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COMMISSION GÉNÉRALE DES
PÊCHES POUR LA MÉDITERRANÉE



COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

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**ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE IN THE
INTERSESSIONAL PERIOD 2004–2006**

1. The Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) held its Fourth session in Alexandria, Egypt, from 7 to 9 June 2004 (see document GFCM:CAQ/V/2006/Inf.4). The activities carried out by the CAQ during the first half of the intersessional period (from mid-2004 to early 2005) were reviewed by the Commission at its Extraordinary session (St Julians, Malta, 19–23 July 2004) and at its Twenty-ninth session (Rome, Italy, 21–25 February 2005). Activities were further monitored during the Thirtieth session of GFCM (Istanbul, Turkey, 24–27 January 2006).

2. The Committee's work programme was updated as a result of these reviews and priority was given to the revitalization of the Information System for the Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM) and to the re-establishment of the Network on Environment and Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (EAM). At its Thirtieth session, the Commission anticipated on a set of priority activities for CAQ up to the Thirty-first session of the Commission scheduled to take place in Rome from 9–13 January 2007.

MAIN ACTIVITIES OF THE SIPAM NETWORK

Meetings

3. During the intersessional period, the SIPAM network has been operating through the Regional Centre located in Tunis, Tunisia. The Eighth SIPAM Annual Meeting, held from 21 to 23 June 2005 in Split, Croatia, was attended by the National Coordinators of eleven participating countries as well as officers from the SIPAM Regional Centre. The report of the meeting is reproduced in document (GFCM:CAQ/V/2006/Inf.8).

4. The new role of the SIPAM National Coordinators, based on the Terms of Reference approved by the Commission at its Twenty-ninth session, was further elaborated, evolving from

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that of national data manager into that of an editorial board of a virtual magazine with responsibility for content and quality of the SIPAM Web site. The content and number of SIPAM databases were reviewed and priority in their development and maintenance was agreed upon. A strategy was identified to reconcile FAO/FIDI and SIPAM aquaculture production statistics.

5. During the meeting, the importance of timely and reliable aquaculture statistics and information was emphasized once again as a priority for the development of the sector. Several countries, however, noted problems resulting from inadequate, unreliable and/or non-existent national systems for aquaculture data, and the resulting negative impact on the building of the GFCM regional aquaculture information system.

SIPAM National Coordinators

6. New SIPAM National Coordinators have been appointed for Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Spain and Turkey. The Secretariat received official confirmation of the appointment of National Coordinators in the aforementioned countries, as well as for Albania, Egypt, Greece, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco and Tunisia. Training and/or help desk assistance has been provided on demand to some of them.

7. The SIPAM National Coordinators contact list has been checked and updated in order to allow for more rapid and effective communication among the different parties involved in the revitalisation process of the system. A preliminary programme of targeted actions has been prepared to strengthen the involvement of National Coordinators in the SIPAM revitalisation process. National Coordinators were asked to update some of the databases while the SIPAM 2006 is being redesigned (see document GFCM:CAQ/V/2006/Inf.8).

8. In 2005, no additional GFCM Member adhered to SIPAM notwithstanding the efforts made by the SIPAM Regional Centre.

SIPAM Portal

9. The responsibility for the conceptual and system development tasks for revitalizing SIPAM was assigned to the FAO MedFisis regional project at the Twenty-ninth session of GFCM. The transfer of the overall coordination of SIPAM from the FAO Inland Water Resources and Aquaculture Service (FAO/FIRI¹) to the GFCM Secretariat was further confirmed at the Thirtieth session of the Commission (Istanbul, Turkey, 24–27 January 2006). SIPAM is being redeveloped around a modern web-based system that will allow remote data entry within a centrally controlled environment.

10. Following the outcome of the Eighth SIPAM Annual Meeting, the FAO MedFisis regional project in cooperation with the FAO/FIRI and the SIPAM Regional Centre, initiated a review and re-development exercise of SIPAM.

