

FIRMS Technical Working Group e-Meeting
Sixth session, 2nd part
Online, 2 April 2019
Report
Author: FIRMS Secretariat

OPENING OF SESSION AND THE WELCOME ADDRESS

1. The Sixth Session of the FIRMS Technical Working Group (TWG) e-meeting (second part) was opened by Mr Gentile (FIRMS Secretariat) at 17.00 hrs. Rome time (CEST) on Tuesday 2nd of April 2019. He welcomed the representatives of the following agencies: CCAMLR, CECAF, GFCM, ICCAT, NAFO, IOTC, RECOFI, SEAFO, SWIOFC, WECAFC/NOAA (see Annex 1 List of Participants). NEAFC and ICES provided a justification for not being able to attend.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

2. The agenda (Annex 2) was presented and adopted without modifications.

REVISING FIRMS STANDARDS AND DEFINITIONS

(Meeting document TWG6.2/2019/2)

3. Ms Anton (FIRMS Secretariat) presented the meeting document “Follow up to FIRMS TWG6-1” (Annex 3) describing the proposals aiming to finalize the revisions of the following FIRMS standard descriptors of marine resources: 1) “Considered a single stock”, “Assessment unit”; 2) “Jurisdictional distribution”; and 3) “Spatial scale”.

“Considered a single stock”, “Assessment unit”

4. The TWG6.1 decision regarding the descriptor “Considered a single stock = Yes/No” was recalled. Such descriptor is leading to some inconsistencies in the database

because it has been observed to cause confusion of the two concepts “true (genetic) biological stock” and “assessment unit”. Therefore, the use of two separate descriptors “Biological stock = Yes/No/Unknown” and “Assessment unit = Yes/No” was recommended. The two terms would be used in place of the current descriptor “Considered a single stock”. They would be compulsory and used for search purpose in the database.

5. Regarding definitions, the group elaborated the following “Biological stock” definition from the two proposals presented in the meeting document (Proposal #1, Annex 3): **"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"**. Such elaboration stems from the well-known definition authored by Sparre 1998, with the need to better reflect the biological component of the controlled term while being enough generic without implying mandatory parameters (e.g. growth or mortality). The definition from Institute of Marine Research Norway “*A stock is a population of a species living in a defined geographical area with similar biological parameters (e.g. growth, size at maturity, fecundity etc.)*” was also recalled as example.
6. Regarding the definition on Assessment Unit, it was highlighted the following: 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.
7. It was also recalled that the FIRMS data model already foresees a “Management Unit= Yes/No” descriptor which can further qualify the biological stock/assessment unit descriptors. The Management Unit descriptor may contain, in turn, such notes currently added in the Assessment Unit definition.
8. The FIRMS 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.
9. As per TWG6.1, it was confirmed that FIRMS Secretariat will ask partners to indicate any criteria or direct indications on how to assign Biological stock and Assessment unit values to the list of species under their mandate. Upon that indication, the FIRMS Secretariat will prepare an update of the existing fact sheets with the new terms, to be submitted to each partner for its validation before publication.

“Jurisdictional distribution”

10. As per TWG6.1 requesting a clear distinction between the two controlled terms “Highly migratory” and “Straddling between high seas and EEZ”, the FIRMS Secretariat prepared two alternative options: a) merging of the two terms “Highly migratory” and “Straddling between high seas and EEZ”; and b) provision of clearer definitions, keeping the separation between the two terms.
11. It was pointed out that straddling stocks are not necessarily also highly migratory, such difference is very relevant for NAFO and other partners. Keeping separate would be also consistent with the UNCLOS¹, 1982 Articles 63 (*Stocks occurring within the exclusive economic zones of two or more coastal States or both within the exclusive economic zone and in an area beyond and adjacent to it*) and 64 (*Highly migratory species*).
12. The group opted for keeping the two terms separated and with the proposed definitions collated from UNCLOS, 1982, and related documentation (Proposal #2, see reference list in Annex 3).

