



JOINT ACTION PLAN CRFM – OSPESCA

September 2012

1. INTRODUCTION

The Third CARICOM-SICA Summit of Heads of State and Government held on 19 August, in El Salvador, desiring to pursue joint actions that have a positive impact on the quality of life of the peoples of the two sub-regions, and considering that both sub-regions face similar development opportunities and challenges for the sustainable development and management of their fisheries and aquaculture sectors, acknowledged the significant efforts made by the CARICOM and SICA to pursue common policies for management, development and sustainable use of fisheries resources and aquaculture, and issued a Declaration to cooperate on matters of common concern and for mutual benefit.

The Heads of State and Government have thus instructed the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and the Fisheries and Aquaculture organisation of Central America (OSPESCA) to work together to strengthen cooperation between the two regional fisheries organizations to improve the conservation, management and sustainable development of marine living resources of the Caribbean Sea.

Specifically CRFM and OSPESCA are requested to:

- a) Develop and implement a joint Action Plan for the responsible management of migratory fish resources of the Caribbean Sea;
- b) Ensure that the Action Plan facilitates the gradual inclusion of CRFM countries in the regulatory framework for the regional management of the spiny lobster industry in cooperation with the countries of SICA;
- c) Promote the strengthening of monitoring, control and surveillance systems to combat and prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;
- d) Explore new production alternatives such as aquaculture; and
- e) Convene the first joint ministerial meeting of the CRFM and OSPESCA, aimed at strengthening collaboration between both regional fisheries organisations to improve conservation, management and sustainable development of the living

marine resources of the Caribbean Sea, including review and approval of the joint Action Plan.

Within this framework the First Joint CRFM-OSPESCA Ministerial Meeting has been convened, 3-4 September 2012 in Belize in order to comply with the directives of the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government at the Third CARICOM-SICA Summit.

This document contains the outline of a proposed joint Action Plan to be submitted for consideration at the meeting in question.

OUTLINE OF ACTION PLAN PROPOSAL

2. OBJECTIVE

This plan aims to outline and to lay the foundation for a joint work program that, for the first time, will be promoted simultaneously by the CRFM and OSPESCA, taking as its starting point, the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government at the Third CARICOM-SICA Summit in 2011, and trying to integrate the fisheries and aquaculture management efforts of the two sub-regions, eventually to be supported in the future by a fisheries and aquaculture integration policy.

Specifically, the plan aims to establish a regional cooperation arrangement for executing the plan that works in a harmonious and coordinated manner to ensure the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture based on principles for sustainable and responsible use of the resources.

3. STRATEGIES

The CRFM and OSPESCA, taking into account the principles and strategies that are common to the fisheries and aquaculture policies of their respective sub-regions,

Taking into account also that this is the first time that a joint action plan will be agreed between the two regional organizations, and in order to ensure

consistency with the reality of the capacities within the Caribbean, the Meeting agrees that the Action Plan will:

- a) Be developed in phases, defining concrete actions for the short, medium and long term;
- b) Contain high priority actions that are clearly defined, manageable and feasible for implementation, especially in the short-term, so as to gradually lay the foundation to support a working mode of operation that is applicable in different regions;
- c) Establish a mechanism for communication and information exchange regarding issues of common interest;
- d) Include an implementation strategy based on the grouping of regional or sub-regional interests, and in this regard, the number of participating countries would depend on the subject to be addressed;
- e) Consider that a joint working mode of operation can commence with the selection of species that are targeted by commercial fisheries and that are important in international or sub-regional trade, noting that the large pelagic fishes and spiny lobster were identified in the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government, but agree that queen conch and other transboundary fish species will be considered in view of their importance to food and nutrition security in the region and international trade, and considering also the lionfish because of its high impact as an invasive species on the commercial fisheries and on biodiversity in the marine environment in the Caribbean;
- f) Consider actions to develop coordinated approach to combat IUU fishing activities and to strengthen Monitoring, Control and Surveillance;
- g) Consider actions to promote development of sustainable aquaculture.
- h) Consider that proposals for actions addressing fisheries and aquaculture management and development will take into account the need to: adopt a precautionary approach, as well as an ecosystem approach to

management, and will take into account biological, social, economic, and environmental aspects;

- i) Consider actions to address post-harvest market, and trade issues of common concern, based on sharing of information, experiences, and lessons learned within the two sub-regions; and
- j) Promote gender equality, and the participation of youth as this is key for equitable development among peoples.
- k) Promote the technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) approach to advance the aims of this partnership.