11. The SIPAM consultancy vacancy was published on the GFCM and SIPAM Web sites in July 2005. The ensuing selection process, however, was delayed by the difficulty in identifying suitable candidates for the Information/Communication Expert post, which made it necessary to extend the deadline for applications. A number of candidates were short-listed and interviewed. Subsequently a decision was taken to establish a 3-person consultancy team comprising: an aquaculturist, an information expert and a web developer. All experts were identified and hired between December 2005 and March 2006. The team of experts, assisted by the SIPAM system designer, began a thorough review and analysis of SIPAM's history, its developmental potential and long-term sustainability, and of the users and beneficiaries of the system. The results of these

¹ Pursuant to GFCM Rule X 1(c), FAO/FIRI was the institutional coordinator of SIPAM.

initial assessments were discussed with the Coordinator of the SIPAM Regional Centre in Rome in March 2006, culminating in the finalization of a preliminary work plan.

12. A questionnaire was prepared and submitted to the SIPAM National Coordinators in order to obtain their views and comments on the revitalization approach. Following the decisions made in conjunction with the Coordinators of the SIPAM Regional Centre, the consultancy team initiated the completion and updating of the data currently available on the SIPAM web site, in a consultative process involving all National Coordinators. Within the framework of this exercise, the databases, the portal itself and its potentialities will be reshaped according to new required functionality and tested so as to meet the requirements of both the Commission and the Mediterranean aquaculture industry, along the lines outlined in Appendix G to the Report of the Eighth SIPAM Annual Meeting (GFCM:CAQ/V/2006/Inf.8).

13. In addition, meetings were held with the FAO Fishery Information, Data and Statistics Unit (FIDI) to harmonize the structure, format and terminology between the SIPAM and the FAO/FIDI statistics and to better synchronize the data release and aggregation methodologies of both systems. It is envisaged that additional technical meetings will be held with a view to standardizing the existing complementarities between the two data sources, and to evaluate the different scopes and approaches of the two systems.

Training

14. Training and/or help desk assistance has been provided to the newly appointed National Coordinators, notably on the SIPAM for WINDOWS' software, data exchange process and SIPAM portal. Certain National Coordinators specifically requested training on the operational management of the SIPAM system and arrangements are being made for the provision of such training.

SIPAM Regional Centre

15. During the intersessional period, the SIPAM Network operated through the Regional Centre located in Tunisia. The Centre continued to collate and verify the national data submitted by the SIPAM Member countries (16 Members at present) and to compile the regional aggregated databases.

16. The SIPAM Regional Centre Coordinator attended a technical meeting organized in Rome in July 2005, to contribute to the preparation of a SIPAM work plan in conformity with the recommendations made by the Commission at its Twenty-ninth session.

17. From 23 to 24 March 2006 a meeting was held at the SIPAM Regional Centre in Tunis, Tunisia, involving the Regional Centre staff and the SIPAM Information and Communication Expert to exchange views on the current status of SIPAM, its weaknesses, its potential and the possible approaches and operational procedures to be adopted for its revitalisation. This allowed defining a linear and effective way for the Tunis and Rome teams to effectively interact and operate. As a result, a 3-day visit to Rome was being organized for the SIPAM Regional Centre staff to foster a more interactive and participatory approach in the design of the SIPAM 2006 release by the Tunis and Rome teams.

18. The SIPAM Regional Coordinator attended the conference organized by the Arab Union of Fish Producers on the "Role of statistics, information and databases in the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture in the Arabic countries" in Cairo, Egypt, from 13 to 14 December 2005. Participants at this meeting welcomed the presentation made on SIPAM as a regional aquaculture information system and expressed interest in receiving technical assistance to develop a similar network for the Arabic speaking countries.

NETWORK ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND AQUACULTURE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN (EAM)

19. The Experts Meeting for the Re-establishment of the Network on Environment and Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (EAM) was held in Rome from 7 to 9 December 2005 in accordance with the recommendations made by CAQ at its Fourth session and confirmed by the GFCM at its Twenty-ninth session. The report of the meeting is provided as document GFCM:CAQ/V/2006/Inf.10.

