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**FISHERY COMMITTEE FOR THE CENTRAL EASTERN ATLANTIC
Scientific Sub-Committee**

Seventh Session

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Review of CECAF-FIRMS fisheries inventories – status of updates and usage

SUMMARY

CECAF has a long history in FIRMS, contributing information on resources and fisheries to the FIRMS partnership which is made available through FIRMS status reports on the FIRMS webpage. For various reasons several marine resources and fishery status reports have not been finally published in FIRMS; in the case of marine resources the most recent reports are pending final discussion at the SSC. This report provides an overview of the current status of available CECAF fisheries and marine resources status reports and the number of records in the marine resources and fisheries inventories in FIRMS, and describes agreed responsibilities and workflow. It also provides an overview of FIRMS governance and possible directions FIRMS may take in the future. The SSC is requested for feedback on i) current fact sheets and the information they contain, and on how workflow and timeliness of uploading new information to FIRMS can be improved ii) on the prospects items usefulness of the FIRMS products to CECAF and CECAF members iii) on future options for CECAF and FIRMS collaboration and provide feedback on the suggested further development of the FIRMS framework in the CECAF context.

Background

1. FAO is leading the FIRMS (Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System) partnership which aims to facilitate access to a wide range of high-quality information on the status and trends of global marine fishery resources, fisheries and their management. The overall goal of the FIRMS partnership is to provide decision-makers with necessary information to develop effective fisheries policies in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
2. The partnership, steadily growing, now brings together 14 Institutions representing 19 Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs)¹. Through the FIRMS website the partnership members contribute their information on status and trends through agreed FIRMS format “status and trends” reports structured on an inventory backbone of over 1000 marine resources and about 200 fisheries that these organizations provide advice on / or manage.
3. On-going efforts aim at: broadening geographic and thematic coverage through engagement of new partners; promoting the existence/potential of both stocks and fisheries inventories and reports so that national agencies and other actors can make the best usage of FIRMS fact sheets; addressing the needs expressed by users involved in reporting on the state of Marine environment, and in marine seafood traceability and certification etc.; and facilitating information reporting by FIRMS partners. The latter includes a standard protocol for streamlining national contribution on fishing activities through the partner RFBs and their capacity building for developing regions (e.g. CECAF, SWIOFC, RECOFI, WECAFC).
4. FIRMS enable its partners and data providers to tap into the knowledge and experience from a well-established, cost-effective system for sharing information on the monitoring of fisheries resources status and fisheries activities.
5. FIRMS can also play a catalytic role in the development of regional databases in support to the regional fishery management plans. Capacity building facilities are also provided by FIRMS.

CECAF in FIRMS

6. Inventorying marine resources and fisheries for the FAO major fishing area 34 started during the early activities of FIRMS (2003) and CECAF, through its Scientific Sub-committee (SSC), has agreed to contribute information to FIRMS on regional CECAF resources assessments as part of its regular process and marine resources reporting in FIRMS under CECAF aegis was endorsed at the 18th session of CECAF in 2006. As such CECAF makes available to FIRMS its working group reports to be shared in the agreed format on the FIRMS website.
7. With respect to the fisheries inventory the SSC, at its fifth session (Casablanca, 2007), requested national representatives to validate the draft CECAF fisheries inventory and in 2009 a [CECAF-FIRMS Workshop on Resources and Fisheries inventories](#) (Accra, 2009) produced a revised and

¹ Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE), FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT), International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO), North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO).

- consolidated version of the inventories and provided capacity building for follow-up activities. The fisheries inventory was later validated at the Sixth session of the SSC (Accra 2011) that also agreed on a reporting workflow (see below).
8. The collaboration with CECAF, CECAF experts and national representatives enriched the inventories with information collected at regional and national level.
 9. At present the CECAF resources and fisheries inventories include:
 - **217** marine resources; and
 - **289** fisheries.
 10. In FIRMS, the inventories are coupled with information provided through CECAF, such as the Scientific Working Groups are used as the backbone for reporting on status and trends of stocks and fisheries under the CECAF mandate using the web-based framework and approaches established by FIRMS.
 11. Based on the information collected, CECAF is currently publishing the following fact sheets in FIRMS:
 - **98** marine resource status reports; and
 - **77** fishery status reports.

Assessment of CECAF-FIRMS reporting status

Marine Resource inventory and status reports

- 217 records in the inventory, 98 reports published as fact sheets.
12. As described above, the inventory grew along years and in some cases the fishery resources/stocks for which reports were provided changed in definition with time, making the inventory itself very dynamic.
 13. The main sources of information used for any required update of the marine resources inventory, and production of fact sheets were:
 - FAO Working group on the Assessment of Small Pelagic Fish Off Northwest Africa (FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report), 2012 (new reports pending final approval are available for 2013, 2014, 2015);
 - Report of the FAO/CECAF Working Group on the Assessment of Small Pelagic Fish – Subgroup South, 2009 (a new report pending final approval is available for 2014);
 - Report of the FAO/CECAF Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Resources – Subgroup North (CECAF/ECAF SERIES), 2010 (a new report pending final approval is available for 2013);
 - Report of the FAO/CECAF Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Resources – Subgroup South (CECAF/ECAF SERIES), 2008 (a new report pending final approval is available for 2011);

14. A few (six) fact sheets were updated in 2012, while the majority of CECAF reports are **older than 2009**. As indicated above, there are updated status reports for the source of information (see also the meeting document [CECAF/SSCVII/2015/Inf.4 - Overview of CECAF Assessment Working Groups and Reports](#)) but with respect to the post 2012 reports FIRMS was not able to publish their content in the form of fact sheets because the reports are pending final discussion at SSC.

