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y la
Alimentación

E**GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN****Twenty-ninth Session****Rome, Italy, 21-25 February 2005****REPORT OF THE SPECIAL SIPAM COORDINATING MEETING ON
THE FUTURE OF SIPAM – ITS ROLE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE
NEW GFCM STRUCTURE**

Special SIPAM Coordination Meeting
on the
***“The future of SIPAM – Its role in the framework of the new
GFCM structure”***

Rome, Italy, 9–10 December 2004

- **FINAL MEETING REPORT** -

BACKGROUND

1. The external evaluation of the SIPAM (Information System for the Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean) Network proposed at the Third Session of the Committee on Aquaculture¹ and endorsed by the Commission at its Twenty-seventh Session² clearly recognized that the Network was a valuable developmental tool for the Mediterranean aquaculture. Furthermore, the Commission during the Extraordinary Session (St Julians, Malta, 19-23 July 2004) allocated funds to the strengthening of the Network. The importance given to SIPAM in providing adequate national and regional information to the Mediterranean aquaculture sector called however for an increased and committed input from all participating GFCM Member countries as well as a natural evolution of the Network towards a more appropriate way to collect, structure and disseminate data and information.
2. As follow-up to these recommendations the Secretariat organized a special SIPAM coordination meeting held in Rome, Italy, from 9 to 10 December 2004 to discuss the future of SIPAM. The List of participants is attached as Appendix 1. The deliberations and recommendations of this meeting are provided in this document.
3. The overall aim of this document is to serve as a working paper on the strategy proposed to reinforce and improve SIPAM to better respond to the new needs and requirements at national and regional level. The document is divided in two sections, i.e. (i) the structural changes in which important modifications of the database structure, data organization, treatment and dissemination are proposed, and (ii) the new SIPAM network working methodology in which a new strategy is proposed to adapt SIPAM to changing demands and different needs. These would be identified annually in order to ensure that the system is truly driven by the end user.

¹ Report of the Third Session of the Committee. Zaragoza, Spain, 25–27 September 2002.

² Report of the Twenty-seventh Session of the Commission. Rome, Italy 19–22 November 2002.

4. From an organizational point of view, SIPAM was conceived to become the official aquaculture information system of the GFCM. As the Commission is becoming a consistent “Fisheries Management Organization” endowed with an autonomous budget, the effective role of SIPAM as well as its relationship and obligations towards the Commission must be taken into account. It is envisaged that SIPAM will provide to the GFCM Information Centre, once established, all relevant data and information concerning Mediterranean aquaculture.

CONSIDERATIONS

5. In introducing a strategic plan for the enhancement of SIPAM within the new institutional framework, it is imperative that three major issues are given appropriate consideration. This assessment will certainly help to introduce and better understand the changes and adjustments that will be anticipated in this report.

The new institutional and organizational framework in which SIPAM is going to operate as from 2005.

6. The renewed GFCM is a reality, not so much as an institution but mainly as an organised body with all the necessary infrastructures, from a headquarters to a full-time secretariat, full-time officers, an autonomous budget, a clear mandate and a future. This is a unique and great opportunity for the SIPAM Network to redefine and reinforce its role in the Mediterranean.

The origin of SIPAM – the situation at that time which motivated the concepts and built the expectations on which it was conceived and then developed.

7. SIPAM was originally conceived at the beginning of the ninety. In 1995, when the FAO executed Mediterranean Regional Aquaculture Project (MEDRAP II) came to an end, it was noted that an effective aquaculture information system in support of sector in the Mediterranean would not exist. SIPAM was therefore established as an entity by the GFCM, in order to contribute to aquaculture development through improving the flow of aquaculture data and information among the participating countries in the Mediterranean Basin and the Black Sea.
8. The approach selected for SIPAM was to develop national information systems with a similar structure, which would communicate through a regional centre. It was generally agreed that these information systems could serve as a tool for planning purposes within each member country and that they would also provide information and other services to the aquaculture industry. The sharing of non-confidential national information through the SIPAM Regional Centre was intended to allow participating countries to access information from other countries and thus to keep abreast of developments at a regional level. This would help each country to be better equipped to deal with and respond to changes, emerging challenges, and new technologies in the sector.
9. At that time, the “informatics” level in the region was, in general, poor, and under no circumstances could the aquaculture community have supported an advanced system or, rather, an advanced information management system. Several other constraints dictated the design of SIPAM, starting from the scarcity of available structured data and information, data definitions and distribution rules. The reluctance of the National

Coordinators to distribute/ disseminate data unless through certain channels and under certain conditions were further constraints. In such circumstances it was compulsory to develop a system with an open architecture (permitting development and management of modules) and, at the same time, a chained structure that enabled the National Coordinators to control the data structure (i.e. the contents), the inflow and outflow traffic and data distribution. In other words, it was under the responsibility of each National Coordinator to decide in isolation what to develop and how to organise the treatment and dissemination of data. However, despite such constraints, SIPAM managed to establish a network in a period when the use of computers was still limited and restricted. Considering the pioneering role that SIPAM has had in this area, particularly in the field of information technology, computer knowledge and usage, data manipulation, integration, data coherence, codification, dissemination, etc., the Network should be considered an achievement in view of its limited financial resources and institutional mandate.

