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GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

Sixth Session

Tirana, Albania, 17-19 December 2008

INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (2006-2008)

INTRODUCTION

1. This document summarises the activities of the Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) covering the intersessional period June 2006- November 2008. It describes in particular the work of CAQ performed through its newly established *ad hoc* Working groups and Coordinating Meeting of the Working (CMWG), as well as the activities of the Information System for the Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM). Information is also provided on the projects supporting the work of the Working groups, respectively, for the Working group on Aquaculture Marketing, the project entitled “Development of a strategy for marketing and promotion of Mediterranean aquaculture products”; for the Working group on Siting and Carrying capacity, the programme entitled “Developing siting and carrying capacity guidelines for the Mediterranean aquaculture within aquaculture appropriate area (*ShocMed*)”, and for the Working group on Aquaculture sustainability, the project entitled “Employing the ecosystem approach in the selection of Indicators for sustainable Development of Aquaculture and guidelines for their use in the Mediterranean (*IndaM*)”.

2. These activities should be appraised in the context of implementing the programme of work of CAQ, as approved by GFCM at its the thirty-first (document GFCM:CAQ/VI/2008/Inf.5) and thirty-second (document GFCM:CAQ/VI/2008/Inf.6) sessions, on the basis of the proposals of the fifth session of the Committee (document GFCM: CAQ/VI/2008/Inf. 4).

COORDINATION MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUPS (CMWG)

3. The CMWG was established to ensure the coordination of the scientific inputs from the subsidiary bodies of CAQ.
4. The first meeting of the CMWG was convened in November 2006 (see document GFCM:CAQ/VI/Inf.7). The Coordinating meeting focused on developing the frame of a medium-term work plan and devised on the possible contribution of SIPAM, especially for the Working group on Marketing. In particular, the CMWG formulated specific and detailed project outlines, including budgetary forecasts, to support each of the three CAQ *ad hoc* Working Groups. The technical proposals were elaborated on the basis of priority activities identified during the Expert Meeting on the re-establishment of the Network on Environment and Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (EAM) held in December 2005 and the Expert Meeting to identify the needs of a subsidiary body on the technical and socio-economic aspects of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean held in June 2006, just prior to the Fifth Session of CAQ. The CMWG organized itself in discussion-teams, for each Working Group.
5. Concerning the Working Group on Marketing, the team of experts highlighted the need to improve the image of aquaculture and to assess and monitor the market situation and trends. It identified two project proposals; entitled respectively “Development of a strategy for marketing and promotion of Mediterranean aquaculture products” and “Image building in Mediterranean aquaculture”. It was later on suggested, that the rationale for the second project would be substantiated on the basis of the preliminary results of the former project.
6. The Sustainability related team of experts delineated a programme focusing on the development of sustainability indices and their values within the framework of an ecosystem approach to aquaculture (EAA), thereby favouring a transversal and interdisciplinary approach. The workplan proposed for the initial period focused on the identification and practical use of indicators by stakeholders. Main activities include validation of selected Mediterranean indicators on the basis of test to be made on pilot scale and the development of regional sustainability guidelines. The *IndaM* programme was intended to support the activities of the Working Group on Sustainability.
7. The team of experts dealing with Siting and Carrying Capacity discussed the integration of aquaculture with the other coastal management issues, on carrying capacity assessment and interaction with current legal frameworks. It also discussed the necessity to harmonise regional guidelines for aquaculture site allocation and their management. In particular the group discussed the necessity for the development of aquaculture zones owned at local level and the need for a common tool to estimate the best siting and holding capacity for the development of aquaculture activities. The *ShocMed* programme proposal was developed to support the Working Group on Siting and Carrying Capacity.
8. The Second Meeting of the CMWG was convened in September 2008 (document GFCM/CAQ/VI/Inf.8). The meeting reviewed the activities of the Working Groups and of SIPAM, and provided guidance to both the subsidiary bodies and the Secretariat on issues at stake. It also provided comments on the draft Agenda for the Sixth Session of CAQ.