“Spatial scale”

13. As per TWG 6.1 request to improve the definition for the descriptor “Spatial scale” removing any ambiguity with the term “monitored” in the current definition (“Geographic level at which the Marine Resource / Fishery is monitored”), the Secretariat presented a new elaboration (Proposal #3, see Annex 3).
14. The group discussed and approved the following: **“Spatial scale: Geographic level/resolution at which the Marine Resource or Fishery is being reported in FIRMS”**.

Informing about the upcoming FIRMS Steering Committee FSC11 (13-14 May 2019, Rome, FAO headquarters) and the pilot release of the Global Record of Stocks and Fisheries (GRSF).

15. Mr Gentile informed on the upcoming FSC11 meeting that will take place at FAO headquarters on the 13-14th of May 2019. The meeting will be held back to back with the CWP meetings which will take place 15-17th of the same week. During those

¹ https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

CWP meeting days, key points of the FSC11 report will be drafted and circulated for feedback. The report adoption session will take place on Saturday morning 18th. So far, upon Partners' confirmation, a good participation is envisaged. The main objectives of the meeting will be to examine and take decision on the various facets of the expansion of the FIRMS Partnership towards comprehensive coverage of world fishery resources. This encompasses membership of additional RFB partners, the adoption of the "Global Record of Stocks and Fisheries" (GRSF) and of the "Global Atlas of Tuna and Tuna-like species", recommended by two technical working groups and workshops held in 2018, and the associated inclusion of collaborative members. Regarding the GRSF, a pilot release is in progress and Partners are welcome to request access to it through the iMarine gateway. Meeting documents on GRSF and Tuna Atlas will be soon circulated in order to inform all Partners about the key aspects which will be discussed during the meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

16. No other topics were discussed.

17. The meeting was closed at 6:45 p.m.

ANNEX 1 - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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ANNEX 2 - ANNOTATED AGENDA

FIRMS Technical Working Group e-Meeting
Sixth session, 2nd part
Online, 2 April 2019
PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA AND TIMETABLE
Author: FIRMS Secretariat

From 17:00 hours to 18:30 hours Rome time (CEST)

1. **Opening of session and introduction**
2. **Adoption of agenda**
3. **Revising FIRMS standards and definitions**
(Meeting document TWG6.2/2019/2)
The discussion held during the GRSF workshop (EAB-TWG2, Rome 28 February – 2 March 2017), the FIRMS Steering Committee (FSC10, Copenhagen, June 2017) and TWG6.1 (Online, Dec. 2017) highlighted the need to update some of the existing FIRMS standards and definitions (ref. to FIRMS Steering Committee decision FSC10/D9.2). Here, we aim to finalize the revisions of the following FIRMS standard descriptors of marine resources:
 1. *“Considered a single stock”, “Assessment unit”;*
 2. *“Jurisdictional distribution”;*
 3. *“Spatial scale”.*
4. **Informing about the upcoming FIRMS Steering Committee FSC11 (13-14 May 2019, Rome, FAO headquarters) and the pilot release of the Global Record of Stocks and Fisheries (GRSF).**
5. **Any other business**

ANNEX 3 – FOLLOW UP TO FIRMS TWG6-1 (Revising FIRMS Standards and Definitions)

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Sixth session, 2nd part
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FOLLOW UP TO FIRMS TWG6-1
Author: FIRMS Secretariat, Giulia Gorelli

Main changes/proposals are highlighted in yellow.

Feedback from FAO in turquoise

Definitions edited during the TWG 6.2 e-meeting

- Feedback #1 (extracted from meeting report):**

“TWG6-1 Participants endorsed the proposal [i.e. to adopt the descriptors: “Biological stock = Yes/No/Unknown” and “Assessment unit = Yes/No”] **and recommended its implementation.**

Partners are kindly asked to indicate any criteria or direct indications on how to assign Biological stock and Assessment unit values to the list of species under their mandate.

Upon that indication, it was agreed that FIRMS Secretariat will prepare an update of the existing fact sheets with the new terms, to be submitted to each partner for its validation before publication.”

