



FIRMS Steering Committee Meeting
Eighth Session
Rome, Italy, 4 - 5, and 8 February 2013
Standard protocol addressing the involvement of nations through RFBs
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Background:

In addressing the NatFIRMS issue, FSC6 noted that nations may contribute information to FIRMS via RFBs. Recognizing that RFB partners already interact with national members with regard to information exchange on resources and fisheries, FSC6 noted that FIRMS process may contribute to information sharing mechanisms within RFBs while strengthening member country capacities.

FSC7 further reviewed the on-going experiences among various FAO RFBs, namely CECAF, SWIOFC and RECOFI, and agreed that the process and outputs presented through these experience seemed sound. FSC7 inquired about the applicability of such process in the case of other regions.

It was agreed that a standard protocol regarding the involvement of nations through RFBs will have to be developed by the Secretariat in order to constitute a FIRMS generally agreed framework for similar developments in other regions / situations. Some principles that would constitute the basis for such protocols were tabled and this draft proposal takes them into account.

This proposal for a standard protocol regarding the involvement of nations through RFBs builds on a generalization of the elements which have been compiled in the annex 2 of a few FAO RFBs. **FSC8 is requested to review the draft, and make comments towards a final version for endorsement.**

Draft of a standard protocol regarding the involvement of nations through RFBs

Type of information and general responsibilities

The national information handled through the RFB should correspond or closely relates with the RFB's mandate, in such ways to ensure that no conflicting information exists between the national and the regional levels.

Information on the state of Resources should be primarily handled at regional level, through RFBs having clear scientific Resource assessment, and/or Management mandates; in such scenario, RFBs have set-up arrangements for collaboration and peer review processes among nations that aim at ensuring consistency among member countries.

Information on Fisheries (concerning fishing activity, management, fleets/means of production) which are of a strict national nature may be handled through any RFB being a FIRMS partner and having a fisheries mandate related to the type of fisheries information contributed. As coordinating mechanism, the RFB organizes the collection of national fisheries information with the goal to consistently aggregate this information at regional level with minimum quality requirements.

This RFB retains corporate ownership, hence overall responsibility for the regionally aggregated content, while direct responsibility and ownership for content of each national set lies with Member country, the national focal points nominated by the RFB having to ensure validation of the content by their competent authorities.

Ownership and responsibilities

Marine resources:

The source of the information contributed to FIRMS is elaborated under the aegis of the RFB's assessment and peer review mechanism. Accordingly, primary ownership of the marine resources inventory lies with the RFB and as such, overall responsibility for the published information resides with the RFB. This arrangement will be indicated in each fact sheet with the following statement: "*This document provided, maintained and owned by <RFB>, is part of <RFB Stock Status Reports> data collection*".

Fisheries:

Primary ownership (and control) hence direct responsibility for content of the national fishery inventory lies with the Member country, while the RFB retains corporate ownership, hence overall responsibility for the regionally aggregated content. Roles and responsibilities are distributed as follows.

The role of the RFB's competent committee or mechanism is to set-up a regional framework for the harmonized development and updating of national fishery inventories, to organize this development and updating through the assignment of national focal points, to coordinate the consolidation at regional level of the national inventories and its review, and to endorse the aggregated inventory for its publishing

in FIRMS. The RFB competent committee / mechanism designates one FIRMS regional representative whose responsibility is to ensure that the RFB's responsibilities are fulfilled.

The national fishery inventories are developed under the leadership of the RFB national focal points, who are responsible for ensuring validation of the content by their competent authorities. This confers to Member countries the primary ownership (and control) for the content of the national fishery inventory.

The national inventories are eventually aggregated at regional level according to the harmonized framework set out by the RFB competent committee or mechanism which ensures, with the support of the FIRMS Secretariat, that agreed conventions, reporting norms, standards and overall consistency for the region are applied. Such role confers to the RFB's competent committee or mechanism the corporate ownership of the aggregated fisheries inventory, without which sign-off no information can be published in FIRMS. As such, the overall responsibility for the published information resides with the RFB. This arrangement will be indicated in each fact sheet with the following statement "*This document provided, and maintained by <country x> and owned by RFB, is part of <RFB Fisheries Reports – country x> data collection*".

