



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

**WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)**

**TENTH SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY GROUP (SAG)**

**Electronic SAG, 4 June 2019**

**Draft Recommendations and resolutions to WECAFC 17 for SAG review**

1. This document provides recommendations and resolutions from WECAFC Working Groups, to be reviewed by the 10<sup>th</sup> session of the SAG, for final review and endorsement by WECAFC 17 in July 2019.
2. For the purpose of clarity and in line with best practices, the use of WECAFC Resolutions and Recommendations is defined below. Both conform with the WECAFC objective to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources in the WECAFC area and address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by Members, and are legally non-binding.
  - a. WECAFC Recommendations promote harmonized sub-regional or regional fisheries conservation, management and development, establish regional measures, and endorse fisheries management plans for sub-regional or regional implementation.
  - b. WECAFC Resolutions encourage all stakeholders in the WECAFC area to implement or support implementation of sub-regional, regional or international voluntary or binding instruments related to fisheries, or address other issues of common interest.
3. The draft Recommendations shown in paragraph 4 were prepared by technical experts, scientists and policy and decision makers representing the WECAFC members in various (joint) Working Groups and workshops.
4. Draft Recommendations for review include:
  - **Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/5 amendment to Recommendation WECAFC/15/2014/2 “ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF FISHERIES USING FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES IN THE WECAFC AREA”**
  - **Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/11 amendment to Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/3 “ON WECAFC DATA COLLECTION REFERENCE FRAMEWORK”**
  - **Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/12 “ON THE LIST OF PRIORITY SPECIES IN THE WECAFC AREA”**

- **Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/14 “ON THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF SPAWING AGGREGATIONS AND AGGREGATING SPECIES”**

**Draft Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/5 amendment to Recommendation WECAFC/15/2014/2 “ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF FISHERIES USING FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES IN THE WECAFC AREA”**

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

*RECALLING* that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

*RECALLING* the conclusions and proposals of the first and second meetings of the WECAFC ad hoc working group on the development of sustainable moored fish aggregating device fishing in the Lesser Antilles (Martinique, 8-11 October 2001 and Guadeloupe, 5–10 July 2004); as well as with those of the recent ICCAT-IATTC-IOTC joint Tuna-RFMO MFAD Working Group meeting (Madrid April 2017) providing new and significant technological and scientific insights regarding the use of MFADs in tuna fisheries;

*REAFFIRMING* its commitments, made at the 14th session of WECAFC, through establishing the

IFREMER/WECAFC Working Group on Development of Sustainable Moored MFAD Fishing in the Lesser Antilles. In this respect the 15th session agreed to expand the Working Group into a joint Working Group on MFADs in which WECAFC, JICA, IFREMER and CRFM participated;

*RECOGNIZING* the conclusions and recommendations of the CRFM-JICA CARIFICO/WECAFC- IFREMER MAGDELESA Workshop on MFAD fishery Management, which was held in St Vincent and the Grenadines, 9-11 December 2013;

*RECOGNIZING* the important scientific research results pertaining behavior of target and bycatch species associated with moored MFADS and capacity building carried out on MFADs by the EU funded MAGDELESA project, as well as the pilot activities on MFADs conducted under the CRFM-JICA project on the "Formulation of a Master Plan on sustainable use of fisheries resources for coastal community development in the Caribbean";

*RECOGNIZING* also the potential contribution that offshore pelagic fisheries may contribute to food and nutrition security, poverty alleviation, income, and employment for present and future generations in the Caribbean;

*CONSIDERING* that the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) issued at its 23rd regular meeting, held in South Africa, November 18-25, 2013, a recommendation (13-01) amending the recommendation on a multi-annual Conservation and Management Program for Bigeye and Yellowfin tunas, which binds a number of WECAFC and CRFM members in terms of MFAD fisheries by industrial fleets catching these tunas;

*WHILE CONCERNED* for the status of significant levels of exploitation of large pelagic resources exerted by several nations and the deficiencies in enforcement and communications recently (April 2017) expressed by Joint ICCAT-IATTC-IOTTC MFAD Working Group regarding 21 regulatory protocols on MFADs;

*NOTING* the ongoing effort of the CRFM through its annual scientific meetings and in collaboration with the CLME and ACP Fish II Projects, to improve conservation and management of the offshore pelagic resources;

**RECOGNIZING** the significant contribution of the CRFM MFAD Management Plan emphasizing on objectives and works necessary to improve MFAD fisheries management in the Caribbean;

**RECOGNIZING** the need of implementing CRFM MFAD Fishery Management Plan with critical considerations on the status of exploitation of the targeted resources as dictated by ICCAT and CFRM resource assessments;