4. REGIONAL ARRANGEMENT FOR EXECUTION OF THE ACTION PLAN

Both organizations will jointly identify the range of interests, to clearly determine the issues that are regional or sub-regional in scope. Issues of interest to only one country, or a very few number of countries, will not be considered in this Action Plan.

The Councils of Ministers of the two organizations will be informed of the progress on the implementation of the Action Plan at least once a year. A Steering Committee will be established, composed of the countries that hold the Chairmanship of the policy making organ of each organization, to monitor and report on the progress of the Action Plan using each organisation's agreed official reporting mechanisms.

The operational coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan will be made by the Directors or Regional Secretaries of OSPESCA and CRFM Secretariats, who will oversee the implementation of the Action Plan, and also inform their respective organisations of the progress achieved. The Directors or Secretaries of the two Secretariats will set up a technical committee to oversee and analyze proposals for inclusion in the Action Plan.

Joint regional working groups will be utilized, as needed, to facilitate the operation of the Action Plan, based on schemes already existing in each organization. In the absence of a specific group and based on the needs identified, a working group will be established, with suitably designated

membership.. If necessary, sessions of extended Groups will be carried out, to include the participation of experts from various countries.

CRFM and OSPESCA will each appoint an expert from its sub-region to coordinate the technical work of each fishery management issue included in the Action Plan. Experts identified to serve as coordinators are expected to consult with other professionals who, in turn, can strengthen or expand the level of participation within each sub-region.

Where synergies exist, these areas will be given attention, and through coordination with other regional and national actors, will serve to strengthen efforts to integrate work in the two sub-regions on sustainable use of aquatic resources. In particular, this will require cooperation and coordination among regional organizations, the organizations of production sectors of artisanal fishing, other members of the fishing industry, the aquaculture industry, the trade industry, and others.

An operating manual, agreed by both organizations, will be prepared to guarantee consistency and quality in implementation of agreed procedures and methods that ensure the achievement of results that contribute to integration and harmonization of approaches across the two sub-regions. In particular, competency profiles must be met by selected coordinators and experts, in accordance with their perceived role and functions.

5. SPECIFIC PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

5.1 Research and management of fisheries of regional interest

5.1.1 Spiny lobster (*Panulirus argus*)

The Caribbean spiny lobster resource supports the second most economically valuable fishery in the region. The resource is distributed throughout the Wider Caribbean, with evidence that it could be at least partly shared among the resident States. Regional-level stock assessments have indicated a decline in resource health, and regional cooperation is required to guarantee sustainability of the dependent fisheries.

In the short term, an inventory and corresponding database of the salient work already completed and documented, or under implementation in the areas of competence of each organization, will be prepared. The relevant documentation will be made available to CRFM and OSPESCA States via the websites of each organization, with the aim of these sites serving as information exchange web portals. Based on this information, the contributions that are common and have regional scope and that can be further advanced by both organizations will be determined. In the medium term, the Plan will consider the application of OSPESCA Regulation OSP-02-09 for the regional management of the Caribbean spiny lobster and the CRFM Ministerial directive to develop a similar regulation for CRFM States. Taking into account the information generated by the inventory, as well as the proposed interventions contained in Strategic Action Programme developed for the region by the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project, CRFM and OSPESCA will work towards the development of a broader regional agreement on the management of the Caribbean spiny lobster. This regional agreement would address all aspects from harmonization of statistical systems and collaboration in research to conservation and management measures that serve to: promote an ecosystem approach to management and a precautionary approach, deter, reduce and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities, protect juvenile, berried and very fecund lobsters. The regional agreement will also strive to guarantee internationally respected market and trade operations.