20. Thirteen specialists from eight GFCM Members and representatives of three intergovernmental partner organizations participated at this EAM experts meeting. The meeting was convened *inter alia* to discuss and update the EAM's Terms of Reference within the framework of CAQ as well as to propose a new operational structure. The task envisaged for EAM was summarized as follows: to prepare Mediterranean marine aquaculture to best meet the rising demand for marine products while accepting and complying with environmental regulatory frameworks..

21. The experts suggested that the EAM Network should be re-established as a subsidiary body of GFCM/CAQ. It was envisaged that EAM will operate through four Working Groups dealing respectively with: (i) Harmonization of environmental regulation and standards for aquaculture; (ii) Scaling Aquaculture-environmental interactions; (iii) Integrating aquaculture within a Coastal Zone Management framework; and (iv) Public perception of aquaculture in relation to environment.

22. As other subsidiary bodies, EAM will be coordinated by the GFCM Secretariat. EAM National Coordinators should be identified as soon as possible and the Working Groups should rely on Focal Points or Facilitators selected on the best available expertise. The Working Groups will require initial funding from GFCM as seed money for launching main activities, possibly starting in 2006. The Meeting of Experts provided accordingly a short- and medium-term programme of work for the new EAM, containing cost estimates for the main activities and a timeframe proposal for the activities. It was further understood that CAQ will review and provide guidance on the most suitable institutional arrangement and *modus operandi* for EAM, including the finalization of its Terms of Reference.

MAIN ACTIVITIES OF THE TECAM AND SELAM NETWORKS

23. During the intersessional period, four international courses and seminars were organized and implemented by the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) through the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza (IAMZ) some with the funding support of FAO Fisheries Department and with the collaboration of several national and regional institutions. Two additional TECAM activities on "Mediterranean Aquaculture and Environmental Management" and "Marine Algae Culture", scheduled from 24–29 April 2006 and 22–26 May 2006 respectively, were under preparation when drafting the present document. All the activities implemented and under preparation during this period by the CIHEAM-IAMZ are listed below.

24. The activities carried out were all alluded to at the last session of the Committee (Alexandria, Egypt, 7–9 June 2004) and confirmed by the Commission at its Twenty-ninth session (Rome, Italy, 21–25 February 2005) as relevant towards the development of the aquaculture sector in the Mediterranean. Due to the limited funding available the up-dating of the "TECAM Survey on Mediterranean Aquaculture Diagnostic Laboratories" was not carried out during this intersessional period.

25. The total number of participants attending the various activities amounted to 78 (guest lectures not included). Furthermore, it is expected that the aquaculture and environmental

management, and the marine algae culture courses (see paragraph 19) will attract an additional 40–50 participants from the region. The majority of the participants were nationals of the various Mediterranean countries, however, participants also attended from selected countries in Central and Latin America, and Africa. Regarding the participants' profile, the activities have aimed at attracting aquaculture experts from the industry, research institutes, universities and relevant public administrations, in order to favour the exchange of experiences.

26. The networks have offered through CIHEAM-IAMZ, and will continue to do so, activities to professionals from the Mediterranean and Black Sea region where there is a lack of training opportunities and expertise in aquaculture. In the selection of candidates for any given activity, and especially for training courses, the organizers have continued to give emphasis in the selection of participants from Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. This included financial support to cover all or part of the expenses such as travel, registration fees, accommodation and food. The activities organized have also provided an excellent opportunity for interactions between participants themselves and the guest lectures with the expectation of future collaboration and interactions. During this period the interest of the private sector to attend the courses offered has further increased.

Courses and Seminars

Advanced course on “Fish disease diagnosis and control in Mediterranean marine aquaculture”

(Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 13–24 September 2004)

27. The course was jointly organized by CIHEAM-IAMZ and the University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain). The general objective of the course was to offer participants integrated information on: (i) fish diseases affecting Mediterranean marine aquaculture, paying special attention to their diagnosis; and (ii) the health management of fish farms, revising the present disease prevention and control methods used. The course counted on the participation of 24 experts selected from 93 candidatures from 11 Mediterranean countries (Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Egypt, Italy, Libya, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey) and from Chile and Ecuador.

