



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

Organisation
des
Nations
Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная
организация
Объединенных
Наций

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)

FOURTEENTH SESSION

Panama City, Panama, 6-9 February 2012

Report

1. The Fourteenth Session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission was held in Panama City, Panama, from 6 to 9 February 2012. The meeting was kindly hosted by the Government of Panama and officially opened by H.E. Oscar A. Osorio, Minister for Agricultural Development of Panama.

2. The following 20 members attended the Session: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Brazil, Dominica, Dominican Republic, European Union, France, Grenada, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago and the United States of America. Apologies were received from Belize, Guinea, Guyana, Jamaica, St Vincent & the Grenadines and Venezuela. The list of participants, including observers and other participants is in Appendix B.

Election of chairperson and two-vice chairpersons for the Commission

3. Mr. Giovanni Lauri (Panama) was elected chairperson of the Commission. Ms. Christine Chan A Shing (Trinidad and Tobago) and Mr. Lionel Reynal (France) were elected respectively as first and second Vice - Chairperson.

4. The Commission adopted the agenda as shown in Appendix A.

Review of the State of Fisheries in the WECAFC region

5. The Commission considered the review of the state of fisheries in the WECAFC region in document WECAFC/XIV/2012/2, and in discussion emphasized the importance of making progress in addressing illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The Commission expressed its concern with the declining trend in fish stocks and catches of a number of commercially and recreationally important fish species. The urgent need for increased cooperation to improve management was underlined. Members called for support to smaller countries by the Commission in data collection and analysis, in order to complement the work carried out with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM). It was strongly recommended that the Commission be prepared to address unexpected issues, such as the sargassum invasion which was likely to have uncertain effects on fecundity and survival of early life stages of flying fish and dolphin fish. The Commission was also requested to monitor the status of dolphin fish as the resource could be overfished in the Eastern Caribbean.

Main decisions and recommendations of the twenty-ninth session of COFI and the thirteenth session of WECAFC

6. The Commission took note of the decisions and recommendations of the Twenty-ninth Session of COFI and the Thirteenth Session of WECAFC, set out in WECAFC/XIV/2012/3.

7. A number of delegations expressed deep concern about the poor representation of the WECAFC members at important international meetings such as COFI. The poor participation was due, *inter alia*, to the limited financial resources, and it was suggested that partnerships be sought with the private sector in order to secure the necessary resources, instead of relying exclusively on government and donor support. It was also proposed to make use of existing regional (WECAFC) and sub regional (OSPESCA, CRFM) frameworks to ensure the best use of available resources and that the region's interests will be presented at international meetings.

Report of the Fifth Session of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) of WECAFC

8. The Commission thanked the members of the SAG for their work and endorsed the report of the fifth session of the SAG, including its conclusions and recommendations, as presented in WECAFC/XIV/2012/4. The beneficial effects of inviting sub-regional frameworks, research institutions, non-government organizations (NGOs) and relevant projects to the session was noted and supported.

Intersessional activities and matters referred to the attention of the Commission

9. The Commission considered the intersessional activities of the Commission and FAO in the WECAFC region as reported in WECAFC/XIV/2012/5, and commended the achievements and outcomes described.

10. A number of delegations expressed concerns about the level of exploitation of sea cucumber stocks, as well as invasive species such as lion fish. The work on a Regional Plan of Action to combat the lion fish invasion by GCFI and others was appreciated.

11. The Commission agreed to continue all Working Groups (Spiny Lobster, Flying Fish, FADs, Queen Conch, Nassau Grouper/Spawning Aggregations) as joint working groups of WECAFC with partner organizations. It was considered that a leading role could be played by these partners as well.

12. The importance of supporting the responsible development of aquaculture in the region was emphasized, as well as the need to carry out a regional workshop on data collection and statistics as foreseen in the 2008-2009 work programme.

13. The Commission discussed the progress in the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries in the WECAFC region, as presented in WECAFC/XIV/2012/13.

14. The Commission endorsed the conclusions and recommendations from the Regional Policy and Planning Workshop on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) in the Caribbean: Achieving Improved Fisheries Management and Utilization in the Wider Caribbean Region, held in Barbados, 6 - 9 December 2011, as presented in Appendix C.

15. Various delegations informed the Commission of recent OSPESCA Regulations (on lobster, shark finning, code of ethics, fleet register) which support the implementation of the CCRF in Central America. The important role of fishers and fishers' organizations in the implementation of the CCRF was underlined and encouraged. In addition, the monitoring of the implementation of the CCRF, including the use of the biennial questionnaire, was considered valuable in reminding governments of actions and measures that needed to be taken. Recognizing the possibility of using satellite data for monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), as applied in the USA and Panama, the other members were invited by Panama to draw on the strengths of its experience.

WECAFC logo

16. The Commission thanked the designers from FAO, Panama and OSPESCA for the original designs prepared and for the proposal from the delegate from St. Lucia. The following logo for WECAFC was chosen by the members, as designed by Ms Sylviane Borghesi.

**Relationship with other bodies active in the Wider Caribbean Region**

17. Mr. Robin Mahon outlined an approach to ocean governance in the Wider Caribbean Region that was developed by the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) Project and guides its implementation. It has also been adopted by the Association of Caribbean States' (ACS) Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC) as an approach for the strengthening of governance. The approach can be described as an ocean governance network regime that involves all of the organizations with a mandate relating to ocean governance, including those with a mandate for fisheries.

18. The Commission considered that it would be useful to collaborate with CSC by providing an integrative science policy interface for regional ocean policy development in the region. This would contribute to the functionality of other organizations in the region.

19. It was suggested that the relationship between the Commission and with the Secretariats of the Cartagena Convention and the Inter American Sea Turtle Convention should be strengthened.