The Regional Agreement on the management of Caribbean spiny lobster will then be submitted for consideration and adoption by both organizations. A working group will be established to identify and develop the elements of the regional agreement, and to determine a suitable timeframe for completion of the agreement and its consideration by the respective policy making bodies of the CRFM and OSPESCA.

5.1.2 Large pelagic fisheries

Large pelagic fish species such as the tunas, dolphinfish and wahoo are highly migratory fishes distributed over vast sea areas within and beyond the Wider Caribbean region. These shared fish resources sustain many artisanal, small-scale, and large-scale commercial fisheries in the Wider Caribbean, and as such, would benefit from joint cooperation by CRFM and OSPESCA at the regional and international levels for their sustainable management. In doing so,

CRFM and OSPESCA States should also strengthen their overall cooperation with the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), which is the Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO) responsible for these fish resources in the Atlantic Ocean.

In the short-medium term, and taking into account the proposed interventions contained in the Strategic Action Programme developed for the region by the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project, CRFM and OSPESCA will consider and work towards achieving a regional management cooperation arrangement with ICCAT for contributing to conservation and management of Atlantic tuna and tuna-like fish species that are harvested by States in the region, in partnership with other interested regional fisheries organizations, as deemed necessary for its success.

It is envisaged that in the long term, the proposed regional management cooperation arrangement with ICCAT will facilitate development of harmonized large pelagic fishery statistical monitoring systems, formulation and implementation of regionally-agreed research plans to strengthen the information and knowledge base on the biology, ecology and management of large pelagic fish resources, and sustainable management utilization of these resources at the regional level, consistent with ICCAT-agreed goals and standards, and other related international obligations.

5.2 Combating Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Fishing through strengthened Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Systems (MCS)

In the short term, CRFM and OSPESCA Secretariats will each conduct a review and evaluation of completed and ongoing initiatives in their respective sub-regions for improving Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS). The results of the evaluations will be used to inform the development, in the medium term, of a joint regional plan covering the two sub-regions that are under the jurisdiction of the two organizations.

The regional plan should include, *inter alia*, the following actions, and will likely require a phased approach to implementation over the medium to long-term:

- a) A coordinated review, update and development of MCS regulatory framework in those Member States that have not yet done so, consistent with the approaches prescribed by the relevant international instruments,

such as the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, and promote Member State ratification, acceptance, approval or accession of these instruments, as necessary, and as soon as possible.

- b) An initiative to strengthen the institutional MCS and law enforcement capacities in Member States, especially with regard to training of fisheries inspectors and maritime security agents.
- c) An initiative to boost the design of a permanent working scheme that allows regional coordination and collaboration between CRFM and OSPESCA on MCS, including the development of information-sharing protocols.
- d) Proposals to facilitate collaboration with other national, regional and international entities and their inputs in both the design phase and the implementation of the joint regional plan.
- e) An initiative to launch a regional network to support implementation of a joint regional plan on MCS.

If deemed necessary, a working group will be established to elaborate this activity and to guide its implementation.

5.3 Regional development of aquaculture.

In the short-term, CRFM and OSPESCA will collaborate to prepare an inventory of completed and ongoing initiatives in aquaculture, to determine the level of information and knowledge available. This information will be shared through the web portals of both organisations. Additionally, the CRFM and OSPESCA will establish and/or participate in existing appropriate aquaculture networks and working groups to promote sustainable aquaculture development at the regional and national levels. This plan will therefore promote an exchange program both for national experts and producers, aimed at extending the opportunities of local best practices at the regional level.

In the medium-long term, , native species will be given preferential treatment for further research and development In promoting sustainable practices at the regional level.

Additionally, the areas of seed production, production technologies, environmental measures, markets and health measures will be given due attention in the activities outlined above.

6. ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Research, development and management of fisheries of regional interest

6.1.1 Queen conch (*Strombus gigas*)

Similar to Caribbean spiny lobster, queen conch is widely distributed throughout the Caribbean, and sustains very valuable fisheries in a number of CRFM and OSPESCA States. The need for a regional approach to the management of queen conch is considered essential.

