purposes of assessment and the nature of the fishery concerned."

Note: Beyond the assessment focus, an Assessment Unit can be considered a Management unit (i.e. delineated within a management jurisdiction such as country's EEZ or RFMO's area of competence) on the basis of practical/political convenience, including for implementation of management measures.

Management unit

"The area where the fish was caught and which is targeted by a unique set of measures. This unit (i.e. one - or more - species in a particular area) has generally been defined at regional, national or local scale by a management authority including through stakeholder consultation."

Note: Management units may not correspond to the biological stock.

Revision: (the change concerns only the Note):

Note: Management units may be used for setting the basis for stock status determination, and may not correspond to the biological stock.