



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
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Продовольственная и
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организация
Объединенных
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Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES

Special Meeting on RECOFI Consolidation and Development

Rome, Italy, 11-12 May 2010

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of the analysis is to respond to the Commission's recommendation to make the latter more efficient and to accelerate its growth. This document presents the preliminary findings of the analysis. It is based on literature review, a survey questionnaire, and interviews conducted at FAO headquarters and in the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (FAORNE). The analysis was carried out by an independent, external international consultant. The opinions and views contained in the document are those of the consultant.

PURPOSE OF THE RECOFI TECHNICAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

2. At the fifth session of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) that was held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, from 12 to 14 May 2009, the Commission agreed to hold a special meeting to consider ways and means to enhance RECOFI's role including the Commission's consolidation and development. Delegates recognised the need to make the Commission more efficient and to accelerate its growth.

3. An external international consultant was recruited to analyse the operations of RECOFI and consider options to strengthen and develop the Commission. The analysis was conducted in two parts. The consultant firstly interviewed the FAO secretariat and other FAO resources persons and reviewed relevant literature. The consultant secondly developed a questionnaire to collect the views from the ministries responsible for RECOFI at country level. The outcomes of the questionnaire are not discussed in this document. They will be presented at the special meeting session.

4. Because the core objective is “to make the Commission more efficient” the analysis focused on the relevance of the strategy and pursuant activities. However, it also addressed how well RECOFI elaborates, pursues and implements the strategy. The issues addressed in the analysis are listed below:

- a. Knowledge about the status of resources and fisheries, data collection and sharing;
- b. Knowledge about the status of aquaculture;
- c. Regional dimensions of the fishing and aquaculture sectors;
- d. Decision making, transparency, participation and methods to define the Commission Strategy, to implement the strategy, and to assess the results;
- e. Quality and provision of scientific advice and economic and social analysis;
- f. Decision making process to adopt Commission recommendations and measures;
- g. Capacity development, training and technical assistance;
- h. Communication and information.

Each of the issues listed above are elaborated in some detail (i.e. activities and experiences, assessment and recommendations) in the appropriate section of the main consultant’s report (in preparation).

COMPENDIUM OF RECOMMENDATIONS FORMULATED BY THESE FINDINGS

Knowledge about the status of resources and fisheries, data collection and sharing

5. At the Commission level, no systematic, common or standardised evaluations are yet available; there are no common fleet registries, no data concerning standardised fishing effort indicators, let alone ecosystem indicators.

6. The Commission should consider the following recommendations (**A** being the most relevant):

- A)** Working on the definition of management units for regional and strictly national stocks from a RECOFI perspective;
- B)** Supporting national technical capacity related to the harmonisation work already completed;
- B)** Widening the set of ecosystem-wide data to include economic data specific to the fisheries sector.

Knowledge about the status of aquaculture

7. The early decision to create a Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) has greatly contributed to the development of a set of coordinated and technical studies to support cooperation between Member countries. The WGA benefited from the permanent involvement of the FAO technical secretariat and of the national staff. In addition, the WGA had at its disposal extra-budgetary funding, targeting RAIS activities (Kuwait funds). There is no doubt that

aquaculture has benefited from this active process because of the resources, the motivation, the human capacity available. Nevertheless, the work accomplished so far is not sufficient to meet the objectives assigned to the Commission.

8. The WGA work program and *modus operandi* correspond to RECOFI's ambitions but they lack a strong commitment from Member countries and sufficient financial autonomy. At this stage, it is necessary to pursue and consolidate RAIS through the facilitation, within RECOFI, of a network of experts and potential decision-makers in order to contribute to the sustainable development of aquaculture in the region. The WGA should seek increased commitment from RECOFI Member countries through appropriate programmes. The Commission is invited to:

- B) Pursue and consolidate RAIS;
- B) Promote a strategy for the development of aquaculture programmes according to environmental standards, minimising risk and the strengthening of economic, commercial and food interests in the area;
- C) Engage RECOFI as a forum to exchange lessons learned from past experience, knowledge and operational capacity.