Hence, like spiny lobster, an inventory and corresponding database of the salient work already completed and documented, or under implementation in the areas of competence of each organization, will be prepared in the first instance. The relevant documentation will be made available to CRFM and OSPESCA States via the websites of each organization, with the aim of these sites serving as information exchange web portals. Based on this information, the contributions that are common and have regional scope and that can be further advanced by both organizations will be determined.

Considering the information generated by the inventory, CRFM and OSPESCA will work towards the development of a broader regional agreement on the management of queen conch, which would address all aspects from harmonization of statistical systems and collaboration in research to conservation and management measures that serve to: promote a precautionary approach, an ecosystem approach to management, and deter, reduce and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities. The regional agreement will also strive to guarantee internationally respected market and trade operations.

The Regional Agreement on the management of queen conch will then be submitted for consideration and adoption by both organizations. If deemed necessary, a Working Group will be established to elaborate this activity, and to guide its implementation.

6.1.2 Lionfish (*Pterois volitans* and *P. miles*)

In view of the threat that lionfish poses to the sustainability of the region's fisheries, the activities proposed are expected to be undertaken in the short-term.

A qualified professional for each sub-region would be identified to coordinate the collection and compilation of data and information, which will provide a comprehensive overview of current understanding and knowledge of the biology and ecology of lionfish, of its impact on the fishing industries of the Caribbean region and of best management control practices.

Based on this information and knowledge, CRFM and OSPESCA will cooperate to formulate and implement a jointly coordinated management and control strategy for lionfish, which will address identified gaps and needs in scientific research, resource assessment, public awareness and education, and management approaches. The strategy will include proposals on the specific work to be carried out jointly in the future, and identify options for promoting the implementation of regionally coordinated actions in collaboration with relevant international, regional, and national partners.

All results will be released to both CRFM and OSPESCA States via the established web portals of both organizations.

6.2. Markets.

Both organizations will develop and pursue a marketing strategy that will strengthen intra-regional trade, for the purpose of encouraging domestic consumption of regional fish and fish products by the populations of both sub-regions.

The strategy will identify commercial alternatives that could be gradually promoted to capitalize on the existing marketing opportunities in both sub-regions, such as linkages with tourism, but will also evaluate the options for improving access to local fishery and aquaculture-generated protein by the region's populations.

A campaign to promote the consumption of fish and fish products will also be considered to enhance access by the socially and economically vulnerable sections of society.

If deemed necessary, a working group will be established to elaborate the strategy fully and to guide its implementation.

6.3. Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) Project

The Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) Project is intended to assist States in and adjacent to the Caribbean Sea to develop a regional and ecosystem-based approach to management of the associated Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem. The project has focused attention firstly on strengthening the technical information base for major fishery activities, evaluation of the fishery governance systems and processes and identification of governance interventions required to promote ecosystem-based management approaches. The Project has also facilitated completion of the first steps to assist States in their preparation for implementing the proposed ecosystem-based approach to management of the CLME, and is currently developing a Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for implementing the next steps, as agreed.

In this Action Plan, CRFM and OSPESCA agree to give continued and increased support to ensure successful completion of the CLME project and its SAP report by December 2012, and to give due attention to the proposed reforms, recommendations and investments contained in the CLME SAP Report that will be presented in early 2013 for Ministerial-level endorsement to guide implementation on the way forward.

CRFM and OSPESCA will also encourage States to conduct national stakeholder consultations to discuss the CLME SAP report, as needed and before December 2012, under the guidance of Ministers responsible for development and management of living marine resource and environment management and conservation, so as to guarantee understanding, contribution, support and cooperation by all stakeholders for refinement and implementation of the actions proposed;

CRFM and OSPESCA will provide continued support to ensure endorsement of the CLME SAP by policy makers, as this is required to secure additional financing and technical assistance from the Global Environmental Facility and other donors to support the implementation of the recommended reforms to strengthen governance, management and sustainable use of the resources of the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem, and will give high priority to facilitating the endorsement process in a timely fashion.

