

Caribbean Countries advise CITES on Queen Conch

Panama City, 25 October 2012

The first meeting of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM¹ Working Group on Queen Conch (Panama City, 23-25 October 2012) concluded with highly valuable advice to the 16th Conference of Parties of CITES² as well as recommendations to the regional fishery bodies and countries in the Western Central Atlantic.

The Working Group Meeting was attended by more than 50 fisheries sector and CITES authority delegates from 23 countries and territories³. The Working Group participants expressed their commitment to individually and collectively take measures and actions to further improve management and conservation of the Queen Conch resource in the Wider Caribbean Region.

The Working Group issued a “Declaration of Panama City” which contained a number of recommendations.

The Working Group:

1. RECOMMENDS the immediate implementation, as applicable, of the recommendations made by the Queen Conch Expert Workshop, held in Miami, USA, 22-24 May 2012, and reviewed and validated by the Working Group during the meeting in Panama City on 23-25 October 2012, taking into account recommendations made by the Working Group on paragraphs 1 and ;
2. RECOMMENDS that WECAFC, OSPESCA, CRFM and CFMC support the development of a regional plan for the management and conservation of Queen Conch, in accordance with the best available scientific evidence to be presented to the 15th session of WECAFC for review, consideration and regional adoption;
3. RECOMMENDS that the Conference of the Parties to CITES take account of and discuss the information and “draft decision” provided by Colombia at its 16th meeting, and adopt recommendations as appropriate to support the sustainable utilization, conservation and international trade in Queen Conch;

¹ This is a joint species specific Working Group of the Caribbean Fisheries Management Council (CFMC), Organization for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector of the Central American Isthmus (OSPESCA), Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM).

² Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild flora and fauna (CITES)

³ Participating countries and territories in the meeting were: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Caribbean Netherlands, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Jamaica, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, St Lucia, St Kitts & Nevis, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Turks & Caicos, United States of America and Venezuela.

4. RECOMMENDS that OSPESCA and CRFM support the development and adoption of sub-regional regulations for Queen Conch and support the implementation of these regulations by their member States;
5. RECOMMENDS that the fisheries authorities in the region increase awareness and build capacity among fishers on Safety-at-Sea and in particular address risk management in and alternatives to compressed air diving for Queen Conch and seek assistance where necessary;
6. RECOMMENDS the Queen Conch range States, CITES and FAO to cooperate closely and work jointly on the improvement and standardization of trade data and statistics (through regionally agreed conversion factors) for Queen Conch and its derivatives such as pearls, shells and opercula; and
7. RECOMMENDS that fisheries authorities with support of CRFM, OSPESCA, CFMC and WECAFC strengthen the participation of fishers in the decision making related to implementation of measures for management and sustainable utilization of Queen Conch.

The joint Working Group was established by the 14th session of WECAFC in February 2012 and the first meeting was co-organized and sponsored by the CFMC of the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Aquatic Resources Authority of Panama, WECAFC and FAO⁴.

More information on the meeting and its outcomes can be obtained from Mr. Miguel Rolon (CFMC) at miguel_rolon_cfmc@yahoo.com or Mr. Raymon van Anrooy (WECAFC) at WECAFC-Secretariat@fao.org.

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)