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**WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT
TWELFTH MEETING**

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VIRTUAL**

**Implementation of the RECOFI Recommendation on Minimum Data Reporting and outcomes
of the RECOFI Workshop on Minimum Data Reporting Regional Database**

Executive Summary

This document aim to provide an update on the progress made on data submission with regards to RECOFI Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 Minimum Data Reporting, as well as to provide a summary of the outcomes of the RECOFI Workshop on the Minimum Data Reporting Regional Database.

The WGFM is invited to:

- consider and comment on the outcomes of the RECOFI Workshop on the Minimum Data Reporting Regional Database
- review the status of Member Country submissions under RECOFI Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1

Introduction

1. This document aims to provide an update on the progress made on data submission with regards to RECOFI Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 Minimum Data Reporting (MDR) (Appendix 1), as well as to provide a summary of the outcomes of the RECOFI Workshop on the Minimum Data Reporting Regional Database.

Background

2. The RECOFI Recommendation on Minimum Data Reporting was established as an initial part of process establishing a pragmatic management scheme based on an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management with adaptive management procedures, the decision taken by the second meeting of the WGFM (Cairo, Egypt, 27-30 October 2008), endorsed by the fifth Session of the RECOFI (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 12-14 May 2009). The FAO/RECOFI Regional Workshop on Stock Indicators and Stock Status Reporting (Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 26–29 July 2009) reviewed data and statistics availability in the region and stock status reporting and recognized the lack of information commonly accessible through the Region. The sixth session of RECOFI (Rome, Italy, 10-12 May 2011) endorsed the Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1, entitled “Recommendation on minimum data reporting in the RECOFI area”. The MDR Recommendation entered into force on 1 January 2012 after a two years preparatory phase.

3. At the Eighth Session of RECOFI the Secretariat informed the Commission that the data reported under the RECOFI Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 had become sufficient for providing

an adequate basis for monitoring the status of fishing operations and resources and supporting for taking management decisions, and urged the Commission to establish a common database and an agreed data access policy. At the ninth meeting of the WGFM (Kuwait City, State of Kuwait, 24-26 November 2015), the meeting discussed the convenience and feasibility of taking further steps towards actively utilizing these data, possibly beginning with the joint assessment of the kingfish and the development of operational management objectives and corresponding indicators.

Update on the implementation of the RECOFI Recommendation on minimum data reporting

4. Regarding the 2021 round of data submission only Iran (Islamic Republic of) submitted their data, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait submitted some partial data. Iraq, Oman, and Qatar have previously submitted data under the Recommendation to the Secretariat.

Outcomes of the Workshop on Minimum Data Reporting Regional Database

5. As endorsed by RECOFI at its tenth session, it was agreed to hold a workshop on the Minimum Data Reporting Regional Database. This workshop was held virtually from 13 to 14 July 2021 and it aimed to strengthen the statistics and information capacity of the body, including the following activities: (i) Review of the current status of MDR national submissions, including discussion on current indicators and data available for submission (ii) Joint improvement/development of a standardized RECOFI MDR questionnaire and/or MDR data exchange format, to replace the collection forms currently used by Member Countries, and to harmonize with other reporting obligations; (iii) discuss timing of MDR data calls (for example to be aligned with global and regional capture submissions).

6. The workshop raised opportunities to reflect on a number of queries stemming from the status of MDR submissions from the adoption of the Agreement. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts on i) the relevance of current MDR indicators in catering to the needs of Member Countries; ii) the need for a review of the MDR Agreement; iii) the ways in which the submitted data could be used; iv) ways to improve reporting capacities of Member Countries; and v) the best ways forward to ensure progress on the development of an operational RECOFI regional database.

7. Recommendations from the workshop include:

- Recommend that Member States submit all historical Minimum Data Requirement datasets, so to fill any data gaps, including information on when fisheries closures and other relevant management measures were applied.
- Recommend that Member States request support for capacity developments, such as the request by Qatar for a need to improve reporting capacity on SDG 14.4.1.
- Recommend that FAO and RECOFI Secretariat provide clear and accessible definitions of all MDR variables.
- Recommend that the possibility to streamline and harmonize workflow between the GCC Statistical Center in Oman, and RECOFI be further investigated. Options include the export of GCC data to be shared with RECOFI, or the submission by Member States of the same data to both GCC and RECOFI.
- Recommend that relevance of current MDR indicators be reassessed to keep into account changes in management measures, such as the total or seasonal ban in several Member States of shrimp trawling.
- Recommend a reassessment of the current Priority Species list to aid the work done under SDG 14.4.1, and to support a better understanding of regional and national stocks. Also, recommend that Member States consider the need for a species breakdown as opposed to a preference for aggregated species groups.