Support to the implementation of international guidelines and agreements by WECAFC

20. The Commission expressed appreciation to the Secretariat for the report on the support to the implementation of international guidelines and agreements by WECAFC shown in WECAFC/XIV/2012/6. The Commission noted the importance of establishing a working group on the management of deep-sea fisheries in order to ensure that a precautionary approach could be taken in relation to such fisheries. The Commission approved the Resolution shown in Appendix D.

Rules of Procedure of WECAFC

21. The Commission reviewed the draft revised Rules of Procedure proposed in Appendix 3 of Document WECAFC/XIV/2012/8. The proposed revisions aimed to revitalize the Commission through improved procedures and decision making and achieve clearer and more effective administration. Mindful that the required 2/3 of WECAFC members for amending the existing Rules of Procedure were not present at the Session, the Commission agreed in principle to the draft Rules of Procedure, but expressed concerns about the wording of some rules and recommended that they be considered for adoption at a meeting where the required number of members is present. The Commission considered that the draft revised procedures shown in Appendix E would contribute significantly to the strengthened operation of the Commission and agreed that they should be implemented on a *de facto* basis.

22. There was extensive discussion on the proposed rules relating to the termination of membership of WECAFC after not being present at two consecutive meetings, which will be considered at a future session of WECAFC. Noting that members should remain active in

WECAFC by attending sessions, a process was favoured for the termination of membership that seeks to work with the members to resolve hurdles to their regular participation. Such measures should not prejudice the least developed countries and small island developing countries that may have difficulty in obtaining financial support for their attendance.

23. Discussion took place on a proposed *de facto* procedure regarding the use of working languages in Working Groups and other WECAFC activities. The Commission did not make a decision on this matter. The Secretariat emphasized that the reduced funding under FAO's Regular Programme for the region would not allow FAO to continue to supply the translation and interpretation services as in the past. The Secretariat called upon the members to provide for extra-budgetary resources in support of covering translation and interpretation related necessities, or to be flexible when organizing Working Groups.

Committee for the Development and Management of Fisheries in the Lesser Antilles

24. The Commission considered a proposal to abolish the Committee for the Development and Management of Fisheries in the Lesser Antilles, contained in WECAFCXIV/2012/9. It was acknowledged that the Committee had been productive until 1995 but that it remained largely dormant for many years. The Commission decided that the Committee should be retained for the intersessional period, to ensure that the mandate of this Committee is covered by other existing or emerging regional bodies.

Disaster Risk Management and climate change adaptation in fisheries in the WECAFC Region

25. The Commission discussed document WECAFC/2012/XIV/10 on reducing vulnerability of fishers, fish farmers and their communities to disasters and climate change impacts. The Commission recognized that the issue is critical in the region. Members reported unusual climatic conditions and types of disasters that have impacted the coasts, fishing communities and fisheries resources. Severe floodings and consequent infrastructure damage, land slippages following heavy rain, hurricanes and consequent sedimentation, mass mortality of fish related to red tides or variations in rainfall were amongst the examples given. Impacts were also reported on coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangroves that sustain the fisheries and livelihoods in the region and the negative impacts on food security.

26. The Commission took note of a number of initiatives in the region to strengthen normative, legislative and operational frameworks in addressing climate change impacts and disaster risks in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. Regional organizations and members reported on their efforts to include climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction/management in their strategic frameworks and programmes, with the scope of better integrating climate change and disaster risks in fisheries strategies and policy and increase resilience of fishing communities.

27. The Commission recommended that this item be included in the agenda of future WECAFC Sessions and requested FAO support in assisting the countries in identifying and implementing appropriate measures and programmes.

Programme of Work of WECAFC (2012 -2013)

28. The Commission considered the Draft Programme of Work of WECAFC (2012-2013) set out in WECAFC/XIV/2012/12. Members congratulated the Secretariat for its excellent work in preparing the draft Work Programme and encouraged increased collaboration by the members in the preparation of future Work Programmes. After discussion, the Commission agreed on minor amendments to proposals on Working Groups and approved the Programme of Work shown in Appendix F.

29. The United States delegation stated that it would support the Queen Conch Working Group.

30. It was agreed to expand the scope of the Nassau Grouper Working Group to a Spawning Aggregations Working Group.

31. The issue of lion fish was raised, underlining that it requires mitigation projects because of the severe threats this species represents for fisheries. It was suggested to establish linkages between WECAFC and other ongoing initiatives in the Region. The meeting was informed that lion fish is included in the agenda of the next CRFM Ministerial Council in April 2012; that a joint CRFM/OSPESCA meeting will discuss this issue; and that a session will be organized at the forthcoming GCFI in November 2012. The commission underlined that a regional framework centralizing the information and assisting in developing a regional management plan, plan of action and database is urgently required.

32. The terms of reference for the following Working Groups were agreed, and appear in the Appendices shown:

- OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Spiny Lobster in Appendix G;
- WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries in Appendix H;
- CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM Queen Conch Working Group in Appendix I;
- IFREMER/WECAFC Working Group on Development of Sustainable Moored Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) Fishing in the Lesser Antilles in Appendix J;
- CRFM/WECAFC Flying fish in the Eastern Caribbean Working Group in Appendix K;
- WECAFC Working Group on the management of deep-sea fisheries in Appendix L, and
- CFMC/WECAFC Spawning Aggregations Working Group in Appendix M.

Any other matters

33. No other matters were raised.

Date and Place of the next session

34. The Commission welcomed the tentative offer made by the delegate from Trinidad and Tobago to host the next session of WECAFC, at a date and time to be agreed. The pro-term President of OSPESCA and the delegate from Honduras also made a tentative offer to host the following session.

Adoption of the report

35. The report was adopted on Thursday 9 February 2012 at 11 AM.