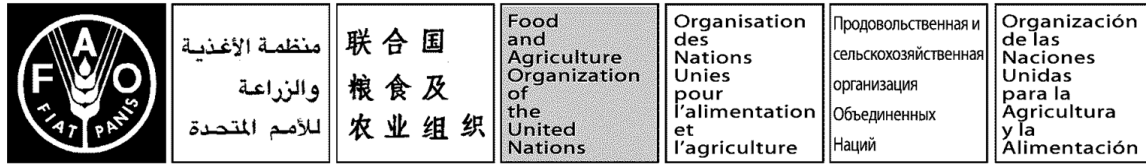


November 2018



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| WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC) |
| NINTH SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY GROUP (SAG) |
| Bridgetown, Barbados, 19-20 November 2018 |
| Intersessional Activities – Review of the WECAFC Work Programme 2018 |

1. This document provides brief information on the intersessional activities of the Commission and FAO in the WECAFC area. The last programme of work approved by the Commission was approved during the 16th Session held in Guadeloupe. The intersessional activities of the 2016–2017 period has been reported to the 8th Session of the Scientific Advisory Group, Merida, Mexico, 3-4 November 2017.
2. This year is marked by a transition of more than 6 months between the departure of the outgoing WECAFC Secretary and the resumption of duties in mid-July 2018 by the new Secretary, with no real coordination of the regional fishery body's secretariat.
3. The current document, which fits within the above context, does not aim to be exhaustive. It will present the key achievements following five main headings, nonetheless consistent with the technical focus areas presented at the last session of the Commission and recalled as follows:
 - Area 1: Improve regional fisheries governance
 - Area 2: Increase regional information and collaboration in fisheries
 - Area 3: Strengthen regional fisheries management and best-practices approaches for fisheries and aquaculture

WECAFC working groups meetings

4. Most Working group meetings initially planned for 2018 were conducted. The following were successfully held, leading to finalized recommendations presented to the 9th Session of SAG as WECAFC/SAG/IX/2018/2, new TORs as WECAFC/SAG/IX/2018/Inf. 11, for the couple of groups which revised their terms of reference, and Work plans, as WECAFC/SAG/IX/inf. 12:
 - Second meeting of the OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CFMC working group on Caribbean Spiny Lobster, held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, from 21 to 23 March 2018
 - 2nd meeting of the CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations, held in Miami, USA, 27-29 March 2018

- The 1st meeting of the Regional Fisheries Data and Statistics, held in Christ Church, Barbados, 14-16 May 2018
 - The 1st Meeting of the WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Guianas-Brazil Shelf
 - The 3rd Meeting of the Regional Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, held in Christ Church, Barbados, 26-28 September 2018
 - The 3rd Meeting of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch, held in Panama City, Panama, 30 October-1st November 2018
5. This section should be read in conjunction with the indicated documents for further information. The reports of these meetings are under preparation and should be available over the next three months.
 6. The Joint CRFM/WECAFC Working Group on Flyingfish in the Eastern Caribbean had a special meeting, in Blue Horizon Hotel, Christ Church, Barbados, 1-2 October, 2018. The consolidated recommendations will be presented to the next SAG, tentatively scheduled for March 2019, as a virtual session.
 7. The anticipated meetings of the Fish Aggregating Device and on Sharks are now rescheduled to 2019.

Projects development and implementation

8. In terms of new projects, the Secretariat in collaboration with partners (in CITES and NOAA) prepared the EU-funded project “*Support to the implementation of the Regional Plan for the Management and Conservation of Queen conch*”, 133,285 USD, and a second one “*Support to implementation of the Regional Plan of Action to deter and eliminate Illegal, Unreported*” 197,531.80 USD, which were both instrumental in the organization of the relevant working groups’ meeting.
9. Implementation of other planned activities is being unfolding. This includes a Regional Plan of Action to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU Fishing (RPOA-IUU) the preparation of which was launched at the 3rd meeting of the relevant WECAFC Working Group.
10. As key executing partner, WECAFC Secretariat hosts and supports the implementation of regional projects:
 - Coordination of the process which led to the inception of the project *Developing Organizational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-Scale Fisheries*” (StewardFish) (GCP/SLC/211/GFF) 1.77 Million USD. This project, which is aimed at implementing the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem plus Strategic Action Programme (CLME+ SAP) within Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines by empowering fisherfolk throughout fisheries value chains to engage in resource management, decision-making processes and sustainable livelihoods, with strengthened institutional support at all levels, had its inception workshop 13-14 September 2018.
 - WECAFC through its EU-funded project jointly organized the 3rd IUU WG meeting with the FAO executed shrimp and groundfish component of CLME+ project “*Catalysing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems*”, (UNJP/RLA/217/OPS). . This component of 1.3 million USD started during the 2018 summer. A sub-regional and national EAF Management Plans are under development for the target fisheries resources, and to initiate the assessment of shrimp and groundfish stocks status. A data preparatory workshop was held 23-25 October 2018.