- Recommend that FAO consider the differences between Gregorian and solar calendars when assessing data submission deadlines.
8. Follow-up actions based on workshop discussions and needs are as follows:
- A FAO statistician consultant will analyze the submitted MDR data from 2012 (and previous years if available and depending on available time), collate, and identify issues in terms of gaps, duplications, aggregates, standards.
 - Work will proceed by FAO to develop a pilot of the Regional Database (RDB), which include standard data submission format proposals.
 - Summarized recommendations from the workshops on MDR, FIRMS, and SDG14.4.1 will be presented to the next formal session of the WGFM.
 - Countries are generally encouraged to refer to best practices in data collection and to attend capacity building courses as appropriate.
 - In support of the above point, RECOFI Secretariat will liaise with FAOSNG on the possibilities for RECOFI countries to participate in the UAE September 2021 course on fisheries and aquaculture statistics.

Appendix 1: RECOFI Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1, entitled “Recommendation on minimum data reporting in the RECOFI area

The Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI),

RECALLING that the purpose of RECOFI is, inter alia, to promote the development, conservation, rational management and best utilization of living marine resources, as well as the sustainable development of aquaculture;

RECALLING that the third meeting of RECOFI’s Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) (Doha, Qatar, 20-22 October 2009) agreed that a recommendation on minimum data reporting in the RECOFI Area should be drafted for review by the fourth meeting of the WGFM (Muscat, Oman, 3-5 October 2010) for submission to the Sixth Session of RECOFI (Manama, Bahrain, 10-12 May 2011);

REAFFIRMING the strong desire of RECOFI Members to promote closer international cooperation and harmonization in fisheries of mutual interest;

AWARE that minimum data reporting requirements for the RECOFI Area are fundamental to promoting long-term sustainable fisheries, especially for species of common interest in the region (see Annex 1);

ADOPTS in conformity with the provision of paragraph 1 (b) and (h) of Article III and Article V of RECOFI Agreement that:

1. (a) Each Member shall take such measures as may be necessary to ensure the collection and submission of information required under the paragraph 2, 3 and 4 of this recommendation.

(b) Nothing in this recommendation shall constrain a Member pursuing data collection and sharing them with the Commission for the purpose of improving management of fisheries and fishery resources in the RECOFI area beyond the requirements of this recommendation.

2. (a) Each Member operating with shrimp trawl fishery shall make available to the Commission the following information with respect to that fishery:

(i) opening and closing dates of the fishery;

(ii) number of vessels engaged in the fishery according to its own vessel type/ size categories (e.g. steel-hulled/speed boats/dhows);

(iii) annual average tow duration, annual average number of tows per day, and total number of days at sea, according to vessel type/size categories;

(iv) live-weight equivalent of annual catch of shrimp, swimming crab, cuttlefish, narrow-barred Spanish mackerel, emperors, groupers, sharks, rays, and other finfishes, taken by the fishery;

(v) annual amount of discards, and

(vi) Species composition of by-catch and discards, if available.

(b) If any by-catch reduction device (BRD) is used or other mitigation measure taken, each Member should advise the Commission of details of such BRD/mitigation measure used and submit the catch and effort for those vessels with mitigation measures separated from those vessels operating normally.

3. Each Member shall make available to the Commission the following information with respect to gillnets, wire-traps, and hooks-and-line fisheries, respectively:

(a) annual effort in individual fisheries, in terms of “number of days at sea”, and if this is not possible, alternative effort with its brief description, and

(b) live-weight equivalents of annual total catch, and of annual catches of narrow-barred Spanish mackerels, emperors, groupers, sharks and rays taken by individual gears with species identification of emperors and groupers to the extent possible, and amount of discards if available.

