

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Project sheet

Strengthening national data collection and regional data sharing through FIRMS to support priority regional fishery management plans in the WECAFC area

The implementation of the WECAFC-FIRMS partnership, focused on three pilot WECAFC-CRFM-OSPESCA regional fishery management plans, will drive the development of a pilot regional database (RDB) in support to stock assessment and adaptive fisheries management. National and sub-regional data collection, compilation and sharing capacities will be developed for the provision of FIRMS reports, and through a regional workshop where experience will be shared and data gaps established. This workshop will provide the substance for developing minimum data requirements (draft), data sharing policy (draft), action plan to strengthen selected national data collection systems, and a pilot operational platform for the RDB. FIRMS inventories will be published on the FIRMS website, while the drafts and pilot RDB will be submitted to SAG for review and recommendations for further development/uptake/support through other SAP supporting projects (e.g. CLME+).

WECAFC

PROJECT SUMMARY

<i>Project title:</i>	Strengthening national data collection and regional data sharing through FIRMS to support priority regional fishery management plans in the WECAFC area
<i>Project objective:</i>	To set up the foundations of a regional data base in support to priority fishery management plans and test through selected pilots
<i>Potential partner(s):</i>	FAO regional projects
<i>Duration:</i>	12 months
<i>Proposed budget:</i>	110,000 euros

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. PROJECT JUSTIFICATION / RATIONALE

At WECAFC 14, which was held in Panama in February 2012, the EU delegation indicated that fisheries data and information are at the basis of better fisheries management in the region and that it would be required to carry out a regional workshop on data collection and statistics. The delegation expressed also that there may be opportunities for EU support available for this activity.

At WECAFC 15 the EU member countries of WECAFC reiterated the need for increased attention to improved fisheries data and information collection. The identified data gaps keep undermining any significant effort to improve fishery management and constitute one of major point of immaturity preventing a change of WECAFC status towards a Management Organization. This need was considered so urgent that one of the four technical Focus Areas in the WECAFC Strategic Plan 2014-2020 is dedicated to this subject and the current Programme of Work includes activity 2.4 “Improved fishery and aquaculture data collection, analysis and dissemination at regional and national level” in support of this subject.

As a decisive step into this Focus Area, the WECAFC 15 agreed to enter into a WECAFC-FIRMS Partnership, recognizing that a partnership with FIRMS would enable WECAFC to tap into the knowledge and experience from a well-established, cost-effective system for the monitoring of fisheries resources status and fisheries activities. FIRMS will play a catalytic role in the development of a regional database to support to the regional fishery management plans. The Commission expressed the need for capacity building on the use of FIRMS and emphasized that the work should concentrate initially on those fisheries and stocks that are commercially most important to the membership.

2. OUTPUTS / ACTIVITIES

OUTPUT 1. FIRMS regional inventories published and capacity built for national inventories in few pilot countries	Tentative delivery date
Activity 1.1 Development and publishing of WECAFC-FIRMS regional Marine resources and Fisheries inventories	Month 3
Activity 1.2 On-the-job [remote] assistance for development and publishing of selected national inventories of fisheries	Month 6
Activity 1.3 Implementation of the translation of FIRMS website in Spanish	Month 3
OUTPUT 2. National and sub-regional capacity strengthened in data collection and data sharing in support to WECAFC fishery management plans	
Activity 2.1 Regional workshop on fisheries data collection, analysis, sharing and reporting	Month 6
Activity 2.2 Definition of action plans in support to selected national data collection programs to implement draft Minimum data requirements	Month 12
OUTPUT 3. Foundations of a scientific Regional Database set-up and tested with pilot data contributions	
Activity 3.1 Development of draft Minimum data requirements for supporting fishery management plans in the WECAFC region	Month 8
Activity 3.2 Pilot operational platform for a Regional Data Base (RDB) configured and tested with selected datasets	Month 12
Activity 3.3 Development of draft data sharing policies	Month 12

3. PROJECT STRATEGY AND METHODOLOGY

This Project will constitute an early stage of the incremental and results based approach agreed upon as part of “SAP strategy 3 / Action: develop ad hoc policy for data collection, harmonization and sharing” regional strategic plan. The project results will feed into the SAP, and will be leveraged by complementary efforts being planned as part of other projects, in particular CLME+. Sub-regional fishery organizations signatory to the SAP (CRFM, OSPESCA) will be closely associated to the activities of the project. All together, efforts will be focused on supporting with relevant data and information the full fishery management policy cycle for three priority regional fishery management plans (the three “pilots”): spiny lobster, flying fish, shrimp and groundfish of Guyana-Brazil shelf.

Highlighting the needs for improvements in the field of statistical data collection, compilation, sharing and analysis, SAG-VI meeting held in Corpus Christy (November 2013) recognized WECAFC’s role in coordinating and in providing a neutral platform for the region, and FAO’s worldwide expertise and frameworks in fishery statistics, in particular through FIRMS, Fishcode-STF1, and the iMarine2 platform.

¹¹ Fishcode-STF is FAO’s programme framework in support to FAO’s Strategy for improving information on Status and Trends of capture fisheries. It has in particular focussed on data collection framework for Small Scale Fisheries.