Fishery inventory and status reports

- 289 records in the inventory, 77 reports published as fact sheets.
15. The work on fishery inventory was mostly carried out during 2009-2011 and national representatives were involved to develop the inventories.
- Validated inventories and fact sheets have been published for 6 countries: **Angola, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea and Spain**. Reporting year is mostly **2011**, updates are expected.
 - Validated inventories are pending for publication for 3 countries: **Morocco, Benin and Congo**. Information was discussed and validated with data owners but green light for publication has not yet been given.
 - Draft inventories are available for 6 countries:
 - **Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal and Mauritania**;
 - In a preliminary stage for **Ghana, Nigeria and Liberia**.

Web trends

16. A comparison between the first 8 months of 2015 and the same period in 2014 shows that FIRMS website is growing in terms of page views and sessions. Although with differences, such increase of web traffic brings more visibility to all partners.

Responsibilities, maintenance workflow and contribution to FIRMS governance

17. Responsibilities and maintenance of workflow with respect to some aspects of CECAF's contribution to FIRMS were discussed and laid out at the sixth session of the SSC in Accra, Ghana, in 2011 (see page p.9 of the report of this meeting). Main points are:
- **Responsibilities:** CECAF is responsible for the content of the marine resources inventory while countries are responsible for the content of the fisheries inventory. Reporting norms, standards and overall consistency for the region are set by the CECAF SSC under the general FIRMS umbrella.
 - **Maintenance:** Countries can update the content of their fishery inventory on a routine basis. The CECAF SSC will keep under review aspects of corporate interest such as usage, rate of update, major modifications, distribution of responsibilities including among subregional bodies, etc.
 - **Governance:** The Chairperson of the SSC is the FIRMS focal point for the CECAF region.
18. The current CECAF focal point for FIRMS (Mr. Kossi Sedzro) has contributed actively to the FIRMS global partnership discussions and has been able to participate in several FIRMS governance meetings thanks to available FAO extra-budgetary funding, including:
19. FIRMS Steering Committee
- FSC8 (Rome, February 2013)

- FSC7 (Rome, December 2011)

20. He was also invited at FSC9 but could not attend because of lack of available funding support.

21. He also contributed to the following FIRMS Technical Working Group:

- TWG4.3 (Online, October 2014)
- TWG2 (Rome, April 2008)

Prospects: FIRMS on-going developments

22. The ninth FIRMS Steering Committee meeting (FSC9, February 2015, Namibia) stated that FIRMS is now a mature framework which RFBs and their member countries are encouraged to use for their own benefits.

23. In order to encourage investment in FIRMS reporting by its members, FSC9 agreed upon new developments which are expected to boost the usage of FIRMS worldwide, hence procure Returns On Investment to its members. These new developments include:

Towards mechanisms ensuring reporting timeliness

24. FIRMS is committed to reduce reporting burden while increasing the impact of reports contributed. This strategy will proceed by combining a Minimum data requirements approach applicable for the global level, and indexing a-la-google of source documents. Beyond those globally applicable Minimum data requirements, FIRMS Partners will individually decide which are their own reporting requirements.

25. For Stocks status: the Minimum data requirements approach will strive to facilitate reporting to FIRMS by mainstreaming this reporting flow with Partner's established reporting procedures.

FIRMS maps viewer, and other on-line services

26. The FIRMS user interface and navigation requires re-engineering. FSC9 decided to proceed with the development of an interactive mapping application capable to display stocks and fisheries and other relevant layers in a given region, upon user requests. The new interface will be enabled to dynamically show maps and selected contents on status of fishery resources extracted from the FIRMS database. The development of the new interface and navigation tool is in progress under the guidance of the FIRMS Technical Working Group (TWG), and on-going mocking work is available at http://figisapps.fao.org/FIGISwiki/index.php/Renewing_the_FIRMS_website#Stocks_.26_Fisheries_map_viewer (FIRMS Wiki, login required, please request credentials to FIRMS-Secretariat@fao.org)

27. Among other services, FIRMS already offers embedding facilities to display fact sheets in other websites (e.g. national websites).

Dashboard of stock status indicators for the region – traffic light approach

28. In order to better communicate the state of marine resources, the last steering committee (FSC9, February 2015) suggested to move towards the “traffic light approach” where possible and depending on agreement of partners. The red-yellow-green visual indicators could

contribute to easily communicate qualitative indications of the overall state of the resource. These will build on the standard FIRMS state and trend descriptors displayed in FIRMS marine resource fact sheets. Development of this functionality is in progress under the guidance of the FIRMS Technical Working Group (TWG).

Global Record for stocks and fisheries: towards use of FIRMS stocks and fisheries references for traceability purpose

29. Actors involved in traceability of fishery products show a potential of becoming major users of stocks and fishery reports. This will occur provided a critical mass of such information can be made available. Towards such objective, FIRMS is currently engaged in the development of the “Global record of stocks and fisheries” which will federate knowledge on status/trends of stocks and fisheries across various global sources, and as such is expected to offer key services to stakeholders involved in “regional/global state of stocks indicators”, as well as public and private actors involved in ecolabelling, traceability and sustainable fisheries. This project is supported by the EU funded BlueBridge.

Actions requested from the Committee

30. The committee is requested to review aspects of CECAF interest such as usage, update and timeliness, workflow, proposed modifications and in particular provide feedback on the following:

- Provide feedback on current fact sheets and the information they contain, and on how workflow and timeliness of uploading new information to FIRMS can be improved;
- Provide feedback on the usefulness of the FIRMS products to CECAF and CECAF members;
Reflect on future options for CECAF and FIRMS collaboration and provide feedback on the suggested further development of the FIRMS framework in the CECAF context.

Resources

- [CECAF Marine Resource fact sheets](#)
- [CECAF Fishery fact sheets](#)
- [CECAF Publications](#)