Regional dimensions of the fishing sector

9. The shared nature of many of the stocks could make national fishery resources assessments and management initiatives of limited use in developing effective management plans. As a consequence, RECOFI should constantly address the regional dimension of issues related to fisheries offering practical and functional solutions. To commence implementing fully the Commission's fisheries mandate, Members should consider appropriate harmonized fisheries management measures that could be adopted and implemented in a coordinated way for stocks of common interest.

10. Recommendations produced during the 3rd meeting of the RECOFI WGFM (Doha, Qatar, 20-22 October 2009), and the conclusions of the "Review of fisheries laws of certain Members of the Regional Commission for Fisheries", (FAO, FIEL/C1049, Rome 2009), have confirmed the well-oriented strategy of the RECOFI to develop and to strengthen knowledge, policy and co-operation to address the regional dimension of fisheries management issues. Sessions IV and V reports, as well as all the technical studies undertaken between sessions, show clearly the awareness of the regional dimension of fisheries management within RECOFI. This should be the basis for strengthening national and international motivation to provide RECOFI with the financial and technical resources and capacity to address the issues that have been identified.

11. There is a need to pool national knowledge and to develop a regional network of experts, also, RECOFI has no current work programme that leads to a protocol and common criteria for the identification and prioritization of regional issues. For these reasons, RECOFI has to become increasingly the leading mechanism for promoting regional cooperation in fisheries management in this part of the world. RECOFI should endeavour to integrate measures to control IUU fishing with its other basic missions, such as successful resource conservation, efficient harvesting of resources, effort monitoring, effective fishing capacity management, sound scientific research, and reliable fisheries data collection, compilation and dissemination. The achievement of these objectives necessarily requires the availability of adequate financial and human resources.

In particular the Commission may consider the following recommendations:

- A) Accord flexibility to the national experts invited to technical workshops according to the skills required;
- A) Define criteria and set protocols to identify common issues and prioritise actions.
- A) Set up a process for the programming and the operationalisation of cooperation in defined areas (research, surveillance, legislation, international cooperation, fiscal arrangements, economics and trade, etc.);
- A) Emphasise the regional dimension of issues related to fisheries whilst offering practical and functional solutions to address them;
- B) Integrate measures to control IUU fishing into its other functions and basic mission;
- B) Facilitate by means of operational measures and by evolution of its structure, a stronger involvement of member countries as, hopefully, will be evidenced by the empowerment of RECOFI.

Regional dimensions of the aquaculture sector

12. The regional dimension of aquaculture depends, of course, on sharing lessons learned and the accumulated knowledge. This dimension is also dependent to the degree to which economic production modes and demand for protein are similar (or dissimilar) within the region.

13. Member countries, under the aegis of countries with a major interest in aquaculture development, should use engage RECOFI as a forum to exchange lessons learned from past experience, knowledge and operational capacity in order to plan and drive the development of investments in the aquaculture sector. In particular member countries, collectively, could:

- A) Engage RECOFI as a forum to exchange lessons learned, as well as knowledge and operational capacity;
- A) Develop a regional approach since it will lead to harmonisation of laws and regulations and thus facilitate regional trade of aquatic animals and aquaculture products;
- B) Open a dialogue with commissions that have investment resources and with private economic operators.

Decision making, transparency, participation and methods to define the Commission strategy, to implement the strategy, and to assess the results

14. The non-political nature of FAO regional fishery bodies is instrumental in providing a forum for dialogue and cooperation among their Members. From a legal point of view the RECOFI agreement is in compliance with the RECOFI missions, objectives and stakes. In the current state of the Commission structures and bodies, the functioning and internal decision-making mode of the Commission appears to work and has yet to meet any significant difficulty. Nevertheless, it is clear that several issues remain if the Commission is to evolve in its structure and in its functioning. In particular, this evolution is best oriented towards greater appropriation by Member countries and a better balance between FAO and RECOFI resource persons. RECOFI should give due consideration to the following:

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- A) Develop capacity to assess the state of governance in each national sector and capacity for managing fisheries and developing aquaculture sector;
 - B) Provide a forum for dialogue and cooperation among their Member countries;
 - B) Solicit external advice that is independent of the Secretariat and session participants in the formulation of action plans, ToRs and the national resources;
 - B) RECOFI Agreement needs to be amended to incorporate modern fisheries management principles as well as established and emerging international conventions (Flag State duties, Port State measures, the precautionary principle and the ecosystem approach to fisheries and aquaculture);
 - B) Review and update Rules of procedure of RECOFI.
 - C) Rethink the location and the funding of the Commission headquarters to one of the Member countries for reasons of proximity, ownership and physical appropriation of the Commission by the Member countries;
 - C) Rebalance the involvement of FAO and the Member countries through the nomination and the financial support of staff from Member countries.