10. It might be argued that not all the national SIPAM network components worked efficiently. This has certainly been the case. However, it should be noted that the obligations of SIPAM represented for most of the National Coordinators additional work without providing clear future prospects. With the new GFCM institutional and organizational framework the situation is clearly expected to change and SIPAM should now have the opportunity to achieve its original goals and express its potentiality.

The evolution of the Network and the growing request for connectivity by the participating countries and by all contributors.

11. In recent years, the demand for reliable data and information as well as for reporting on aquaculture developments, constraints and needs has greatly increased and driven, not only by the need to formulate and monitor sound policies and development plans, but also by new information and reporting requirements of international agreements and initiatives and increasing public demand for transparency and accountability. In addition, all this must be associated with the established and increased interest for networking as an increasing number of aquaculture policies formulation and management strategies are based upon the analysis of reliable and timely information. Searching for national and international data is, nowadays, an integral part of a planning and decision making process and the need for such responsive systems is impelling.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES

12. According to the new requirements, SIPAM must change its functionality from a structured modular centrally controlled system (where data are collected, structured, managed and disseminated according to a given and static design) into a system that regulates itself (adjusting its databanks, data collection models and strategies, and dissemination protocols) according to new projects, ideas and the dynamics of information requirements. Any improvement in the operational use of SIPAM must be considered in the context of national needs and priorities as well as of those coming from the private industry and other possible user. The costs related to the regular adjustment of the system in responding to such needs and the necessity of acquiring data and information, beyond that provided by the SIPAM National Coordinators,

must be taken into account at resources level. Financing the collection of additional data and information must therefore be envisaged.

13. In anticipation, the new strategy will require strong changes in two key areas, i.e. (i) data collection, and (ii) elaboration and dissemination of timely and attractive information; in other words the whole information management flow. The structural revision should start from reconsidering the data collection process in order to adapt the database structure according to the data collection mechanism.
14. From the data collection perspectives, the new database component, fully internet-based, SIPAM will manage five levels of data submission channels:
 1. Official national reports and strategic data will still be submitted by the SIPAM National Coordinators (official statistics, list of production centres, research institutions etc.).
 2. Experts in the various administration or other institutions (projects, inter-governmental organizations, NGOs, etc.) will be authorized to feed into the SIPAM database on issues of their competence. Furthermore national producers will also be authorised to enter their data into the new system under their own responsibility.
 3. National scientists and “others” experts working in the sector, may also be authorized to enter data into SIPAM through a general monitoring system under each of the National Coordinators.
 4. The SIPAM Data Manager, in coordination with the Information and Communication Expert, will be responsible for searching, evaluating and importing data from selected websites and other sources of information into SIPAM according to well defined procedures. It should also be envisaged that external consultants might be recruited to collect data, prepare reports and produce information according to needs.
 5. The full interaction and close collaboration of SIPAM with FIGIS, the FAO Fisheries Global Information System, as well as with other information systems will be developed, establishing ad hoc links and database intercommunication facilitating the retrieval of specific information of interest to the aquaculture sector in the Mediterranean.
15. The above changes together with a more advanced technological environment should greatly improve the data acquisition of SIPAM.
16. From the communication point of view, a media professional should be employed as an Information and Communication Expert to work closely with the SIPAM team and the GFCM Secretariat. This expert, with proven “journalistic/communication” skills, will be required to exploit the databases and other information available in SIPAM, in order to produce analytical reports and studies. The expert is also expected to animate discussions and provoke constructive reactions (see draft Terms of Reference in Appendix 2) among the SIPAM partners and other relevant parties.
17. These important changes should be supported by scientifically or financially motivated National Coordinators (Terms of Reference in Appendix 3). In view of the new structural changes and working methodology proposed in this document all Member countries active in the Network are expected to reconfirm and/or nominate their National Coordinators that are committed to

the needs of SIPAM. Furthermore, it is expected that changes will also be required at the organizational level within the countries. The figure of the National Coordinator should be split into two entities with clear and separate functions and mandates as indicated below.