The FIRMS Secretariat provides support to the RFB mechanism through capacity building, assistance in setting the regional harmonized framework, and quality control regarding conformance of the disseminated information with the conventions agreed by the RFB competent committee or mechanism.

Standards to be used

The information to be contributed by RFB will conform, where possible, with the Information Management Policy established by the FIRMS Steering Committee.

Methods of collection and processing

Marine resources inventory:

The Marine resource inventory is aggregated and validated under the aegis of the RFB competent committee or mechanism. The FIRMS Marine resources inventory template is available as an "information collection mechanism" which countries might be encouraged to use for compiling information about resources suggested to be added in the regional inventory. These nationally contributed inventories might be used, amongst others, as sources for possible recommendation by the relevant RFB mechanism regarding the inclusion of marine resources in the RFB regional inventory.

The state and trends information is reviewed and cleared by the RFB's competent committee or mechanism and further consolidated in its session reports. State and trends information is structured for uploading and dissemination in FIRMS consistently with the validated inventory.

Fisheries inventory:

The inventories harmonization process at RFB level will be achieved as follows: national focal points nominated by the RFB competent committee / mechanism lead the development of the inventory content using the FIRMS excel template and/or

inventory guidelines, while referring to the harmonized framework set out by the RFB competent committee / mechanism. During this process, any harmonization issue which cannot be resolved will be recorded. The RFB competent committee / mechanism will examine the regionally aggregated inventory, and will make decisions on the reported outstanding harmonization issues.

A successful outcome of the procedure described in the above paragraph will enable decision by the RFB competent committee to publish the inventory in FIRMS. A regional inventory aggregating a minimum of half of RFB member countries would be deemed acceptable for such decision.

Bibliographical sources:

Links to source RFB reports are provided in the Marine resource fact sheets, while relevant bibliographic sources are contained in these reports; likewise, bibliographic sources used to structure and update the inventories are clearly listed in the Fisheries fact sheets.

Transmission protocols and dissemination channels.

Marine resources:

The Stock assessment reports periodically endorsed by the RFB and used as source for marine resources fact sheets, are published periodically with electronic copies accessible.

Regional resources inventories on which fact sheets are based are elaborated according to Excel templates, stored within dedicated folders and periodically updated through review sessions of the RFB. Their public dissemination occurs only through the FIRMS fact sheets, while dissemination of the Excel sources might occur through specific requests to the RFB.

Fisheries:

The reports of the various public meetings at which the results of fisheries assessments, and various options for management and resource conservation, are presented and discussed, are published periodically with electronic copies accessible.

National fisheries inventories on which fact sheets are based are elaborated according to Excel or Word templates, stored within dedicated folders and periodically updated through review sessions of the RFB. Their public dissemination occurs only through the FIRMS fact sheets, while dissemination of the Excel or Word sources might occur through specific requests to the RFB.

Data and Information security

All contributions from RFBs are in the public domain. National actors involved in the RFB's FIRMS process are granted user rights to review and approve the national information packaged as FIRMS Fact sheets before publishing, while the regional FIRMS representative has the eventual publishing rights.

Transparency of the information and results on status and trends of stocks, resources and fisheries presented by the RFB are documented in the course of the

assessment and peer-review processes followed to obtain the results, and in the reports of the various public meetings at which the results, and various options for management and resource conservation, are presented and discussed. Details on these meetings and processes are available at RFB web-site.

Other entitlements

As FIRMS partner, the RFB nominates one representative for participation in the FIRMS FSC meetings with voting rights. Other national focal points nominated by the RFB can attend the FIRMS FSC as part of the RFB delegation, without voting rights. These various actors can participate to the work of the TWG, but here again under one vote for the RFB.