TECAM advanced course on the “Design and management of bivalve mollusc hatcheries”

(Zaragoza, Spain, 14–19 February 2005)

28. The course was organized by CIHEAM-IAMZ with the collaboration of the FAO Fisheries Department. The course, which was designed for producers, technical advisors and researchers, presented the current state of knowledge, covering biological and technical aspects of bivalve hatcheries and nurseries from an applied angle. Attention was also paid to the opportunity that exists in nursery facilities in areas where a hatchery may not yet be required. The presentation of specific examples provided participants with a perspective of the functioning of hatcheries from experimental to commercial scale. A total of 27 experts, selected from 98 candidatures, attended the course from 10 Mediterranean countries (Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey). Participants came from different national administrations, research institutions, universities and from private companies.

TECAM advanced seminar on the “Use of geographic information systems in fisheries and aquaculture”

(Zaragoza, Spain, 13–24 June 2005)

29. The seminar was organized by the CIHEAM-IAMZ under the sponsorship of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI), through the Nauta Programme. This seminar addressed the spatial components of fisheries and aquaculture assessment and management, within the context of the most recent use of the Geographic Information System (GIS) tool. The

programme provided the technical bases for the use of GIS and examined existing case studies to illustrate the wide range of applications that can benefit from this technology. The course was attended by 27 experts, selected from 116 candidatures, from 6 Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey), Mauritania and Mexico.

SELAM advanced course on “Traceability of Fish and Fish Products: Technologies and Management Systems”

(Zaragoza, Spain, 17–21 October 2005)

30. The course was jointly organized by CIHEAM-IAMZ and the FAO Fisheries Department, with the collaboration of the Centre for Marketing Information and Advisory Services for Fishery Products in the Arab Region (INFOSAMAK). The main objective of this course was to provide participants with the tools that will enable them to analyze and implement traceability in the fish supply chain in order to meet both regulatory and market requirements. It presented and discussed methods of system analysis, technological solutions to data capture and communications along the supply chain and demonstrated how these have been applied within the industry using case studies and field visits. Twenty-five experts from 11 Mediterranean countries (Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Italy, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey) selected from 68 candidatures participated in this course. The participants come from different national administrations, research institutions, universities and from the private sector.

Joint SELAM/SIPAM meeting on seabass and seabream market analysis

31. The organization of the joint SELAM/SIPAM meeting on market analysis of the European seabream (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) and Gilthead seabream (*Sparus aurata*) was under preparation at the time of the drafting of the present document. In late 2005, the FAO Fish Utilization and Marketing Service (FIU) agreed to provide technical support in organizing the meeting and to contract a consultant to produce a background market report on seabass, seabream and other relevant finfish species in the European market.

32. The meeting will be held at FAO Headquarters and is scheduled to take place on 12 May 2006. It will gather approximately 10 experts from Northern, Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries (including producers, government officials, marketing experts and other resource persons as well as the marketing consultant). The findings of the report will be discussed and recommendations for follow-up actions will be drafted for consideration by the Committee.

Expert meeting for the integration of TECAM and SELAM as a subsidiary body of CAQ

33. As a follow-up to the recommendation made by the external evaluation of CAQ and its Networks (Rome, Italy, 29–30 March 2004), the Commission agreed at its Thirtieth session (Istanbul, Turkey, 24–27 January 2006) to support the organization of an expert meeting for the establishment of a subsidiary body of CAQ that would combine the competencies/mandates of TECAM and SELAM and merge the two Networks into a single and more efficient entity.

34. The follow-up to the above mentioned recommendation and the preparation for this meeting has been coordinated by the FAO Fisheries Policy and Planning Division (FIP) at the request of the Secretariat.

35. At the time of the preparation of this document, the meeting was planned to be held back-to-back with the Fifth session of CAQ, i.e. from the 2 to 3 June 2006 in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. The proposed dates for the meeting would (i) conform to the guidance received from the Commission to limit the number of meetings; (ii) give a possibility to the experts to also participate in the CAQ session without additional costs; and (iii) permit the Secretariat to report to CAQ, thereby allowing the Committee to take necessary decisions, including on the terms of

reference, priority activities, institutional set-up and *modus operandi* on the merged TECAM and SELAM, and ensure in turn the inclusion of related activities in the CAQ programme of work and budget for the forthcoming intersessional period.

