



GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION
FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN
COMMISSION GÉNÉRALE DES PÊCHES
POUR LA MÉDITERRANÉE



GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

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INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (2005)

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 provides a summary on the work of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and its subsidiary bodies, on progress achieved by the entities related to the Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) and on other activities conducted upon guidance from the GFCM. Conclusions and advice on the management of capture fisheries are reviewed in document GFCM/XXX/2006/5. Many additional activities were carried out by the FAO regional projects supporting the Commission. They are referred to in the report of the Eighth Session of SAC (document GFCM/XXX/2006/Inf.5) whereas complementary reporting on major activities of these projects is enclosed in document GFCM/XXX/2006/Inf.15.

II. ACTIVITIES OF THE SAC DURING THE INTERSESSIONAL PERIOD

2. The Eighth session of SAC was held in Tirana, Albania, from 25 to 28 October 2005. The Session was attended by delegates from 15 Members of the Commission as well as by observers from the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

3. SAC reviewed the achievements of its subsidiary bodies. The Programme of work of the Committee drew upon the "Reference framework for the mandate of SAC 2003-2004" adopted by the Commission at its 27th session (November 2002), and further updated at its following sessions. In February 2005, the Commission agreed on the Programme of work of the Committee for 2005¹ and

¹ Report of the 29th Session, paragraphs 89-95.

acknowledged that this programme would mainly consist in finalizing, consolidating or extending most of current activities for each of SAC subsidiary bodies².

4. SAC, its four Sub-Committee, Workshops and Working groups worked intensively during the nine months of the 2005 intersessional period. This is reflected by the number of documents produced³ and, in accordance with the decisions of the Commission, of 15 meetings held, as follows.

Meetings

- SCSA Workshop on Gear Selectivity. 9-11 February 2005, Sète, France.
- 3rd Joint GFCM/ICCAT *ad hoc* Working Group on Bluefin Tuna Farming in the Mediterranean, 16–18 March 2005, Rome, Italy.
- SCSA transversal Workshop on Measurement of Fishing Effort, and SCSA transversal Working Group on Operational Units. Tangiers, Morocco, 4-6 July 2005.
- SCMEET transversal Workshop on Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries, 7-9 September, Salammbô, Tunisia.
- SCSA transversal Workshop on GFCM Statistical Framework and Databases, including IUU white list, 26 September, Rome, Italy.
- SCSA, Annual meeting, including the Working group on demersal species and the Working group on small-pelagic species, 26-30 September, Rome, Italy.
- SCESS, Annual Meeting, 27-30 September, Rome, Italy.
- SCSA, Annual Meeting, 27-30 September, Rome, Italy.
- SCMEET, Annual Meeting, 27-30 September, Rome, Italy.
- Informal Coordination Meeting of the Sub-Committees (CMSC), 30 September, Rome, Italy.
- Coordination Meeting of the Sub-Committees (CMSC), 24 October, Tirana, Albania.
- Eighth Session of the Scientific Advisory Committee, 25-28 October, Tirana, Albania.

5. Only the first meeting of the Permanent Working Group on Stock Assessment Methodologies (PWGAM) was postponed and rescheduled to take place in Istanbul (Turkey), early 2006, to ensure a larger participation and consistent results. SAC endorsed the terms of reference prepared for the PWGAM with the understanding that they might be consolidated in future.

6. The Committee took note of the conclusions (document GFCM/XXX/2006/Inf.8 refers) of the ***Coordinating Meeting of the Sub-committee*** (CMSC) which was formally established by the Commission at its 29th Session and endowed with a comprehensive mandate. The CMSC worked accordingly as a functional steering group to harmonize disciplinary inputs and outputs from the Sub-Committees and coordinate transversal issues. However, the CMSC was not yet in a position to prepare or finetune integrated opinions on fisheries management.

7. The CMSC noted that the collaboration, mainly through electronic mail between its members, remarkably improved, in particular in relation to meetings arrangements (e.g., drawing up agendas; terms of reference for the Working groups, etc.) and to strengthening liaison with the various stakeholders. Concern was expressed regarding the lack of financial support for the Coordinators of the Sub-committees in relation to the increasing number of meetings held during the intersessions.

