

September 2003



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
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Agriculture  
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Organisation  
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pour  
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et  
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Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
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## GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

### Twenty-eighth Session

Tangiers, Morocco, 14-17 October 2003

### INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (2002-2003)

#### I. INTRODUCTION

1. The report on intersessional activities is a standing item of the agenda for the sessions of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). It covers activities of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and of the Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ). As a specific reporting on fisheries management conclusions and advice are laid down in document GFCM/XXVIII/2003/5, this document only summarizes major activities undertaken within the frameworks of SAC and CAQ since the Twenty-seventh Session of the Commission (Rome, Italy, 19-22 November 2002). It does not cover many of the activities which were carried out by the AdriaMed, CopeMed and MedSudMed regional projects which are incorporated in the report of the Sixth Session of SAC (GFCM/XVIII/2003/Inf. 4).

#### II. ACTIVITIES OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC)

2. The Sixth Session of SAC was held in Thessaloniki, Greece from 30 June to 3 July 2003. The Session was attended by delegates from 14 Members of the Commission as well as by observers from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and from World Conservation Union (IUCN).

3. The mandate of SAC for the intersessional period was stated in the "Reference Framework" attached as Appendix H of the Report of the Twenty-seventh Session of GFCM. It also comprises those complementary or transversal issues for which the Commission calls for follow-up action.

### Meetings

4. SAC and its Subsidiaries continued to work intensively during the intersessional period, including through convening a total of fourteen meetings, as indicated in the following table.

Meetings of the Sub-Committees 2003	Title	Date	Place
Stock Assessment	Annual Session	3-6 June	Nicosia, Cyprus
	Working Group on Demersal Species	12-14 March	Tangiers, Morocco
	Working Group on Small Pelagic Species	12-14 March	Tangiers, Morocco
Statistics and Information	Annual session	3-6 June	Nicosia, Cyprus
Economic and Social Sciences	Annual Session	3-6 June	Nicosia, Cyprus
	Working Group on Indicators	3-4 March	Barcelona, Spain
Marine Environment and Ecosystems	Annual Session	3-6 June	Nicosia, Cyprus
	Working Group on Ecology and Environment	27-28 March	Salammbô, Tunisia
	Working Group on Anthropogenic Effects and Fish Technology	27-28 March	Salammbô, Tunisia

SAC Meetings	Sixth Session	30 June-3 July	Thessaloniki, Greece
	Coordination of the four Sub-Committees	5 June	Nicosia, Cyprus
	<i>ad hoc</i> Working Group on Operational Units	8-9 April	Rome, Italy
	<i>ad hoc</i> Working Group on Sustainable Tuna Farming	12-14 May	Rome Italy
	Preparatory meeting for the <i>ad hoc</i> Working group on Sustainable Tuna Farming	18 January	Madrid, Spain

5. SAC, however, noted once more that participation in the meetings of its subsidiaries continue to decrease, in term of number of scientists involved, countries represented and sub-regional balance. It concluded that it could be the result of inadequate budgetary resources at national and GFCM levels as well as because of the high number of meeting held each year. In addition, despite the fact that a number of meetings were convened in the Eastern Mediterranean, participation from this sub-region and from the Black Sea had been below expectation. With the view of securing adequate participation in the future, SAC made the following suggestions for consideration by the Commission :

- limiting the number of meetings convened in the intersessional period, e.g., by holding the Working Group meetings back-to-back with that of the Sub-Committees, when possible;
- promoting interface between activities, e.g., through emphasizing the organization, as appropriate, of focused transversal workshops on key activities or subjects, including on the basis of multi-disciplinary case studies when relevant;
- strengthening the coordinating role of the SAC bureau, e.g., through improving linkages among Sub-Committees and national focal points, establishing proper Terms of reference for SAC Chair, Vice-chairs and Coordinators and ensuring their participation at the sessions of the Commission.

#### *Transversal issues assessed by SAC*

6. In addition to the disciplinary activities of the Sub-Committees, the following transversal issues were addressed through multidisciplinary Working Groups.

7. The activities of the Joint GFCM/(SAC/CAQ)/ICCAT ad hoc Working Group on **Sustainable Tuna Farming** in the Mediterranean are reported below under the section related to CAQ.

