



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations**

## REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES

### TENTH SESSION

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### REPORT ON THE WORKING GROUP ON AQUACULTURE (WGA)

#### Executive summary

This document serves to report on the intersessional period work of RECOFI Working Group on Aquaculture. During the inter-sessional period from May 2017, the following events were organized under the programme of work of the WGA: Regional Workshop on Building National Capacity for Cultured Animal Disease Diagnostic in Relation to Bio-Security (Cairo, Egypt, 6-8 March 2018); and Eighth meeting of the WGA (Kuwait City, State of Kuwait, 17-19 April 2018). During the inter-sessional the following works/initiatives were underway: Marine spatial planning for the RECOFI Area; update of RECOFI Regional Aquaculture Information System, and the initiative on the integration of current RECOFI regional data set into RAIS.

#### Suggested Action by the Commission

The Commission is invited to:

- Note this report and provide further general guidance.

## INTRODUCTION

1. During the intersessional period the following two events of the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) took place:

- Regional Workshop on Building National Capacity for Cultured Animal Disease Diagnostic in Relation to Bio-Security; Cairo, Egypt, 6-8 March 2018, and
- Eighth meeting of the RECOFI Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA); Kuwait City, State of Kuwait, 17-19 April 2018.

## REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON BUILDING NATIONAL CAPACITY FOR CULTURED ANIMAL DISEASE DIAGNOSTIC IN RELATION TO BIO-SECURITY

2. The workshop was originally scheduled to be held in Saudi Arabia. For organizational reasons, however, it was held in Cairo, Egypt, from 6 to 8 March 2018. The regional workshop was

complementary to the following previous work of the WGA: the Introductory Training Course on Risk Analysis for Movements of Live Aquatic Animals for RECOFI Members and the Round-table Meeting on RECOFI Regional Aquatic Biosecurity, held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, from 1 to 5 November 2015. 8. The meeting was informed that the workshop consisted of two-day lectures and a one-day practical diagnostic exercise in a laboratory. The workshop was attended by five participants representing three of the eight RECOFI Members, Iraq (one participant), Sultanate of Oman (one participant) and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (three participants), as well as one FAO staff and five invited lecturers

3. The WGA took note that the workshop provided an overview of the major infectious fish and shrimp diseases. The One-day practical laboratory session, which was held in the Central Laboratory for Aquaculture Research (CLAR), based in Abbassa, Sharkeya, provided introductory level laboratory diagnosis methods for viral and bacterial fish diseases.

#### **EIGHTH MEETING OF THE WGA: KEY DISCUSSIONS, OUTCOMES AND DECISIONS**

4. The eighth meeting of WGA was held in Kuwait City, State of Kuwait, from 17 to 19 April 2018. Sixteen participants from six members of the Commission attended, namely, Bahrain, State of Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman, State of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. The Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) was present at the meeting as an invited regional organization.

5. Key discussions, outcomes and decisions of the meeting were as follows:

- The Meeting was informed about the intersessional period activities;
- The Meeting was briefed on the main decisions and recommendations of (i) Seventh Meeting of RECOFI Working Group on Aquaculture; (ii) Ninth Session of RECOFI; (iii) ninth session of the FAO COFI-Sub-Committee on Aquaculture; (iv) Thirty-third session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East;
- The Meeting was briefed on recent aquaculture developments, including emerging issues and national priorities in RECOFI countries;
- Revised copies of the National Aquaculture Sector Overview (NASO) were updated at the meeting for their publication in the dedicated FAO and RAIS web pages. The updated NASOs were then published in the FAO and RAIS dedicated web pages;
- The Meeting was briefed on the Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS). The analysis covering the period from 15 March 2016 to 15 April 2018 suggests that there is a global interest in RAIS, primarily from RECOFI's competence area. The WGA noted that national aquaculture information and data had not been regularly updated during the intersessional period, which caused a considerable limitation in assessing status and trends of aquaculture at the regional, sub-regional and national levels. the WGA agreed to update: (NASO and the National Aquaculture Legislation Overview (NALO); the RAIS data and information for each directory, including contact details of the RAIS Focal Point; RAIS National Centre details; the Virtual and Photo Library; and aquaculture production data within one month following the eighth meeting of the WGA. The WGA also agreed to regularly post news on the "News and Events" section;
- The Meeting was provided with the implementation status of status and progress regarding the three-phased implementation roadmap agreed on by the WGA during its seventh meeting for the implementation of the RECOFI Recommendation on Minimum Data Reporting on