**REAFFIRMING** the need for further action by all interested parties to ensure the long-term sustainable use and management of the offshore pelagic fisheries resources in the region based on an ecosystem approach to fisheries that considers proper dimension of regional MFAD fisheries development under conditions of fully utilized resources availability in the WECAFC region;

**REAFFIRMING** also its commitment to promote the use of co-management and other participatory approaches involving all affected parties in the development and implementation of relevant policies and programmes;

**NOTING** the concerns of the WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries about the billfish stocks in the Caribbean and the untapped value of this resource in terms of catch-and-release fisheries; and considering the noticeable preponderance of blue marlin as the most impacted species in moored MFAD fisheries in the region;

**NOTING** that the fishery on fish-aggregating devices (MFAD) in the Lesser Antilles has grown substantially in the last ten years, apparently increasing catches of pelagic species but also catches of vulnerable and already overexploited stocks of species; and adding the need to regulate MFAD numbers and MFAD density to avoid adverse economic consequences;

**REAFFIRMING** its commitment to the application of the precautionary approach, which establishes that lack of scientific evidence should not be used as a reason for not taking management measures for the conservation of fishery resources and securing sustainable fisheries;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the good efforts of various WECAFC and CRFM members to license MFADs fishers, prepare legislation for MFAD fishery, ensure disaggregated data collection and analysis in terms of MFAD fishery, encourage best-practice design and training in MFAD construction and use, promote safety-at-sea when fishing with MFADs, reduce conflicts over the use of MFAD, notify maritime authorities of MFADs locations, establish co-management regimes for MFAD fishery and promoting the proper maintenance of MFADs;

**NOTING** that the exchange of information between researchers, fisheries managers and fishers on MFADs fishery has improved in recent years and needs to be strengthened;

**RECOGNIZING** that the ongoing development of MFAD fisheries in the WECAFC area provides new opportunities for income generation, livelihoods and contributes to food security, as well as may reduce the pressure on coastal and reef fish stocks;

**FURTHER RECOGNIZING** the need to improve data and information to reduce uncertainties to stock assessment methodologies currently used and to monitor the long term impacts of these fisheries on the stocks especially recognizing that MFAD catch rates (CPUE) are indicators of biomass aggregation by MFADs, which may not reflect relative abundance of the wild stocks;

**CONSIDERING** the need to conduct more research related to the potential impact of moored MFADs on the migration patterns, size/age/sex structures and compositions of stocks, change in yields per recruit and other biological effects due to the conspicuous presence of juvenile tuna species in MFADs, as well as on the currently used concept of CPUE for stock assessment and

management purposes, co-management options, social and economic aspects, environmental and climate change, fishing techniques and technologies;

NOTING the issues on access to resources via MFADs fisheries, and property rights claims and disagreements on MFAD aggregated resources;

NOTING the economic impact of natural phenomena, such as strong hurricanes, on the destruction of MFADs and the lack of reporting of MFAD numbers, locations, lifespan and replacement;

CONSIDERING IFREMER conclusions that species diversity associated with MFADs varies according with regions within the WECAFC area as well as seasonality of the catch rates of target and bycatch species;

*PENDING* the delivery of additional information by the Working Group, CRFM annual scientific meeting and the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG);

*ADOPTS* in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the RECOMMENDATION that:

1. Members of WECAFC prepare (if relevant) national level MFAD fisheries development and MFAD management plans that consider status of exploitation of targeted and bycatch species as determined by ICCAT and CRFM stock assessment results, and put in place appropriate legislation in support of a sustainable MFAD fishery adhering to the FAO Code of Conduct if insufficient technical and scientific data are available for proper management of MFADs at this time.
2. Members of WECAFC adhere to standardize as far as possible MFAD protocols that could generate compatible MFAD fishery statistics using standard terminology (as determined by the Working Group on MFADs) for the different varieties of MFAD fisheries in the WECAFC area and report in an agreed format on their total catch (i.e. landings and discards) and effort data in FAO Area 31 to the Working Group on MFADs in support of ongoing research, decision making and management processes at national and regional level..
3. Members of WECAFC, in line with similar recommendations from ICCAT, IATTC and other RFBs, aim to:
  - a) Prohibit the unauthorized transshipment at sea of MFAD caught fish in the WECAFC area.
  - b) Collect and analyze biological, ecological, social and economic data and information to inform decision making processes on MFAD Fisheries.
4. WECAFC, CRFM, and as appropriate OSPESCA, support the regional harmonization of national MFAD technologies and fishing protocols that will secure compatible fishery regulations contained in national fishery management plans and related legislation, in accordance with the best available information (including scientific evidence and local and traditional knowledge) and consistent with international best practices, and present the progress made to the respective regular sessions of these RFBs.
5. WECAFC, CRFM, and as appropriate OSPESCA, support a regional MFAD characterization of the impacts of moored MFAD fishing in the different regions (within the WECAFC area), and building that regional knowledge into the management decision-making.