- The project Climate Change Adaptation in the Eastern Caribbean Fisheries Sector (GEF Special Climate Change Fund supported) which covers 7 (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago), has increased resilience and reduced vulnerability to climate change impacts in the Eastern Caribbean fisheries sector, through introduction of adaptation measures in fisheries management and capacity building of fisherfolk and aquaculturists through Climate Change Adaptation in the Eastern Caribbean Fisheries Sector (CC4FISH) Project. This project has, inter alia, developed and carried out vulnerability assessments of coastal communities to climate change in two countries, trained over 600 fishers to improve safety-at-sea, 40 fish farmers have been trained in aquaponics. Two workshops have been held on integrating the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries, Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management into fisheries legislation, plans and policies as well as Fisheries and Aquaculture Emergency Response Training. A symposium on Sargassum management is being organized on 21-22nd November 2018.
- The project on sustainable management of bycatch in Latin America and Caribbean Fisheries (REBYC-II LAC) in support of the national level application of the 2010 FAO International Guidelines on Bycatch Management and Reduction of Discards by WECAFC members. It is working with a diverse group of stakeholders in Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname and Brazil to develop responsible trawl fisheries- a crucial fishery in all three countries. This year particularly countries are developing studies to evaluate shrimp and groundfish value chains, including the ways in which women participate in them; a draft strategy has been prepared and presented as WECAFC/SAG/IX/2018/8. This project jointly organized the meeting of the Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Guianas-Brazil Shelf.
- Through the Caribbean Billfish Project project (component of the Ocean Partnerships For Sustainable Fisheries And Biodiversity Conservation – Models For Innovation And Reform) (GCP/SLC/001/WBK) will complete its activities on 30th November. Value chain improvements for export tunas in Grenada were linked to sustainable fishery actions to promote access to more profitable and less volatile markets. Two workshops were held to promote the sustainable management of billfish and other shared stock resources. A Business case is being prepared and foreseen as an essential input to inform the WECAFC transformation process into an RFMO;
- This year also saw the operational clearance and launch of two major Port States Measures Agreement Implementation Support Projects in the region, but hosted by the Rome-based coordinating unit of the global PSMA programme. They are implemented within the framework of FAO's global capacity development Umbrella Programme to support developing coastal States and Small Island Developing States in building capacity to adopt and implement the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA), complementary international instruments and regional mechanisms to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Partnership, advocacy, data and information sharing for improved regional governance in fisheries

- Apart from the introductory meeting between OSPESCA, CRFM Executive Directors and the new WECAFC Secretary held in the margins of the 33rd Committee on Fisheries (9-13 July 2018), two formal meetings of the Fisheries Interim Coordination Mechanism (FICM) were held this year, the last one (the 8th session) was organized back-to-back with the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) Interim Coordination Mechanism Meeting, on 18 August 2018 in Miami.

- Contribution to the process of establishment of a Permanent Policy Coordination Mechanism (PPCM) and a Sustainable Financing Plan (SFP) for Ocean Governance in the CLME+ region. WECAFC attended the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) Interim Coordination Mechanism Meeting and the PPCM and SFP Regional Consultation, respectively held 15-17 Aug 2018, Miami, Florida and 25-26 September in Cartagena, Colombia. Inputs are also being provided in relevant documents requiring a review and through electronic consultations.
11. The finalization of the discussion paper in support of the WECAFC Strategic reorientation process to clarify issues in relation to WECAFC's objectives, competency area, stocks coverage, budgetary implications for Member states, institutional structure membership, decision making processes, national sovereignty aspects and its objectives. This report is now being translated in the other two languages before it is sent to all WECAFC member countries for their review and preparedness for a specific meeting to be organized towards February/March 2019.

Resource mobilization

- Besides the EU Trust fund projects in support of WECAFC Working Groups, current efforts are laid on preparing proposals within the framework of GEF7. At least two proposals are contemplated for the Caribbean region. The more advanced proposal, which was endorsed by the Ministerial Council of CRFM on 11 October 2018 aims to focus on using existing SAPs to develop national Blue Economy (BE) strategies that are addressing more than just the core LME modules of governance, pollution and habitats/conservation and fisheries, but to also include the other sectors as well as elements of FAO's approach to Blue Growth: value adding through food loss/waste reduction, energy efficiencies/carbon footprint, decent work and innovation (technical and financial).
- Consultation and financial support request preparation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Fisheries Service, Office for International Affairs and Seafood Inspection. This is for the organization of WECAFC17, tentatively in April/early May 2019 in Miami. The official commitment for hosting the event is yet to be received by FAO. However an informal agreement reached recently is that NOAA will contract a service provider who will be responsible for the local logistics, including selecting a venue and dates that are mutually agreeable to NOAA/NMFS and WECAFC/FAO, setting and managing a meeting registration website, identifying some suitable hotels within the vicinity of the venue for communication to WECAFC Secretariat, to properly inform delegates. Funds will be provided to WECAFC/FAO to sponsor travel expenses for selected delegates (airfare, hotel, meals, etc.).

Other regional activities

12. FAO held a regional effective fish trade and sustainable development workshop for Caribbean Small Island Developing States, to contribute to the technical expertise necessary to develop actions at local, national, regional and global levels to enhance the active involvement of SIDS members within the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 framework and implementation of specific activities identified under the Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in SIDS, as well as increase the understanding of the core elements and changes to the trade seascape, including its background, principles, diplomatic influence, legal status, and major issues affecting trade in fishery products.
13. The workshop saw the participation of 12 Caribbean Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) countries, namely Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.