Aquaculture (RECOFI/8/2015/1). It was noted that except for production data by intensity of farming system, which are not commonly collected due to lack of established standard definition for intensity, the scope of aquaculture data recommended for collection and reporting by RECOFI under production statistics generally match with the aquaculture data collection questionnaires in current use by FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department (FI). As regards reporting of aquaculture production data by Member States to FAO, The Meeting noted that RECOFI member countries have varying levels of capacity and show varying levels of compliance in national data reporting to FAO in terms of: (i) completeness in data coverage; (ii) validation of actual production and projected/expected production by producers; (iii) identification of farmed species using internationally established standard references such as the ASFIS list for fisheries statistics purposes (available at <http://www.fao.org/fishery/collection/asfis/en>); (iv) classification/disaggregation of production by farming system; and (v) timeliness in reporting. In view of the current situation of aquaculture data reporting to FAO by RECOFI member states, the meeting reiterated the need for members to focus first on production statistics using existing FAO data questionnaires before national data scheme to expand to cover additional statistical areas;

- The two data questionnaires in MS Excel format used by FAO for annual data collection on aquaculture, namely AQNS1 and FishStat-AQ forms, were presented to the WGA, specifically explaining areas of major concern regarding national data collection and reporting. In addition, the ASFIS List of Species for Fishery Statistics Purposes, an annually updated international standard reference, was introduced to WGA for recommendation to the member countries for use in production statistics in both capture and aquaculture; and
- It was agreed that while FAO/FI will take aquaponics and Recirculated Aquaculture Systems (RASs) into consideration for the future update of global aquaculture data questionnaires, WGA members will be consulted by FAO/FI regarding the finalization of national data reports of their respective countries, for the reference years 2017 and 2018.
- The meeting was briefed on the development of marine cage culture in the Near East for Enhanced aquaculture sustainability and also FAO's initiatives on the FAOs initiatives on the ecosystem approach to aquaculture (EAA), Blue Growth (BG), and the sustainable development goals as essential frameworks for aquaculture development to target fish as the entry point for improving nutrition and livelihoods of targeted communities. The WGA recognized the knowledge base established by the Secretariat on marine cage culture and MSP in the RECOFI competence area and concluded that to move forward, the next phase would be to proceed a technical workshop. The draft set of guidelines on criteria for marine fish cage site selection will be prepared by the Secretariat with the help of a consultant and distributed in advance of the technical workshop. The WGA Focal Points agreed to review the information that will be prepared by the Secretariat and to propose criteria that could be considered for adoption as RECOFI guidelines.

### ***On-going work***

#### ***Marine spatial planning for the RECOFI Area***

6. At its seventh session (2013), the Commission recognized the knowledge base established by the Secretariat for spatial planning in the RECOFI region and concluded that to move forward, the next phase of the spatial planning development programme should be to proceed with an “operational phase” and, within available resources, provide the necessary support for its implementation. In accordance with the

decision of the WGA, a technical paper on cage site-selection criteria is being prepared.

*RECOFI Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS)*

7. Works are underway to regularly update the RAIS webpage. Mr Kadarkaraiyandi Kumar, Marine Biology Expert of the RAIS Regional Centre based in Kuwaiti Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAFR), is currently the principle technical person updating the RAIS in collaboration with national RAIS contact persons, the Chairperson of the WGA and the RECOFI Secretariat.

1. An updated concept note prepared by the Fisheries and Aquaculture Information and Statistics Branch (FIAS) on the integration of current RECOFI regional data set into RAIS was sent by the RECOFI Secretary in May 2019 to PAAFR for likely financial support from Kuwait.