6. Members of the WECAFC be encouraged to improve MFAD designs, use non-entangling materials, and adhere to minimum standards to increase durability in order to reduce marine debris, the entanglement of marine animals, and the impact on ecosystems.
7. Members communicate to the Working Group on MFADs the measures taken to adhere to the above paragraphs.
8. The Commission support the Members, in the establishment of stakeholder- and public outreach and communication campaigns, including addressing the need to transfer research findings on MFAD fisheries and communicate best practices to the fishers and facilitate inputs from stakeholders.

- **Draft Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/11 amendment to Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/3 “ON WECAFC DATA COLLECTION REFERENCE FRAMEWORK”**

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC):

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

NOTING that the 16th session of WECAFC held in Guadeloupe, France, 20-24 June 2016, agreed to establish the Regional Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group (FDSWG);

CONSIDERING the identified minimum steps needed to improve the capability of the Commission in becoming a regional fishery management organization (RFMO) to include efforts to (i) Increase and improve fisheries data and statistics, (ii) Increase accuracy of data and statistics via utilizing agreed practices in data collection, (iii) Develop and implement agreed practices for data sharing and (iv) Identify feasible stock assessment models for the region;

MINDFUL that qualitative and quantitative improvement of regional data and statistics requires harmonization and standardization at national and regional level with the definition of minimum data requirements in support of evidence based decision-making;

REAFFIRMING the commitment of CARICOM States to improving evidence based decision-making through regional cooperation as expressed in multiple regional policy documents including the “Strategic Action Programme for the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem”, the CARICOM Strategic Plan, 2015 -2019, the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (CCCFP) and the CRFM Strategic Plan, 2013-2021;

RECOGNIZING the important steps taken by the OSPESCA and CRFM members in terms of building capacity for reliable and timely statistics in the past years.

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the continued efforts by the WECAFC members to increase their capacities to collect, analyze and report fisheries data and statistics;

PENDING the delivery of additional information by the FDS-WG;

**ADOPTS** in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this **RECOMMENDATION** to:

1. Recognize the WECAFC-FIRMS project as a collaborative platform for collation and sharing of scientific information, leveraging ongoing regional projects, and prioritizing national data needs,
2. Promote provision of national data and statistics to the RDB according to DCRF framework,
3. Recognize the important role of WECAFC, CRFM, and OSPESCA to support and to validate national inventories and their publishing through FIRMS as part of the global monitoring framework requested under SDG14.4.1,
4. Endorse the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF)

5. Promote continued participation in the FDS-WG and specifically to support the intersessional work plan as relates interactions with thematic working groups relating to national vessel mappings to regional fleet segment classifications, promotion of species for priority reporting, and associated identification of sub-areas for species reporting,
6. Promote interactions between FDS-WG and thematic working groups to further tailor the DCRF and associated data sharing policies in consideration of the use of relevant data sets by those working groups



- **DRAFT RECOMMENDATION ON WECAFC/17/2019/12 “THE LIST OF PRIORITY SPECIES IN THE WECAFC AREA”**

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC):

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

NOTING that the 16th session of WECAFC held in Guadeloupe, France, 20-24 June 2016, agreed to establish the Regional Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group (FDSWG);

CONSIDERING the identified minimum steps needed to improve the capability of the Commission in becoming a Regional Fishery Management Organization (RFMO) to include efforts to (i) Increase and improve fisheries data and statistics, (ii) Increase accuracy of data and statistics via utilizing agreed practices in data collection, (iii) Develop and implement agreed practices for data sharing and (iv) Identify feasible stock assessment models for the region

MINDFUL that qualitative and quantitative improvement of regional data and statistics requires harmonization and standardization at national and regional level with the definition of minimum data requirements in support of evidence based decision-making;

REAFFIRMING the commitment of CARICOM States to improving evidence based decision-making through regional cooperation as expressed in several regional policy documents including the “Strategic Action Programme for the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem”, the CARICOM Strategic Plan, 2015–2019, the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (CCCFP) and the CRFM Strategic Plan, 2013-2021.

RECOGNIZING the important steps taken by the OSPESCA and CRFM members in terms of building capacity for reliable and timely statistics in the past years.

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the continued efforts by the WECAFC members to increase their capacities to collect, analyze and report fisheries data and statistics;

RECALLING that The WECAFC shall cover all living marine resources, without prejudice to the management responsibilities and authority of other competent fisheries bodies and other living marine resources management organizations or arrangements in the area.