8. At its second meeting in April 2003, the Working Group on **Operational Units (OUs)** made significant efforts to draw up a scheme for minimum socio-economic and resources-based data collection. SAC endorsed the scheme as well as a proposal to carry out two pilot studies to be conducted by AdriaMed and CopeMed, to test the applicability of this data collection scheme. The Committee also requested that for future activities on this issue the largest involvement of experts from different sub-regions and from all Sub-Committees be sought.

9. SAC also noted the lack of progress made in relation to the Ad Hoc EIFAC/GFCM Working Party on the **Management of Sturgeon**.

10. The Committee reiterated the importance of the **Glossary** to the work of SAC and established an *ad hoc* Steering Group composed of three scientists to revise definitions and include new terms in the Glossary.

#### *Observations on the Sub-Committees*

11. The following observations related to the work of the Sub-Committees were also noted by SAC:

- **Sub-Committee on Stock Assessment:** Despite decreasing participation of scientists at the Working group meetings, a total of 24 stocks were reviewed from 13 GFCM geographical sub-areas (GSAs) on the basis of 14 assessments (8 on demersals and 6 on small pelagics). The list of shared stocks was updated and the list of priority species revised. Progress was also acknowledged with regard to the identification of biological reference points. The Committee reiterated the need that the Commission request Members to encourage the participation of their experts and ensure they bring along with them all relevant information and data. The Committee agreed that in general it should maintain the recommendations made to the Commission at its Twenty-seventh Session. It reiterated that priority should be given to those assessments dealing with shared stocks and priority species although, assessment work should not necessarily be limited by GSAs boundaries but should encompass as much as possible the occurrence area of the stock concerned;

- **Sub-Committee on Economic and Social Sciences.** SAC acknowledged continuous efforts being made for improving the collection of economic and social information on the OUs in the Western Mediterranean and the Adriatic while limited progress was made to initiate similar work in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The Committee expressed the need for increased research related to fish markets, including prices, quality control, processing and labelling.
- **Sub-Committee on Marine Environment and Ecosystems.** SAC recognized the vulnerability of cartilaginous fishes and requested SCMEE to revisit the issue. The Committee also expressed serious concerns regarding catches of non-target species by driftnets and invited the Commission to request Members to submit all available relevant information in this respect.
- **Sub-Committee on Statistics and Information.** SAC was informed about the current status of the MEDFISIS regional project that is to be funded by the European Commission and the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP). The project is expected to focus on the census of fishing vessels and catch and effort data collection schemes along with the development of related information systems. The TCP component of the project focusing on the Eastern Mediterranean has been approved by the Director General of FAO and is operational. The document on the main component of the MEDFISIS project is in the process of being signed.

#### *Other intersessional activities related to SAC*

12. Within the collaborative framework of the Sub-Committee on Stock Assessment and the developing FAO/FIGIS **Fisheries Monitoring System (FIRMS)**, substantial progress were made, with support from CopeMed, on establishing an inventory of 17 shared stocks in the Mediterranean. FIGIS/FIRMS, a network of institutional partners aimed at providing access to information on the global monitoring of marine resources, was presented to the Committee. SAC invited GFCM to provide guidance regarding the ownership and validation of the information prior to its publication on the FIGIS public Web page.

13. SAC was informed on the participation of a representative from the Secretariat at the “Workshop on responsible fisheries in the **Black Sea and Azov Sea** and evaluation of demersal resources” organized by the UNDP-GEF Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project (BSERP), in Istanbul, Turkey, in April 2003. The Workshop highlighted the importance of enhancing the Black Sea constituency in SAC with a view to better transfer the scientific and management expertise developed by SAC into the Black Sea sub-region

14. On the issue of promoting greater **participation of the private sector in research activities**, CopeMed organized late July, its first Forum encompassing industry, research and administration representatives of the Western Mediterranean. AdriaMed pursued the follow-up of its two previous meetings on the same subject, especially the dissemination of the Project’s scientific results to stakeholders and the planning of specific topics and related pilot-case studies. A document on the Adriatic Sea professional fishery associations is also being finalized.

15. The Secretariat informed the Committee that FAO was willing to print and disseminate peer reviewed **publications** emanating from the work of SAC and invited Sub-Committees to submit more regularly scientific outputs to be published in the GFCM “Studies and Review Series”. In this respect, the Secretariat and AdriaMed have jointly launched an activity by which all GFCM publications and scientific contributions, since 1952, will be catalogued and abstracted, thereby contributing to the establishment of a data base on GFCM publications and to enhancing the visibility on the achievements of the Subsidiaries of the Commission.