9. The CMWG focused in particular on the status of formulation and implementation of the above mentioned projects proposed in support of the Working Groups. It acknowledged with satisfaction the inception of the marketing project and called for accelerating the process to obtain the approval of the European Community (EC) concerning their contribution for the financing of *IndaM* and *ShocMed*. The CMWG recalled in particular the importance of sustainable indicators and related standard reference points, and the necessity to integrate the relevant outputs of the Working Groups in the SIPAM Data Banks. The CMWG agreed that the SIPAM should concentrate on the Production Statistics database as a core priority for CAQ and should consider the Production Centres directory as useful for assessing the aquaculture production capacity of the Mediterranean countries.

WORKING GROUP ON MARKETING ON AQUACULTURE

10. The Project entitled “Support to the GFCM Working Group on Marketing of Aquaculture Products: Development of a Strategy for Marketing and Promotion of Mediterranean Aquaculture” funded by the Spanish Government (Secretaria General de Pesca, Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación) was finalized by the GFCM Secretariat in the fall of 2007 and became operational in April 2008. The project, executed by the Secretariat, is implementing a series of activities in support of its parent Working Group (see details in document GFCM/CAQ/VI/Inf.9) which focus on the assessment of the present situation of the marketing of aquaculture products in the Mediterranean with the view to developing a strategy, accordingly.

11. In order to promote the establishment of a network of marketing experts, the project was presented during the General Annual Meeting of the Federation of European Aquaculture Producers - FEAP (Gran Canaria, Spain, May 2008) and at the IUCN workshop on the preparation of Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of Mediterranean Aquaculture (Hammamet, Tunisia, June 2008) and, more recently in a joint FEAP/ MedAqua meeting (Bodrum, Turkey, October 2008).

12. Within the activities on the project, the structure for data collection including the template for an understanding of the present market situation of each Mediterranean country was finalised. Some countries (Albania, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Spain) already initiated the preparation of the national report, based on a pre-established template. The preliminary structure of a marketing database, including the parameters to be included in the SIPAM Information Technology System was prepared.

13. A Technical document entitled “Market Study on Mediterranean Meagre (*Argyrosomus regius*)” was drafted. It includes information on trends for both cultured and wild meagre from the Mediterranean basin; on main market traits; prices, strategies and production types; and indication of market opportunities (see document GFCM:CAQ/VI/Dma.3).

WORKING GROUP ONSITE SELECTION AN CARRYING CAPACITY

14. The programme proposal (*ShocMed*) drafted by the CMWG in November 2006 in support of the Working Group on Siting and Carrying Capacity (WGSC) was endorsed by GFCM at its 31st Session. At the session, the EC expressed its willingness to co-finance the programme.

A number of administrative and budgetary adjustments between the competent EC services and the Secretariat were necessary in order to finalize the project document for the first year activities, leading to the signature of the project in October 2008, for a contribution of the donor amounting at about 40 000 Euros.

15. A joint IUCN/FEAP/CAQ workshop on “Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of Mediterranean Aquaculture – Site Selection” was held in Istanbul, Turkey from 24 to 25 October 2007. The workshop analysed different aspects related to selection of aquaculture sites and discussed a number of scientific contributions on models related to assessing carrying capacities, monitoring of Ecosystem Impact Assessment (EAS), the use of GIS and drawbacks in administrative processes, including planning and licensing.

16. A first meeting of the WGSC was convened at the University of Biology of Crete (Greece) from 21 to 23 October 2008 (the report of the WGSC is quoted GFCM:CAQ/VI/Inf.10). The Working group focused its discussions on the parameters for monitoring aquaculture activities, on salient aquaculture impact on the environment and on gaps concerning the legal framework for site selection. A revised work plan for the implementation of *ShocMed* for the period 2008-2009 as well as main lines for the activities to be implemented in 2010, were devised. In addition, the Working group formulated specific recommendations for the consideration of CAQ, notably on the implementation of a programme for monitoring the environment in relation to marine finfish aquaculture; the introduction of a procedure for EAS and the proposals for the limitation of new aquaculture installations in sensitive habitats.