18. One officer from the relevant administration with decisional mandate should be responsible for the institutional role of SIPAM and deal with recommendations, internal and external relationships, authorities and administrations. This officer should, as much as possible, be the same officer who covers the position of National Focal Point at the GFCM Committee on Aquaculture. A second person with knowledge and operational capabilities on aquaculture data management should deal with all operational and running aspects of SIPAM.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND LOCATION OF SIPAM

19. As mentioned it is important to establish the role SIPAM will have within the GFCM information website. Therefore it is imperative that the restructuring of SIPAM is made in the same framework of the new strategic plan. It is suggested that the development plan and the new system design be made in collaboration with or directly by the team of MedFisis (Mediterranean Fishery Statistics and Information System) which will be responsible for the statistical databases and information component of the GFCM.
20. The second major issue is the role of the new Information and Communication Expert. This professional must take active part in the re-designing process and preferably work in tight collaboration with the team leading the development of the new system. The web developers, who will build up the new internet-base SIPAM portal following the GFCM-MedFisis design, will require inputs from the Information and Communication Expert particularly regarding the needs and capabilities of the SIPAM Regional Centre and National Coordinators.
21. The Committee on Aquaculture has acknowledged the efforts of the Tunisian Government for its substantial support to the Network noting that it is not secured that Tunisia will host and support the SIPAM Regional Centre *ad infinitum* and that different skills are now necessary to bring SIPAM into the “age of information”. It was therefore recommended that the Regional Centre be re-locate within the GFCM Secretariat not to duplicate efforts and waste valuable staff and financial resources. However, given that the GFCM new structure and autonomous budget are still in the consolidation phase, the Regional Centre is ought to remain in Tunisia for sometime until its possible relocation will be clearly defined.

SIPAM WORKING METHODOLOGY

22. A new and more dynamic working methodology should be adopted by the SIPAM Network and users to ensure continuous identification and delivery of the required outputs. These should correspond to the demand of different users, such as policy makers, research and development bodies, and from the public

and private production sectors. The system should be structured to reach two main objectives as indicated below.

A – SIPAM should be able to respond to changing demand and different needs, identified year by year, in order to become a user driven system.

23. *Identification of needs.* In order to realize the new SIPAM structure and to achieve these ambitious goals, the proposed methodology could be as follows:

- Identification of key issues, at national and regional level, by each National Coordinator using a standard pre-formatted questionnaire;
- Analysis country by country of the main key issues and elaboration of a national report, that should follow the structure of the FAO-National Aquaculture Sector Overview, by the National Coordinator;
- Presentation of country results at the SIPAM annual meetings;
- Constitution of working groups specialized in areas such as policy and regulations, research/development and production that would identify common issues based on the country reports;
- Elaboration by the working groups of summary reports taking into account regional needs and developments;
- Adoption of the summary report by the National Coordinators at the SIPAM annual meetings.

24. *Elaboration of outputs.* Under the responsibility of the SIPAM Regional Centre, the SIPAM Information and Communication Expert would provide the appropriate outputs, identified using the above mentioned methodology as well as using the new SIPAM functionalities described in the structural changes of this document. For the time being the presence of an Information and Communication Expert should ensure the identification in a short-term period of the stated outputs, using the current SIPAM existing information.

B – SIPAM should provide the most recent available information on aquaculture at national and regional level, produced by different information sources.

25. *Up-to-date information.* In order for information to be attractive and useful to all external users, SIPAM should be able to provide the most recent available information on aquaculture. For this purpose SIPAM, as the main regional disseminating system, should be in a position to establish partnerships with projects and other information systems in the field of Mediterranean aquaculture. These projects could provide SIPAM with new and fresh information and possibly additional funds for implementation and improvement of the system.

BUDGET ALLOCATION

26. From a budgetary point of view, it is expected that the 2005 allocation in the GFCM autonomous budget be used as follows:

Information/Communication Consultant (8 m/m)	30 000 US\$
System Development Team (10 m/m)	40 000 US\$

SIPAM Regional Centre interaction with the development team	15 000 US\$
Web Provider/hosting	2 000 US\$
National Coordinators	10 000 US\$

Appendix 1 – List of participants.

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Appendix 2 – Terms of Reference (TORs) of the SIPAM Information and Communication Officer.