4. (a) Each Member shall make available to the Commission the following information with respect to narrow-barred Spanish mackerel *Scomberomorus commerson* taken in any fishery in the country:

- (i) catch in live-weight equivalent on a monthly basis to the extent possible, if not on an annual basis;
- (ii) fork length composition of catch on a monthly basis to the extent possible, if not on an annual basis, either based on fishery monitoring or obtained from other sources, and
- (iii) for operations targeting narrow-barred Spanish mackerel (e.g. kingfish fixed net, gillnet and hooks and line), monthly catch with fork length composition and effort by gear type, together with clear description of kinds of effort used, to the extent possible.

(b) Each Member shall make available to the Commission any results obtained through surveys and research works relevant to narrow-barred Spanish mackerel, including fishery-dependent and fishery-independent stock indicators, biological parameters (e.g. growth rate, length frequency data obtained by projects, age-length relationship, reproductive information, natural mortality) and ecological information (e.g. distribution, feeding habitat, habitat preferences).

5. Each Member shall, to the extent practicable, make available to the Commission the following additional information:

- (a) shrimp species composition within the shrimp trawl catch, and
- (b) species composition of discards.

6. Each Member shall submit to the Commission the information required under paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5 of this recommendation, and any modification to information reported previously, before the end of August of the following year. Each Member shall cooperate in exchanging historical information relevant to those described in this recommendation.

7. Each Member shall cooperate in sharing survey plans and protocols prior to their implementation, as well as results of such surveys upon their conclusion, to the relevant Members through the Commission.

8. The Commission shall collate, maintain and promptly disseminate to Members the information provided under paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5 of this recommendation. The Commission may, subject to the request from a Member who provided information, impose restrictions on access to the information by the public.

9. The Commission shall monitor and evaluate regularly the status of implementation of this recommendation.

Appendix 2: Current list of RECOFI Priority Species

FAO Name	ASFIS code	Common name	Scientific name
Green Tiger Prawn	TIP	Green Tiger Prawn	<i>Penaeus semisulcatus</i>
Blue swimming crabs	SCD	Blue swimming crab	<i>Portunus pelagicus</i>
Pharaoh cuttlefish	IAH	Cuttlefish	<i>Sepia pharaonis</i>
Stolephorus anchovies	STO	Anchovies	<i>Stolephorus spp.</i>
Indian oil sardine	IOS	Indian oil sardine	<i>Sardinella longiceps</i>
Bludger	NGY	Jacks	<i>Carangoide gymnostethus</i>
Golden trevally	GLT	Golden trevally	<i>Gnathanodon speciosus</i>
Indian mackerel	RAG	Indian mackerel	<i>Rastrelliger Kanagurta</i>
Snubnose emperor	LBW	Orange finned emperor	<i>Lethrinus borbonicus</i>
Pink ear emperor	LTS	Redspot emperor	<i>Lethrinus lentjan</i>
Spangled emperor	LHN	Spangled emperor	<i>Lethrinus nebulosus</i>
Coral hind	CFI	Coral grouper/Bluespotted grouper	<i>Cephalopholis miniata</i>
Orange-spotted grouper	ENI	Orange-spotted grouper	<i>Epinephelus coioides</i>
White-spotted spinefoot	SCN	Rabbitfish	<i>Siganus canaliculatus</i>
Narrow-barred Spanish mackerel	COM	King mackerel/Narrow-barred Spanish mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus commerson</i>
Longtail tuna	LOT	Longtail tuna	<i>Thunnus tonggol</i>
Kawakawa	KAW	Kawakawa	<i>Euthynnus affinis</i>
Requiem sharks nei	RSK	Sharks	<i>Carcharhinidae</i>
Silver pomfret	SIP	Silver pomfret	<i>Pampus argenteus</i>
Hilsa shad	HIL	Indian shad	<i>Tenualosa ilisha</i>
King soldier bream	KBR	King soldier bream	<i>Argyrops spinifer</i>
Painted sweetlips	DGP	Painted sweetlips	<i>Diagramma pictum</i>
Smalltooth emperor	LEN	Smalltooth emperor	<i>Lethrinus microdon</i>
Indian white prawn	PNI	Indian white prawn	<i>Penaeus indicus</i>
Klunzinger's mullet	LZK	Klunzinger's mullet	<i>Liza klunzingeri</i>
Greenback mullet	LZI	Greenback mullet	<i>Liza subviridis</i>