ACKNOWLEDGING the WECAFC members challenges to collect data and produce statistics on all living marine resources

PENDING the delivery of additional information by the FDS WG and Species specific WGs;

**ADOPTS** in conformity with Article 6 of the WECAFC Revised Statutes this RECOMMENDATION that:

1. WECAFC supports the structure and concept of developing a list of priority species, for statistical reporting by members, based on several selection supporting bases by the FDS WG. **In particular to support monitoring and reporting for:**

- Species for which the historical establishment of species and/or fisheries (e.g., working groups and of policies within the region exist (conch, lobster, flying fish), FAD, deep sea, recreational billfish),
- Species of the high seas straddling/migratory/deep seas in areas beyond national jurisdiction that would correspond to the WECAFC-as-RFMO mandate (as per WECAFC 16<sup>1</sup> decision),
- Species with existing mandatory reporting to RFMO's (e.g., ICCAT tuna and tuna-like species)
- Species of the high seas and deep seas in preparing for a possible mandate for WECAFC as RFMO, and
- Other Reference species identified to other importance to the regional and subregional fishery bodies (e.g., CRFM, or OSPESCA)

2. The FDS-WG should continue to seek guidance and final approval of the species priority list from all WECAFC members.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bo086e.pdf>

**Draft Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/14**

**“ON THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF SPAWING AGGREGATIONS AND AGGREGATING SPECIES”**

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC):

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication and to address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

REAFFIRMING its commitment to support management and implementation of regional strategies and regulations to protect spawning aggregations and aggregating species through the establishment of the WECAFC Working Group on Spawning Aggregations (SAWG) at the 14<sup>th</sup> session of WECAFC in 2012.

NOTING that stocks of many species of groupers and snappers in the Caribbean have declined significantly in the last three decades, some of their fish spawning aggregations (FSAs) have declined or disappeared and that immediate action is required to stop further reductions.

MINDFUL that many fishers' livelihoods are dependent on harvest from spawning aggregations and the fisheries that they support, but also that these fishers have experience and expertise that could be invaluable in the conservation, management, and possible tourism at such sites and that the development of economic alternatives for affected fishers should accompany efforts to halt fishing during spawning periods or close areas where spawning occurs.

REAFFIRMING the recommendations of the Declaration of Miami (2013) issued at the 1<sup>st</sup> CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations.

REAFFIRMING and supporting the recommendations and the workplan from the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM Working Group on Spawning Aggregations.

NOTING members' commitment to the 2018 SAWG workplan, various planned actions and that activities are well underway,

COMMITTED to individually and collectively taking measures and actions to further improve the management and conservation of fish spawning aggregations and species that aggregate to spawn in the Wider Caribbean Region

**ADOPTS** in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the RECOMMENDATION that:

1. Members of WECAFC identify and determine the status of all known Fish Spawning Aggregation (FSA) sites (particularly for snapper and grouper), confirm the timing of spawning seasons, and inform the WECAFC Scientific Advisory Group (SAG).
2. WECAFC, CFMC, and as appropriate CRFM, OSPESCA, and CEP-SPAW support the development of a regional Fisheries Management Plan (for national adoption throughout the region) for species forming FSAs (targeting groupers and snappers), in accordance with the best available science, for presentation to the WECAFC Secretariat in 2020.

3. WECAFC Secretariat and Members invest resources and support the standardization of existing monitoring programs to coalesce them into a unified regional monitoring program utilizing standard protocols to share data designed to track the status and trends of aggregations and the species that form them and thus contribute to local, national and regional management efforts.
4. Members of WECAFC call for international action to protect Fish Spawning Aggregations (FSAs), including strengthening enforcement of closed seasons, closed areas, and sales bans during the closed season.
5. Members of WECAFC agree upon and adopt a regional seasonal closure for all commercial and recreational fishing of Nassau grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*), *at least* for the period 1 December – 31 March and that Members will not permit export or commercial sale of Nassau grouper or its products (e.g. roe, fillets) for the duration of the seasonal closure.
6. WECAFC Secretariat support an assessment of the economic value of FSAs and the socio-economic impact of proposed management measures to inform future management decision-making.
7. Members offer training to fishers (displaced due to FSA closures) in monitoring, research, assessment, and suitable economic alternatives. Fishers and other stakeholders to be involved in cooperative research and FSA management.
8. The WECAFC Secretariat support a regional outreach and communication strategy on conservation and management of FSAs.
9. Members of WECAFC prioritize FSAs for monitoring, conservation, and management based on status, vulnerability and Members' institutional capacity.
10. The WECAFC Secretariat, together with the Members of WECAFC, seek to mobilize resources to assist the Members in the implementation of priority research, monitoring, enforcement, management and conservation of FSAs and the species that form them.