Background

Following the recommendations of the Fourth session of the GFCM Committee on Aquaculture (Alexandria, Egypt 7-9 June 2004) and the decisions taken during the GFCM Extraordinary Session (St Julians, Malta 19-23 July 2004) concerning the funds to be allocated in supporting and strengthening of the Information System for the Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM), it was decided to recruit an Information and Communication Officer. The main role of such officer would be to strengthen the collection and analysis of regional aquaculture information and to facilitate data and information exchange among the SIPAM member countries. The following draft Terms of Reference have been prepared by the Secretariat.

The Information and Communication Officer will provide, in collaboration with the SIPAM Regional Centre team and under the overall supervision of the GFCM Secretariat, coordination and management support on the implementation of SIPAM activities and data flow strategies. SIPAM has been conceived with the aim of contributing to the sustainable development of aquaculture through improving the flow of aquaculture information among the participating countries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

Tasks

The Information and Communication Officer will be responsible for the assessment and exchange of aquaculture related data and information among all SIPAM participants and networking with national governmental institutions, scientific and non-governmental organisations, regional and specialised agencies, for the effective implementation of the Network activities as approved by the CAQ-GFCM Committee. In particular the SIPAM Information and Communication Officer will be required to:

- Design, propose and eventually implement communication/information strategies for the SIPAM Network;
- Liaise with all SIPAM National Coordinators to implement and ensure an efficient data and information flow in SIPAM;
- Encourage the SIPAM National Coordinators to provide data and news on a regular basis;
- Research, analyse and manage information and data from external sources and that provided by the SIPAM National Coordinators;
- Compile and edit a regular information bulletin and other promotional material on SIPAM activities, and ensure its distribution to all SIPAM participants as well as ensure its targeted distribution;
- Define, in collaboration with SIPAM Regional Centre and the GFCM Secretariat, the editorial inputs to the SIPAM website;
- Plan, identify and produce relevant edited and updated SIPAM website contents and ensure their timely publication in the relevant website pages;

- Prepare and distribute news releases and technical reports, as appropriate, to highlight ongoing national and regional aquaculture activities;
- Participate when possible in sector events (e.g. meetings, conferences, workshops, fairs, etc.) and deliver presentations to promote the role of SIPAM;
- Prepare relevant technical reports for the SIPAM annual meetings and for the CAQ biannual session;
- Coordinate and participate in relevant working groups engaged in information collection, analysis and dissemination;
- Maintain communications with all SIPAM National Coordinators and the GFCM Secretariat;
- Liaise with public/private organizations which may support the SIPAM Network;
- Handle relevant correspondence and reply to inquiries for public information materials; and
- Any other duties as may be assigned.

Qualifications

- University degree or equivalent in marine and aquaculture sciences with at least 5 years of practical experience in information and communication.
- Excellent and proven communication skills with government officials, scientific organizations and other stakeholders engaged in the Mediterranean aquaculture sector.
- Good computer skills including databases and web design and maintenance tools.
- Fluency in written and spoken English and French. Knowledge of one or more of the other languages used in the participating countries is desirable.
- Excellent team working skills.

This vacancy is open to male and female candidates from GFCM Member countries.

Appendix 3 – Terms of Reference (TORs) of the SIPAM National Coordinators.

Recognizing each government's commitment to SIPAM within the *aegis* of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), and the full support of his/her supervisors, the duties of SIPAM National Coordinator shall include (but not be confined to):

- The National Coordinator is representing his/her country in SIPAM.
- In close collaboration with the SIPAM Regional Centre and in coordination with other CAQ Networks Focal Points, be responsible for all SIPAM activities in his/her country.
- Elaborate through national workshops or other means such as suboffices, projects and initiatives on aquaculture to be submitted to the SIPAM Network.
- In conjunction with the SIPAM Regional Centre, prepare annual national SIPAM work programmes in coordination with other national aquaculture bodies.
- Prepare and submit annual draft budgets for all national SIPAM activities, including essential national and international travel, for government funding.
- Be responsible for the regular and timely transmission of data and information to the SIPAM Regional Centre also required for the updating of the SIPAM web pages.
- Attend regional SIPAM meetings.
- Assist the SIPAM Regional Centre in identifying and soliciting potential non-governmental and private sources of funding to support the SIPAM Network and activities.
- Fully publicize the existence and value of the information contained in the SIPAM website to the private sector and within his/her government, as well as in relevant institutions such as universities and provide guidance in the use of the SIPAM website.
- On a continuing basis, suggest ways in which SIPAM can be improved.
- Conduct continuous internal evaluation of the efficacy of information dispersal by SIPAM on a national level in order to improve future services.
- Assist in the promotion and success of SIPAM in any other way as shall be requested, from time to time, by the SIPAM Regional Coordinator and by the GFCM Secretariat.