36. Preparation for such expert meeting have been made, including the development of a meeting prospectus, invitations and specific background documentation. The meeting would have the following objectives: (i) to bring together the relevant expertise and knowledge on issues relevant to the mandates of the two existing Networks; (ii) to identify the rationale, objectives, terms of reference, membership and operational structure for a new subsidiary body dealing with socio-economic, market and industry aspects, taking into consideration existing programmes, networks and institutional available capacity; (iii) to set-up initial common priorities and activities on the basis of a medium-term programme of work; and (iv) to suggest the most appropriate institutional set-up and *modus operandi* for such subsidiary body.

GFCM/ICCAT AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE BLUEFIN TUNA FARMING

37. The Joint Ad Hoc GFCM and International Commission for the Conservation of the Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) Working Group on Sustainable Bluefin Tuna Farming/Fattening Practices in the Mediterranean was established in line with the decision taken by the Commission in 2002 calling for practical guidelines aimed at ensuring the sustainability of bluefin tuna farming in the light of the expansion of this activity in the Mediterranean.

38. The work plan of the Working Group (WG) was discussed and proposed by a Coordinating Committee which met in January 2003 (Madrid, Spain) as agreed during the Twenty-seventh session of the GFCM. At its first meeting held in Rome from 12 to 14 May 2003, the WG produced a survey form that would enable to produce a summary of the current situation of bluefin tuna farming in the Mediterranean, identify problem areas with respect to the issues to be addressed and propose solutions. During the second meeting (Izmir, Turkey, 15–17 December 2003), the WG formulated a preliminary snapshot of the current situation of bluefin tuna farming based on the findings of the survey and progressed with the drafting of the guidelines.

39. The WG held its third and final meeting in Rome, Italy, from 16 to 18 March 2005. The meeting was attended by 19 experts from 10 Mediterranean countries, Japan and the European Commission, as well as representatives from the GFCM and ICCAT Secretariats. At this meeting the WG finalized and produced, as required, technical guidelines for addressing the sustainability of this activity as well as updated the summaries on capture fisheries, farming and marketing/trade of bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean.

40. Based on the data and information provided by the experts, the technical guidelines were developed under the following main headings: (i) Capture fisheries; (ii) Transport and transfer; (iii) Farming; (iv) Harvesting and marketing; and (v) Summary of statistical issues. The “Farming” section refers to the bluefin tuna production itself, and as the farming of this pelagic species raises a series of distinct issues that require particular attention, the following sub-heading are included in the Guidelines: Registration, Socio-economic issues, Environmental issues, Data and research; and Animal welfare. The Report of the WG, including the Guidelines translated in English, French and Spanish, is contained in document GFCM:CAQ/V/2006/Inf.11.

41. The WG Report was presented to the Commission at its Thirtieth session (Istanbul, Turkey, 24–27 January 2006). The Commission expressed its satisfaction with the results of this joint activity with ICCAT. It endorsed the guidelines and invited CAQ to expand them through the EAM as necessary, especially on issues related to aquaculture and the environment.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE COMMITTEE

42. The Committee is invited to review the activities carried out during the intersessional period 2004-2006, including any follow-up that might be deemed necessary such as on the (i) workshop on Bio-indicators for Sustainable Aquaculture, which was scheduled to take place in Montpellier, France, early April 2006, that has been postponed; (ii) and workshop on Coastal Lagoon Management and its Interactions with Artisanal Fisheries.

43. The Committee may also wish to provide guidance on issues of particular relevance especially on the institutional set-up, *modus operandi* and work plan of the proposed CAQ subsidiary bodies, taking into consideration that a meeting of expert will be organized early July 2006 to review a set of amendments to the GFCM Rules of procedure, including possibly those related to the mandate and functioning of the subsidiary bodies of CAQ.