² Report of the 29th Session, paragraphs 89 and 93.

³ See list of document produced in GFCM/XXX/2006/3.

The matter was taken up by SAC which favoured some form of travel support from the autonomous budget of the Commission when Coordinators are required to participate to more than two meetings of SAC subsidiaries during the intersession.

8. The CMSC also conveyed the concern, particularly of the Sub-Committee on Marine Environment and Ecosystems (SCMEE) and of the Sub-Committee on Economic and Social Sciences (SCESS), that the attendance of experts (especially from the Black Sea and the Eastern sub-regions) slightly decreased compared to 2004. SAC noted that increased accountability of the SAC National Focal Points in ensuring the networking of national institutions could contribute, together with the launching of the CopeMed (Phase II) and of the EastMed project, to securing more steady participation in the future. The Committee reviewed the list of its Focal Points and updated it.

9. SAC further acknowledged the stronger interface built between the Sub-Committees through the following **cross-sectional or transversal activities**. It expressed the wish that this translates into the preparation of proper multidisciplinary and integrated management advice.

- The Transversal **Workshop on standardization of selectivity methods** applied to trawling was organized under the aegis of the Sub-committee on stock assessment (SCSA). It reviewed, on the basis of case studies, available knowledge on experimental methodologies and protocols with the view to identifying priority actions towards better standardisation of methods and data transfer. The Workshop acknowledged that square meshes were more selective than diamond meshes and that there was a need to evaluate selectivity also in terms of economy loss for the fisheries. It concluded that no experimental methods can be privileged in view of the many variables which influence the effectiveness of the capture. The main results of the Workshop were assessed jointly by the SCSA, the SCSi and the SCMEE, and endorsed by SAC.
- The **Workshop on Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF)**, organized under the aegis of the SCMEE, favoured a common understanding of the key principles and tools for implementing the EAF. It reviewed GFCM related undertakings and covered in particular the geographical partition, time scales and classification of ecosystems to be taken into consideration. The following topics were emphasized: Essential and sensitive habitats; Modelling; Ecosystem indicators for spatial and temporal monitoring of fishing effort; Selectivity and gears; and By catch of vulnerable and protected species as well as elements for an implementation roadmap, including research needed. Main results were jointly assessed by the SCSA and the SCSi.
- The transversal **Working group on Operational units** was organized under the aegis of the Sub-committee on Statistics and Information (SCSi). It was convened back to back with the **Workshop on the standardization of the measurement of fishing effort**. These meetings reviewed progress made with the support of the regional projects to further expand and harmonize Catch and Effort Assessment Survey (CAS) in order to comply with data requirements of the Operational Unit Scheme. The Working group on Operational Unit finalized proposals for data aggregation and data collection scheme. It further identified standard minimum effort parameters for fleet segments within the OU frame, including routine fleet and catch/effort data collection requirements at national level. SCSi together with SCESS assessed in detail the results of the Working group and finalized related tables on minimum data requirements. They also fine-tuned the proposal for regulating the Dolphin fish fishery in the Mediterranean. It was however acknowledged that tangible progress was needed with regard to the measurement of fishing effort.

- The **Workshop on Statistical Framework and Data bases** (including IUU white list) included participants from SCSi and SCESS. It reviewed some of the existing Mediterranean databases, including those of the FAO Regional projects, and appraised their possible development and integration within the GFCM database. The Statistical schemes developed by MedStat statistical programme within the framework of the FAO regional projects was satisfactorily assessed. The data base structure and major requirements for the establishment of vessel register (fishing vessels over 15 m LOA) were identified.
- No meeting of the Joint **GFCM/ICCAT Working group on Large pelagic species** in the Mediterranean was scheduled in 2005. SAC suggested that such a meeting, dedicated to swordfish (especially stock structure, the ecosystem approach to swordfish fisheries, socio-economic aspects of the fishery and, fleet statistics, possibly using the operational unit format for fleet data) be held in 2006, subject to ICCAT/SCRS availability.

Major observations emanating from the work of the Sub-Committees:

10. The four Sub-Committees met simultaneously at FAO Headquarters, 27-30 September. The Working groups, respectively on demersal and on small-pelagic species, of the SCSA met, for the first time, within the Sub-committee Session. SCSi also convened its **Workshop on Statistical Framework and Databases** during its annual session. The holding of all these meetings on the same venue, in parallel or back to back, proved cost-effective. As stated above, it allowed in particular for joint assessments of the outcomes of transversal activities.

SCSA:

- A total of twenty two assessments of 20 stocks (9 demersals and 11 small pelagics), including 6 shared stocks and covering 7 GFCM geographical sub areas (GSAs), were appraised, mostly in the Western Mediterranean. SAC however noted that only few pilot multispecies assessments were performed and that neither the list of shared stocks, nor the list of priority species was modified.
- The estimated lengths at first sexual maturity of the anchovy was updated for the following areas: Catalan coast and South of Sicily; Ionian and Aegean seas; Tunisian coast and Adriatic Sea.
- SAC further endorsed the suggestion from the SCSA that a more systematic use of the results of the trawl survey MEDITS programme be exploited by the Sub-committee, including the use of MEDITS abundance indices (scientific CPUEs) for the most important stocks. The SCSA also formulated management advice out of which SAC endorsed seven (7) on demersal species in four GSAs and nine (9), including on Dolphin fish, on pelagic species in five GSAs. No consensus could be reached with regard to the anchovy, sardine and sprat in the GSA 17 (Northern Adriatic) and two divergent opinions were put before the Commission (document GFCM/XXX/2006/5 refers).

SCESS

- SCESS concentrated its work on issues related to operational units (OUs) schemes. Emphasis was on identifying homogeneous group of vessels encompassing the biological, economic and technical insights, and determining economic data collection scheme, using the SAC classification of fleet segments and fishing effort parameters. Together with SCSi, it elaborated the four tables, adopted by SAC, on data requirements that respectively covers: i) fleet segment; ii) fishing activity; iii) economic parameters for each fleet segment; iv) variables. It further enlarged the scope of socio-economic indicators (on sociological and

marketing aspects) and addressed related reference points. The Sub-committee stressed the need to better monitor recreational fisheries and initiated demand and supply analysis with the view to assessing the impact of the market on the management of fisheries.

- SCESS also emphasized the need for strengthening data analysis and modelling capacities throughout the Member States by increasing the level of cooperation among all countries at all levels (industry, public authorities, research and statistics), including the training and dissemination of a common data analysis framework

SCSI:

- The SCSI focused on the Operational Unit issue on the basis of the outcomes of the pilot experiences accrued with support from CopeMed and AdriaMed. SAC acknowledged the applicability for the whole Mediterranean of the multidisciplinary Operational Unit concept.
- It was noted that the collaboration with FAO/FIGIS-FIRMS on the fisheries inventory was evolving satisfactory. Similarly, progress achieved in updating and implementing the MEDSTAT programme was expanding with as a growing number of countries using the system, including since 2005, in the Eastern Mediterranean with support from MedFisis.
- SCSI through the MedFisis project achieved substantial progress on the structuring of the GFCM vessel Register data base, as an initial core of the GFCM regional database.
- SAC endorsed the recommendation that a Programmer/data base manager be appointed in the GFCM Secretariat to design and develop the GFCM system framework and that the post of GFCM fishery statistician be defrozen to operate and maintain the GFCM databases. The Terms of reference for this post are attached as Appendix 1 to this document for consideration by the Commission.

SCMEE:

- SCMEE followed-up on the issue of the protection of ecosystems and vulnerable habitats. Measures for the protection of four sensitive habitats or fragile sites were identified. Results were recognized to be still limited on geographical occurrence, seasonality and effect of mucilaginous algal bloom and on effects of fishing gear on marine ecosystems. SAC also noted that no specific recommendations on by-catch, especially for mitigation measures of marine turtles had been formulated.

11. Finally, the Committee endorsed the selection of the Coordinators as proposed by the respective Sub-Committees as follows:

- *SCSA*: Ms C. Karlou-Riga
- *SCSI*: Mr. M. Camilleri
- *SCESS*: Mr. M. Malouli Idrissi
- *SCMEE*: Mr. M Nejmeddine Bradai

Other intersessional activities of relevance to capture fisheries

12. At its 8th Session, SAC appraised the major activities of the **FAO Regional Projects**, namely CopeMed, AdriaMed, MedSudMed and MedFisis. The principal activities of these Projects range from identifying and carrying out research programmes, holding technical meetings, organising training activities and preparing and issuing technical publications (see overview on performance in

document GFCM/XXX/2006/Inf.15). SAC reiterated the paramount importance of these projects for its work. It called for a greater involvement of all the Northern Mediterranean countries in the work of CopeMed. SAC further acknowledged that the cooperation and integration of activities between MedFisis, the other regional FAO projects and the Secretariat proved to be a key element for the fulfilment of the Committee objectives.

13. The Committee was informed of the status of these projects which, updated up to December 2005, is as follows. The AdriaMed and MedSudMed Projects have been extended under the financing by Italy with possible additional funding from the EC in the case of AdriaMed. The formulation phase of the EastMed Project which was financed by Italy, has been completed. The project document for the second phase of CopeMed (also referred to as CopeMed II), to be jointly supported by Spain and the EC, and of the EastMed Project, to be co-funded by Greece, Italy and the EC, have been finalized and submitted to respective donors. Both the CopeMed II and EastMed Projects are foreseen to be operational early in 2006.

14. The activities of the **Joint GFCM/ICCAT ad hoc Working Group on Sustainable Bluefin Tuna Farming**, are reported below. However, the Committee further noted that the technical guidelines on sustainable tuna farming prepared by the Working group required subsequent developments, mainly on aquaculture related issues. SAC therefore invited GFCM to call on the Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) to ensure follow-up and to inform SAC accordingly.

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

15. The Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) held its fourth Session, in Alexandria, Egypt, in June 2004 (the Report of the session is quoted GFCM/XXX/2006/Inf.6). Activities carried out during the first part (mid 2004-early 2005) of the CAQ intersession were reviewed by the Commission respectively at its Extraordinary session (July 2004) and at its 29th session (February 2005). The Work programme of the Committee was updated and priority given to the revitalization of SIPAM and the re-establishment of EAM.

16. Thus activities carried out under the framework of CAQ between February to December 2005 involved mainly the following areas: i) organization of the Third meeting of the Joint ad hoc GFCM/ICCAT Working Group on Sustainable Bluefin Tuna Farming in the Mediterranean; ii) data collection and processing by SIPAM; iii) the holding of the eight annual session of SIPAM and preparation of the SIPAM revitalization project; iv) courses and seminars by CIHEAM, of behalf of the network on Technology of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (TECAM); v) a meeting of expert for the re-establishment of EAM.

Meetings of CAQ

17. In accordance with Commission decisions, the following meetings were held:

- TECAM advanced course on "Design and management of bivalve mollusc hatcheries". Zaragoza, Spain, 14-19 February 2005.
- Third GFCM/ICCAT Joint ad hoc Working Group on Bluefin Tuna Farming in the Mediterranean, Rome, Italy, 16-18 March 2005.
- TECAM course on "Use of Geographic Information Systems in Fisheries and Aquaculture"; Zaragoza, Spain, 13-24 June 2005.
- SIPAM Annual Meeting, Split, Croatia, 21-23 June 2005.
- Expert meeting for the re-establishment of EAM, Rome, Italy, 7-9 December 2005.

18. The following meetings were postponed:

- Workshop on Bio-indicators for Sustainable Aquaculture (now scheduled to be held 5-6 April 2006 in Montpellier, France).
- Joint SIPAM/SELAM meeting on the seabass and seabream markets (now scheduled to be held mid May 2006 in Florence, Italy).