The project will first aim at implementing FIRMS inventories with a limited number of countries on these three pilots. FIRMS offers a framework with proofed data exchange protocols for the sharing at regional level of state of stocks reports and fisheries data in support to management. Implementing FIRMS is expected to foster data exchange among countries and monitoring capacities. Availability in the public domain of a comprehensive collection of authoritative fishery status reports in national languages is expected to lead to progressive involvement and participation of all stakeholders in fishery governance processes. To this effect, it is important that the Spanish language be implemented in FIRMS.

FIRMS inputs will enable a diagnostic on data availability, quality and gaps in respect of the needs for data in support to fishery management plans. This diagnostic will be made during a capacity building workshop facilitated by FAO experts in the field of data collection and data sharing. During this workshop, national and regional/sub-regional participants will also share experience on suitable or innovative data collection methods and approaches, will discuss minimum data requirements for a regional data base, and will identify areas where national capacities should be strengthened.

Building on the workshop results, the foundations of a regional database in support to joint regional assessment and management working groups will be elaborated. The project will support the elaboration of draft documents on Minimum data requirements in support to the regional database, and on related data sharing policies, and will configure the data infrastructure through which data will be effectively shared. Such database is eventually expected to enhance the efficiency of these working groups hence the reliability of the assessment results, and the capacities for adaptive management. In earlier stages, by fostering national level statistical data collection and compilation capacity, this data base will also contribute to improve fisheries monitoring and management at national level.

It is finally expected that through CLME+ SAP, these efforts will contribute to the broader monitoring of the regional state of the marine environment, this mechanism being in turn expected to influence national decision makers towards implementation of sustainable fisheries.

3.1. Inputs required

Activity 1.1 - Development and publishing of WECAFC-FIRMS regional Marine resources and Fisheries inventories.

Marine resources inventory will be focused on 4 priority resources assessed by Joint WECAFC-CRFM-OSPESCA working groups in the region. Regional Fisheries will focus on the three selected pilot fishery management plans (spiny lobster, flying fish, shrimp and groundfish of Brazil-Guyana shelf

- Input: FIRMS Secretariat time for building capacity of CRFM and OSPESCA regional focal points and for the harmonization, loading and publishing of data.

Activity 1.2 - On-the-job [remote] capacity building for selected national inventories of fisheries.

Estimated number of pilot national inventories: 6 fishery inventories.

- Input: FIRMS Secretariat time for building capacity of national focal points and for the harmonization, loading and publishing of data.

Activity 1.3 - Implementation of the translation of FIRMS website in Spanish:

- Input: Translation services
- Input: System consultant to implement translated artifacts in FIRMS website

² The iMarine initiative is supported by a EU project; it aims at developing an innovative data infrastructure in support to fisheries management and conservation of living marine resources

Activity 2.1 - Regional workshop on fisheries data collection, analysis, sharing and reporting.

15 countries will be invited to participate; two main topics: FIRMS and regional database needs (2.5 days); National data collection experiences and gaps (2.5 days).

- Input: FIRMS and Fishcode-STF consultant time to prepare and lead the workshop
- Input: Travels for 15 national fishery data officers within the region, as well as CRFM, OSPESCA, WECAFC, and FAO HQs staff

Activity 2.2 - Definition of action plans in support to selected national data collection programs to implement draft Minimum data requirements.

This action plan will focus on the most promising situations for improvement of national data collection programs, and will develop detailed plan including required support for two or three countries. The action plan will be submitted to other projects in support to SAP.

- Input: Consultant desk work and travel support to visit 2 or 3 countries

Activity 3.1 - Development of draft Minimum data requirements for supporting fishery management plans in the WECAFC region.

The draft document will be elaborated with reference to the needs expressed by the joint WECAFC-CRFM-OSPESCA working groups concerned by the three pilots, to similar frameworks in other RFBs, and aware of existing capacities established during the regional data workshop; this draft will be reviewed by the SAG for endorsement.

- Consultant time to draft the document

Activity 3.2 – Pilot operational platform for a Regional DataBase (RDB) configured and tested with selected datasets

With reference to the Minimum data requirements draft document, the iMarine Virtual Research Environments (VREs) will be tailored and configured to the needs of the joint WECAFC-CRFM-OSPESCA working groups, enabling data upload, harmonization, sharing and analysis workflow. The pilot RDB will be presented to SAG for recommendations regarding further development/uptake/support phases.

- Input: Fishery system specialist consultancy to define, configure and test the VREs with case studies;
- Input: Consultant Developer to tailor the VRE capacities and user interface to WECAFC needs;

Activity 3.3 - Development of draft data sharing policies on the basis of selected pilot contributions

The Minimum data requirements for the WECAFC regional database will be reviewed against the FIRMS Information Management Policy and the iMarine Data Sharing and Access Policy, and a draft Data sharing policy will be elaborated for the WECAFC regional database, for further review by the SAG.

- Input: Fishery information management specialist consultancy to draft the policy document;

3.2. Project estimated budget

OUPUTS/ACTIVITIES	Total (Euros)
OUTPUT 1.	20,000
Activity 1.1	4,000
Activity 1.2	9,000
Activity 1.3	7,000
Activity 1.4	
OUTPUT 2.	63,000
Activity 2.1	51,000
Activity 2.2	12,000
OUTPUT 3.	27,000
Activity 3.1	3,000
Activity 3.2	18,000
Activity 3.3	6,000
Total (Euros)	110,000