Quality and provision of scientific advice and economic and social analysis

15. To date, the Commission has not issued recommendations to Member countries. This is due in part to its work plan since its creation, which focuses on strengthening knowledge and exchanging data before embarking on the preparation of technical, economic, legal or environmental recommendations. The Commission should consider:

- A) Developing criteria and technical protocols to improve cooperation between national institutions with a view to their participation in the RECOFI activity plan (research, monitoring, control and surveillance);
- B) Developing a framework to take action in the face of uncertainty and weakness in scientific advice;
- B) Taking into account economic analysis (rent assessment) and fisheries management plans (target species and high value species) as well as current principles of fisheries management, including ecosystem based approach, biodiversity protection, etc;
- B) Developing capacity to assess the state of governance in each national jurisdiction and the capacity for managing fisheries and developing the aquaculture sector;
- B) Addressing management questions at the regional level, not simply in the quest for harmonised technical measures, but also to resolve at the appropriate geographical scale, certain problems that face the sector (e.g. fishing capacity or trade).

Decision making process to adopt Commissions recommendations and measures

16. Given the fact that RECOFI has not yet produced recommendations based on recognised scientific work related to fisheries management on a regional scale, it should:

- B) Target the dissemination and exchange of reports focused on specific issues and work projects.

Capacity development, training and technical assistance

17. RECOFI has served as a forum for the transfer of knowledge and for strengthening the capacity in fisheries research and management and aquaculture development addressing the national, regional and international level.

18. Given the context and the activities undertaken by RECOFI until now, albeit such structures and initiatives require further work, it is clear that what is lacking are resources and financial and human capacities to really maximise the benefit of initiatives already under way. RECOFI should consider:

- AA) Seeking increased financial support (including extra-budgetary contributions) to augment the output from, and impact of, capacity building initiatives;
- A) Prioritising the needs of Member countries in a more operational way in order to prepare a plan to build national capacity;
- B) Strengthening the human and financial capacity of the Secretariat to support the focal points in the dissemination and the facilitation of national actor networks concerned with fisheries and aquaculture problems;
- B) Giving focal points the resources and an action plan to disseminate RECOFI achievements as well as to mobilise the technical human capacities required to execute the ToRs;
- C) Giving focal points the resources, through financial and technical support of the Secretariat, to encourage and articulate the demands from Member countries consistent with RECOFI missions;
- C) Continuing with the comparative national thematic review work, and solicit the more advanced countries to build capacity, to develop partnerships within RECOFI in order to benefit from their achievements and their technical skills.

Communication and information

19. RECOFI activities, through the Working Groups' technical workshops, sessions and *ad hoc* meetings are always reported in published documents that are available on the FAO RECOFI website. All these FAO/RECOFI standard publication materials and the RECOFI website can be used as a basis for information with other institutions and partners. However, efforts are still required regarding cooperation with other organisations likely to contribute to, or act upon common issues. RECOFI should:

- B) Prepare a communication and information plan to deal with relations of Member countries with non-member countries in the same geographic area and with all partners likely to bring financial, technical and operational support to RECOFI workshops.

Additional suggestions by the Consultant

20 The Commission mandate should evolve towards a more ambitious policy oriented, knowledge production programme. A Scientific, Economic and Technical Committee could help with the formulation, the structuring of an institutional framework and the management of a project or an action plan related to the production of information required to formulate policy recommendations. The Commission should consider

- A) Creating a Scientific, Economic and Technical Committee;

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE SPECIAL MEETING

21. The delegates to the Meeting are invited to:

- consider the outcome and recommendations of the preliminary findings. Review and comment on them, as appropriate;
- propose ways and means to ensure that appropriate follow-up action is taken at the national and regional levels; and
- provide guidance to the Secretariat on further steps to address the issue of RECOFI consolidation and development.