17. A first comparative assessment on the existing legal framework and administrative procedures for site selection was initiated within the context of the IUCN/FEAP “Guide on Site Selection and Site Management”. In the meantime, the guidelines were finalised on the basis of a number of meetings and workshops organized under the aegis of the IUCN and FEAP, including in Istanbul, Turkey, (October, 2007), Alicante, Spain (February 2008) and Split, Croatia (February 2008). Noteworthy, the guidelines which are structured in thematic chapters, are the results of joint collaboration of experts from different disciplines, including socio-economists, biologists, lawyers, producers’ associations, governmental and environmental organisations from most of the Mediterranean countries.

18. The WGSC was also informed of the progress made by the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) entitled “Developing a Roadmap for Turkish Marine Aquaculture Site Selection and Zoning Using an Ecosystem Approach to Management” which was implemented during 2008. The TCP aimed at supporting the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) for developing a roadmap for sound site selection and a zoning plan for marine aquaculture. The project has organised two workshops with the involvement of several relevant stakeholders and has designed a proposal for a procedure for coastal zone planning concerning mariculture development in certain areas of Turkey.

WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABILITY

19. The programme proposal (*IndaM*) in support of the activities of the Working Group on Sustainability, followed similar adjustments and delays as mentioned above in the case of

ShocMed. At the time of preparing this paper, the project document for the first year of activities, was about to be signed between the GFCM Secretariat and the European Community, including a contribution from the donor of about 65.000 Euros.

20. The Working Group on Sustainability organized a Workshop on the Selection of Indicators for the Sustainable Development of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean, to be held in Montpellier (France) from 27 to 28 November 2008, with support from IFREMER. The Workshop aims at reviewing experiences of recent research initiatives and methodologies in the development of aquaculture indicators and to identify a set of indicators and reference points to be implemented in the Mediterranean on the basis of pilot testing. The report of the Workshop will be made available as document GFCM:CAQ/VI/2008/Inf.11.

SIPAM

21. The Ninth Annual meeting of the Network on Information Systems for the Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM) was held in Larnaca, Cyprus, 15 – 17 November 2006 (GFCM:CAQ/VI/Inf.12). It was the first meeting of SIPAM after its formal recognition as CAQ subsidiary body, in support of the activities of the three Working Groups.

22. The previous Database Management system developed in MS-ACCESS was replaced by a new multi-use data access into Structure Query Language server environment (SIPAM2006). This permitted the SIPAM data bases to pass from “stand-alone” national information systems to a web-based system operating through server communication and SIPAM has been restructured to become the official aquaculture information system of the GFCM.

23. With the support of the SIPAM Regional Centre in Tunis (Tunisia), the development of the new SIPAM Information System was completed in July 2007 and all the historical data were successfully transferred to the new associated databases and the statistical queries and reports in connection with the Production Statistics database were finalized.

24. The Regional Centre in Tunis continued to have the overall responsibility for establishing contact and communications with the SIPAM National Coordinators (SNC). Moreover, it was requested to the Tunisian Government to provide an extension of the SIPAM Trust Fund until June 2009 to permit the finalization of the decentralisation process from the Regional Centre in Tunisia to the GFCM Secretariat.

25. In April 2008 a handing-over process of the IT component of SIPAM to the GFCM Secretariat was initiated. As part of the process, the following four technical manuals were drafted: a “Technical Manual”; a “Technical guide for the system analysts and programmers”; a “User Guide” and an “Operational guide” for SIPAM users to support the management of the Warehouse

26. Since July 2008 significant efforts have been pursued in order to undertake technical maintenance and improvements to the SIPAM management. In particular, a server-side application has been developed to facilitate the management of the news, publications and

events reported on the SIPAM portal. Particular attention was paid to the optimisation of Production Statistics database and Production Centre database.

27. Moreover, assistance to the SNC of Albania, Algeria, Egypt, Italy, Lebanon, Montenegro and Slovenia was provided to help them finalizing their registration, have their user rights granted and/or concerning further activities required to use the SIPAM portal properly.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE

28. The Committee is invited to review the activities carried out during the intersessional period (June 2006 – December 2008) by its subsidiary bodies, with particular attention to the aspects related to the organisation and coordination of the activities of the Working Group and SIPAM.