Descriptor	Definition	Controlled terms
Biological stock	A subset of a species having the same growth and mortality parameters, inhabiting a particular geographic area and showing negligible mixing with adjacent subsets of the same species (adapted from ²). "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." (adapted from ²). a group of individuals of a species that occupies a well-defined	Yes
		No
		Unknown

	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.	
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. Note: Ideally the fish stock boundaries are known and the assessment unit coincides with the biological stock. However, missing such knowledge or if a stock is very disperse, the assessment units are established on the basis of practical/political convenience, generally on the management jurisdiction which does not necessarily coincide with the biological stock extent/coverage. Being the focus of an assessment, assessment units implicitly inform on the very likely existence of at least some management measures.	Yes
		No

- **Feedback #2:**

“It was finally agreed that the FIRMS Secretariat will prepare a new proposal, including two alternative options: a) merging of the two terms “Highly migratory” and “Straddling between high seas and EEZ”; and b) provision of clearer definitions, keeping the separation between the two terms.”

Proposal 2.a - Merging of the two terms “Highly migratory” and “Straddling between high seas and EEZ”

PROPOSED DEFINITIONS			
Descriptor	Definition	Controlled terms	Definitions (adapted from ³ and ⁴)
Jurisdictional distribution	Typology of shared stocks considering how the stock distribution overlaps marine jurisdictions ¹	National	Marine Resource distributed within the EEZ of one country
		Shared between nations	Marine Resource whose distribution overlaps the EEZ of two or more countries
		High seas purely	Marine Resource that is not found in EEZs
		Straddling between high seas and EEZ/Highly migratory	Marine Resource whose distribution overlaps EEZ(s) and areas beyond national jurisdiction. These include migratory and stationary resources.
		Unspecified	Unspecified

Proposal 2.b - Provision of clearer definitions, keeping the separation between the two terms highly migratory and straddling between high seas and EEZs

PROPOSED DEFINITIONS			
Descriptor	Definition	Controlled terms	Definitions (adapted from ³ and ⁴)
distribution	Typology of shared stocks considering how the stock distribution overlaps marine jurisdictions ¹	National	Marine Resource distributed within the EEZ of one country
		Shared between nations	Marine Resource whose distribution overlaps the EEZ of two or more countries
		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. (The list of highly migratory species can be found in ⁵)
		High seas purely	Marine Resource that is not found in EEZs
		Straddling between high seas and EEZ	Marine Resource whose distribution overlaps EEZ(s) and areas beyond national jurisdiction
		Unspecified	Unspecified

Feedback #3:

“...the participants expressed concern regarding the definition of the Spatial Scale descriptor as “Geographic level at which the Marine Resource / Fishery is monitored”. Particularly, it is not clear what the word “monitored” refers to. In fact, it was pointed out that the monitoring of a fishery can occur at different geographic scales simultaneously. It was clarified that the term “monitored” in this context stands for “reported”, meaning the spatial scale at which the resource / fishery is being reported in FIRMS. In this regard, the group agreed that FIRMS Secretariat will improve the definition of the “Spatial scale” descriptor to remove any ambiguity.”

Current definition of spatial scale: Geographic level at which the Marine Resource / Fishery is **monitored**¹

Proposed definition of spatial scale: Geographic level/**resolution** at which the Marine Resource or Fishery is being reported in FIRMS

References

¹ FIRMS Marine Fishery resources Inventory: Methods and Guidelines

² Sparre, P., Venema, S.C. Introduction to tropical fish stock assessment. Part 1. Manual. FAO Fisheries Technical Paper. No. 306.1, Rev. 2. Rome, FAO. 1998. 407p

³ Maguire, J.-J., Sissenwine, M., Csirke, J., Grainger, R., Garcia, S. The state of world highly migratory, straddling and other high seas fishery resources and associated species. FAO Fisheries Technical Paper. No. 495. Rome: FAO. 2006. 84p.

⁴ The Quest for Sustainable International Fisheries. Evelyne Meltzer, 2010 (NRSC Research Press Editor)

⁵ UN, 1982. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Annex I (Highly Migratory Species) http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf