

May 2003



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**GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN**

SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Sixth Session

Thessaloniki, Greece, 30 June - 3 July 2003

**REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE
COMMITTEE DURING THE INTERSESSIONAL PERIOD**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This document is the summary by the Chairman of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) on the work of the Working Groups, Sub-Committees and other related activities conducted in follow-up to the guidance expressed by GFCM at its twenty seventh session (Rome, Italy, 19-22 November 2002). The Commission agreed that Intersessional activities will draw mainly from the provision of the "Reference framework for the mandate of SAC for the period 2003-2004"¹, and from the respective work plan of the the SAC subsidiary bodies as endorsed by GFCM.

2. The intersessional activities reported below do not include the many other support activities that were carried out by the regional projects: COPEMED, ADRIAMED and MEDSUDMED and that are described in the respective reports of the SAC subsidiary bodies which are made available at this session of SAC.

¹ Report of the 27th Session, Appendix H.

II. ACTIVITIES OF THE SAC DURING THE INTERSESSIONAL PERIOD

3. At its Twenty-seventh Session, the Commission² agreed on a biennial (2003-2004) Reference Framework for the work of SAC and endorsed the Programme of Work proposed by the Fifth Session of the Committees³. It further instructed the Chairperson of SAC to determine priority activities within the Reference Framework, based on available inputs and achieved results for the intersessional period. The SAC had seven months within which to implement its 2003 programme. All the meetings approved by the Commission⁴ for the intersessional period 2003 were convened, as follows:

For the Sub-Committees

Meetings of the Sub-Committees 2003	Title	Date	Place	Coordinator/Facilitator
Stock Assessment	Annual Session	3-6 June	Nicosia, Cyprus	Pere Oliver
	Working Group on Demersal Species	12-14 March	Tangier, Morocco	Enrico Arneri
	Working Group on Small Pelagic Species	12-14 March	Tangier, Morocco	Argiris Kalianotis
Statistics and Information	Annual session	3-6 June	Nicosia, Cyprus	Dino Levi
Economic and Social Sciences	Annual Session	3-6 June	Nicosia, Cyprus	Mohamed Idrisi Malouli
	Working Group on Socio-economic Indicators	3-4 March	Barcelona, Spain	Mohamed Idrisi Malouli
Marine Environment and Ecosystems	Annual Session	3-6 June	Nicosia, Cyprus	Amor El Abed
	Working Group on Ecology and Environment	27-28 March	Salammbô, Tunisia	Alberto Garcia
	Working Group on Anthropogenic Effects and Fishing Technology	27-28 March	Salammbô, Tunisia	Francesco Serena

² Report of the 27th Session, paragraphs 78 and 88.

³ Rome, Italy, 1-4 July 2002

⁴ Report of the 27th Session, paragraph 90.

For SAC

SAC Meetings	Sixth Session	30 June-3 July	Thessaloniki, Greece	Juan A. Camiñas
	Coordination of the four Sub-Committees	6 June	Nicosia, Cyprus	Nicos Hadjistephanou Vincenzo Placenti
	Workshop on the glossary	5 June	Nicosia, Cyprus	Pilar Pereda
	Joint SCIS/SCES/SCSA Working Group on Operational Units	8-9 April	FAO, Rome	Dino Levi
	Joint GFCM/ICCAT Working Group on Large Pelagics	26-28 May	Madrid, Spain	Victor Restrepo
	Joint SAC-CAQ/ICCAT Working Group on Sustainable Tuna Farming	24 January 12-14 May	Madrid, Spain FAO, Rome	Victor Restrepo

4. The Coordinators of the four Sub-Committees and Facilitators for the Working Groups collaborated with the SAC Secretariat and Chairperson in drawing up the agendas and holding the meetings, in line with the thematic areas identified by the Commission. The respective reports of the Sub-Committees are made available as documents: GFCM:SAC6/2003/Inf5, Inf.6, Inf.7 and Inf.8.

5. In addition, representative of SAC participated to the Workshop on responsible fisheries in the Black Sea and Azov Sea and Evaluation of Demersal Resource (Istanbul, 15-17 April, 2003). The Workshop was organised by the UNDP-GEF Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project (BSERP) and aimed at reviewing the state of fisheries and other marine living resources of the Black Sea and Azov Sea and formulating recommendations for their management in an ecologically, economically and socially sustainable manner. The conclusions and recommendations of the Workshop were presented at the SAC Sub-Committees meeting. They include a call for strengthened involvement of Black Sea scientists within the work of SAC. The report of the workshop is being made available to the present session as document GFCM:SAC6/2003/Inf.18.

6. The reports of the Working groups of the Sub-Committee were discussed during the respective Sub-Committee meetings held in parallel in Nicosia, Cyprus. The reports of the cross-sectional Working Group of SAC, namely the Working Group on Operational Units, the virtual Working Group on SAC Glossary and the joint GFCM (SAC/CAQ)-ICCAT (SRCS) Working Group on sustainable Bluefin Tuna Farming, were presented during a joint plenary session of the Sub-Committees. This session also discussed aspects related to the modus operandi of the SAC Sub-Committees, as reported in the Report of the SAC Sub-Committees Coordinating meeting (document GFCM:SAC6/2003/inf.17).

7. The Meeting of the GFCM/ICCAT Working Group on Large Pelagic species was organized by the ICCAT/SCRS and concentrated on the assessment of swordfish fisheries in the Mediterranean. The report of this Working group is being made available at the present session as document GFCM:SAC6/2003/inf.14.

8. The conclusions and recommendations of the Sub-Committees will be presented by the respective Coordinators under the corresponding agenda item and on the basis of document GFCM:SAC6/2003/3. The outputs of the Sub-Committees are therefore not dealt with here.

9. At the meeting of the Joint SCIS/SCSA/SCCESS Working Group on Operational Units, a number of pilot surveys and inventories were presented on the basis of which the Group identified a scheme linking socio-economic data related to the adopted fleet segmentation with targeted species by seasons. The scheme was defined as a complete model to be implemented for the compilation, by GFCM Members, of data on Operational Units. The Working Group further identified accordingly the minimum set of resources related data and socio-economic based data to be used within the proposed scheme as the foundation for the GFCM data base on Operational Units.

10. The Working Group recommended that the SAC endorsed the scheme and the data format. It also recommended that specific multidisciplinary case studies on implementing the model and its scheme be undertaken in various GFCM sub-areas and particularly, with possible support from ADRIAMED in GFCM sub-areas 17 and 18, and with possible support of COPEMED in relation with the small-pelagic fisheries of the Alboran Sea. It was also recommended that GFCM Members, as relevant, initiate harmonizing their respective Catch and Effort Assessment Survey (CAS) in order to comply with data requirements of the Operational Unit Scheme. Finally, it was noted that the new MEDFISIS regional project will constitute a substantial tool for promoting the establishment of the GFCM data base on Operational units. The full report of the Working Group is made available as document GFCM:SAC6/2003/Inf.15.

11. Following GFCM guidance⁵ in relation to the work of the Joint GFCM (SAC/CAQ)/ICCAT Working Group on Sustainable Tuna Farming, a Steering committee met in Madrid, Spain, in January 2003 to fine tune the terms of reference of the Working Group and identify a schedule of activities. The first session of the Working Group was held in May. It agreed that it needed to (i) summarize the current situation of bluefin tuna farming in the Mediterranean with the support of a National Survey Form, (ii) analyze (i), (iii) identify problem areas with respect to the issues to be addressed with regards respectively to the capture, the farming, and the market and trade components of the activity, and (iv) propose solutions to (iii). It further agreed on its future work plan toward finalising the requested guidelines on sustainable tuna farming practices by Spring 2004, as set out for information in Document GFCM:SAC6/2003/Inf.16.

12. No progress were noted in relation to the work of the Joint EIFAC/GFCM Working Group on the Management of Sturgeon.

III. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

13. The work of the SAC and of its four Sub-Committees and Working Groups during the intersessional period has been particularly intense, as shown by an increasing number of meetings held and documents produced compared to previous years. The meetings continued to be poorly attended by experts from many GFCM countries, although a major participation from Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea experts was acknowledged at the meeting of the Sub-Committees. Once again, the reports of the Sub-Committees all allude to this concern and pointed to the potential negative impact of such a situation on their scientific advices.

14. Participation in the work of the Sub-Committees and Working Groups being essentially voluntary and therefore not necessarily consistent from one year to another, there is still the need to identify effective strategies to enable scientists, not only to participate to meetings but also to work year-round on SAC activities through establishing proper mechanisms to facilitate intersessional scientific activity.

⁵ Report of the 27th Session, paragraphs 58 and 90.

15. The Sub-Committees also noticed that as demand for scientific work tend progressively to concentrate on monitoring fishing effort of some operational units in specific GFCM Sub-geographical areas, the sub-regional dimension of multidisciplinary scientific analysis is becoming more and more crucial for the proper management of those shared stocks which are not highly migratory. In this respect, the role of sub-regional projects has proven essential to ensure sustainability of research outputs. SAC might wish to discuss the issue.

16. Furthermore, as recognized by the GFCM⁶, since a growing number of issues are cross-sectional activities among the Sub-Committees, there is a need to ensure a stronger interface between their respective activities. Indeed, GFCM requested SAC to strengthen the critical role of Coordinators of Sub-Committees with the aim to improve the linkages among Sub-Committees and National focal points of GFCM Members⁷. The Commission also noted the need to clarify and implement properly the procedures governing the work of the Sub-Committees and Working groups, including the terms of reference of Coordinators and the designation and role of National focal points⁸. It further endorsed the suggestion by SAC to hold regular joint meetings of Sub-Committees Coordinators.

17. As a complement to the above, during the Sub-Committees meetings, it might be worth exploring the feasibility to devoting a joint plenary session of the four Sub-Committees to deal with transversal issues with the view to better integrate scientific outputs as well as to enhance coordination of the respective proposed work plans of SAC subsidiaries, which subsequently could help elaborating a medium term research plan for SAC.

18. There has been progress in organizing national databank programmes toward fitting GFCM medium-term requirements, mainly in countries supported by COPEMED and ADRIAMED regional projects. This trend is expected to consolidate with the launching of the MEDFISIS programme, including its specific component in support to the Eastern Mediterranean. This will in turn provide means to boost the activities of the Sub-Committee on Statistics and Information for establishing a common data collection system and an integrated statistic and information system at regional level. In addition, the need to reinforce the process of publication and dissemination of findings, scientific documents and studies produced by SAC and its subsidiaries to the scientific community as a whole and to fisheries managers still requires attention.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

19. The Chairperson of the Committee pays tribute to the work of the Coordinators of the Sub-Committees, the Facilitators of the Working Groups and to all the experts who participated in the intersessional activities of SAC, as well as the institutions that have generously hosted meetings. He further thanks all members of SAC and its subsidiaries for the continuous support and strength received as Chairperson and for the results gained since the inception of SAC in 1999.

20. The Committee is invited to review and discuss this report on the intersessional activities, together with the conclusions and recommendations of the Sub-Committees provided in document GFCM:SAC6/2003/3. The Committee is also invited to put forward recommendations for the attention of the Commission and to provide guidelines and suggestions for the future programme of work of the SAC and enhanced *modus operandi* of its subsidiaries.

⁶ Report of the 27th Session, paragraph 23.

⁷ Report of the 27th Session, preamble to Appendix H.

⁸ Report of the 27th Session, paragraph 27.