6.4. Disaster and climate change risk management and adaptation strategies

The contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to social and economic development and food security is threatened by increasing vulnerability of the people involved in the sector, with this vulnerability growing because of increased incidence of hazards and the impact of climate change. As such, climate change is likely to have profound effects on fishing and fish farming communities in the region, e.g. changes in fish distribution and accessibility by fishing fleets. It is therefore essential that appropriate proactive policies, strategies and action plans are developed to deal with the increasing vulnerability of the sector to disaster risks and climate change, and to build resilience to the associated risks.

CRFM and OSPESCA will establish a Working Group to develop a combined strategic approach to address the impacts of disaster risk management (DRM) and climate change, and taking into account the Hyogo Framework of Action within their fisheries and aquaculture sector policies, including, *inter alia*:

- (a) Activities to strengthen long-term capacities at regional, sub-regional, national and local levels to systematically contribute to building resilience to hazards in fishing and aquaculture communities;
- (b) Activities to ensure that institutions concerned with fisheries and aquaculture development at the local, national, sub-regional and regional levels develop and maintain sustainable mechanisms of coordination to support the implementation of regional programmes for DRM and climate change adaptation across the fisheries and aquaculture sector;

- (c) Collaboration with a range of other sector agencies to implement systematic approaches to livelihood diversification for poor fishing and aquaculture communities in ways that build their resilience and reduce their vulnerability;
- (d) Activities to reinforce institutional and operational capacities dedicated to risk management of natural disasters within the fisheries and aquaculture sector, build local and national capacities to undertake hazard identification and analysis, undertake risk assessments and risk mapping and strengthen local early warning and response capacities.

6.5. Securing small scale fisheries and livelihood security, training of fishers, fisheries policy coordination

Small-scale fisheries in CRFM and OSPESCA Member States make a valuable contribution to poverty alleviation, food and nutrition security, employment and income generation, economic growth and social stability. As such they provide livelihood security for vulnerable members of society including women and marginalized youth. However, the sustainable development and management of small-scale fisheries face challenges because of the large numbers and low level of education of the operators involved, the remote location of fishing and landing operations, inadequate organisational structures, and limited access to credit and markets.

The CRFM and OSPESCA will support initiatives aimed at capacity-building of small-scale fisherfolk organisations and at strengthening the sustainable management of small-scale fisheries to guarantee and enhance their contribution to social and economic development.

The CRFM and OSPESCA Secretariats will also continue their individual efforts and initiate joint activities to build human and institutional capacity and to secure transfer of appropriate technology and knowledge among fisherfolks, staff of national fisheries departments and regional fisheries bodies to improve policy coordination and implementation, as well as governance, management and sustainable use of fisheries resources and ecosystems.

If deemed necessary, a Working Group will be established to develop this activity and to guide its implementation.

6.6. Development potential of under-utilized and un-utilized resources

To afford the realization of fisheries development opportunities in cases of under-utilized and un-utilized resources, and taking into account the special needs of their Member States as Developing States, the CRFM and OSPESCA will develop and information and knowledge base on fishery development activities, and make this available to their Member States. Where a regional or sub-regional need has been identified, the CRFM and OSPESCA will explore and develop options for technical cooperation and other capacity building activities among stakeholders and fisheries managers.

If deemed necessary, a Working Group will be established to develop this activity and to guide its implementation.

7. Training and technical assistance.

Both organizations will seek resources for specialized technical assistance and training programs identified as priorities by the parties involved.

Efforts will be made to capitalize on the experience of specialists from both sub-regions.

The approach of training of trainers will be utilized to strengthen the region's own technical expertise and capacity to deliver training.

8. Development of a long-term integrated Regional Work Program.

It is proposed that both organizations establish a scheme that allows progressive development of an integrated regional work program of wide and long-term scope, informed by actions, outputs and outcomes effected in the short term, as well as by other experiences fostered at the regional level.

9. Fisheries and Aquaculture integration Policy

In the long-term, the Action Plan will generate information and knowledge to facilitate the development of a proposal for a fisheries and aquaculture integration policy, which could involve a binding governance model in order to ensure accountability for the use and management of the fisheries resources and aquaculture.

10. Financing.

Resources to implement the plan will come from the national and regional contributions, and both organizations will invite international cooperation to play a role in this new regional integration effort.