19. The **Joint GFCM (SAC/CAQ)/ICCAT Working Group on Sustainable Tuna Farming** produced, as required, Technical guidelines for addressing the sustainability of this activity. Based on the data and information provided by the experts, the guidelines were developed under the following main headings: i) Capture fisheries; ii) Transport and transfer; iii) Farming, including Registration, Socio-economic issues, Environmental issues, Data and Research and Animal welfare; iv) Harvesting and marketing; v) Summary of statistical issues. The Report of the Working group, including the Guidelines are available as document GFCM/XXX/2006/Inf.16.

20. During the intersession, the **SIPAM Network** fully 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. It provided training to the new appointed National Coordinator of Algeria, especially on the software SIPAM for WINDOWS, data exchange process and SIPAM portal. The SIPAM Regional coordinator participated to a technical meeting organized in Rome in July 2005, to set up the SIPAM working plan to meet the recommendations of the 29th Session of GFCM. He also attended the Arabic conference on the "Role of statistics, information and databases in the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture in the Arabic countries" organized by the Arabic Fish Producers, in Egypt, in December. Participants at this meeting appreciated the demonstration made on SIPAM as a regional information system and expressed interest to receive assistance to develop a similar network for the Arabic countries. In 2005, no additional GFCM Member adhered to SIPAM.

21. The Eighth SIPAM Annual Meeting was attended by National Coordinators from eleven countries. The new role of the SIPAM National Coordinators, based on the Terms of reference approved by GFCM in February 2005, was further elaborated, evolving from that of national data manager into that of an editorial board of a virtual magazine with responsibility for content and quality of the site. The content and number of SIPAM databases were reviewed and priority in their development and maintenance were agreed upon. A strategy was identified to reconcile FAO/FIDI and SIPAM aquaculture production statistics.

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

23. The transfer of the SIPAM system from FAO Inland Water Resources and Aquaculture Service (FAO/FIRI⁴) to the GFCM Secretariat was confirmed and the responsibility for the conceptual and system development tasks for revitalizing SIPAM was assigned to MedFisis. SIPAM will be re-developed around modern web-based system that would allow remote data entry within a centrally controlled environment.

⁴ Pursuant to GFCM Rule X 1(c), FAO/FIRI was the Institutional Coordinator of SIPAM.

24. Upon guidance from the SIPAM Meeting, the MedFisis regional project in cooperation with the FAO/FIRI, the SIPAM Regional Centre and the GFCM Secretariat launched the **SIPAM revitalization project**. The recruitment of the SIPAM Information/Communication Expert was hampered by the difficulty to identify adequate candidates. It was therefore decided to establish a consultancy team composed of an experienced aquaculturist and an information expert that will be supported by the MedFisis/SIPAM System designer and a web developer. The team is expected to implement a consultative process involving the Regional Centre and the National Coordinators. Within this frame, the databases, the portal and its potentialities will be reshaped according to new required functionality and tested so as to meet the needs and exigencies of GFCM and of the Mediterranean aquaculture industry along the line described in Appendix G to the Report of the Eighth Annual Meeting (document GFCM/XXX/2006/Inf.13).

25. A number of courses and seminars have been organized by CIHEAM/IAMZ), out of which the two **TECAM** courses mentioned above, were supported by FAO/FIRI.

26. Thirteen specialists covering eight GFCM Member countries and three partners intergovernmental Organizations participated to the **Meeting of experts for the re-establishment of EAM**. The meeting was called, *inter alia*, to discuss and produce specific proposals of Terms of Reference for the re-establishment of EAM within the framework of the GFCM and more specifically in support of CAQ. 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 regulations.

27. The Experts concluded that the EAM Network should be re-established as a subsidiary body of GFCM/CAQ. It will work through four working groups identified as follows: (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.

28. EAM will be coordinated by the GFCM Secretariat. EAM National Coordinators should be identified as soon as possible and 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 term programme of work for the new EAM, supported with cost estimates for the main activities.

IV. SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

29. The Committee is invited to review activities carried out by its Committees during the intersessional period and to provide guidance on issues of particular relevance expressed by its subsidiary bodies, including on any follow-up that might be deemed necessary.