16. In the same context, and for enhancing the visibility of GFCM outputs, the Secretariat, with the support of CopeMed and FIGIS, is being improving the GFCM home page ([www.faogfcm.org](http://www.faogfcm.org)), including through appropriate linkages with regional projects and relevant institutions. Work on the GFCM logo is also considered.

17. In addition, SAC welcomed the proposal made by the Secretariat to undertake an **external evaluation of the achievements of SAC** and agreed that the outcome of the evaluation should be presented to the Commission. An *ad hoc* Meeting of Experts on the Independent Appraisal of the Achievements of the Scientific Advisory Committee (1999-2003) was convened from 27 to 28 August 2003. The Meeting, comprising selected scientists from SAC, reviewed the assessment made by an independent consultant and produced a report (made available as document GFCM/XXVIII/2003/Inf.5). The report lists major achievements of SAC, identifies strengths and weaknesses of current SAC process and suggests considering preliminary options for improvements.

### III. ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE (CAQ)

18. Activities carried out under the framework of CAQ between November 2002 to October 2003 involved mainly four areas: i) active participation in the work of the Joint GFCM/ICCAT Working group on Sustainable Tuna Farming; ii) follow-up on the revision of the regional aquaculture project proposal for the Mediterranean; iii) data collection and processing by the network on Information Systems for the Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM); iv) courses and seminars by the network on Technology of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (TECAM), dealing with technical and biological aspects of aquaculture development.

19. Following a meeting, early January, of its Steering Group for preparing a workplan, the Joint GFCM/ICCAT Working Group on **Sustainable Tuna Farming** met in May and reviewed preliminary data and information on tuna farming for a number of countries. On this basis, a questionnaire for national reporting was finalized. National reports will be analysed for each of the following sub-components: capture fisheries; farming and market and trade, on the basis of which a first draft of guidelines for sustainable tuna farming will be prepared for discussion at the second meeting of the Working Group, scheduled to take place from 15 to 17 December 2003, in Izmir, Turkey. A third meeting organized as a workshop with participation from the private sector and with the main goal of finalizing the guidelines, is planned soon after March 2004. Countries that have not participated to the first Working Group were encouraged to participate to the subsequent meetings and provide information accordingly.

20. The Secretariat proceeded, as requested by GFCM at its last session, with the drafting of a revised and focused **regional aquaculture project proposal** in support of the implementation of the Plan of Action for responsible aquaculture in the Mediterranean, endorsed at Second Session of CAQ (2000) as well as by the Commission in 2001. The revised project has been formulated and is being finalized for presentation at the next session of CAQ.

21. During the period under review, the **SIPAM Network** has focused its activities on:

- up-dating by the SIPAM Regional Centre, in Tunis, of the regional databases managed by the network;
- reviewing and improving the SIPAM website ([www.faosipam.org](http://www.faosipam.org)) through support from FAO Regular Programme budget, particularly for enabling external users to directly submit relevant aquaculture information to the SIPAM Administrators;
- convening the Seventh Annual SIPAM meeting which was organized in Casablanca, Morocco, from 19-20 September 2003.

22. A course, a seminar and a survey have been organized under the **TECAM network** by CIHEAM through the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza (CIHEAM-IAMZ) and in

collaboration with a number of local organizations. The Advanced Course on "Advances in fish reproduction and their application to broodstock management" took place in Zaragoza and Castellón (Spain) in February 2003 with the main objective of providing an updated vision of the scientific bases and of the progress made in fish reproduction and to demonstrate its practical application to broodstock management. The Advanced Seminar on "The use of veterinary drugs and vaccines in Mediterranean Aquaculture" took place in Izmir (Turkey) in May 2003 and contributed to the compilation of the TECAM Survey on Mediterranean Aquaculture Diagnostic Laboratories, the results of which will be published by the end of 2003 in a special volume of the CIHEAM journal, *Cahiers Options Méditerranéennes*.

#### **IV. SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMISSION**

23. The Commission is invited to review and discuss the activities carried out by its Committees and the Secretariat during the intersessional period. The Commission may also wish to take into consideration preliminary conclusions of the ad hoc Meeting of Experts on the achievements of SAC and to further provide guidelines and suggestions on issues of particular relevance expressed by SAC, including on its *modus operandi*.