

Recommendation WECAFC/XVII/2019/11 “ON THE MANAGEMENT OF SHRIMP AND GROUND FISH RESOURCES OF THE NORTH BRAZIL-GUIANAS SHELF IN THE WECAFC AREA”

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC),

RECALLING that the objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources within the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission;

RECALLING that most WECAFC members have endorsed the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME+) Strategic Action Programme (SAP) and that under its Strategy 6 “Implement EBM/EAF of the Guianas-Brazil continental shelf with special reference to the shrimp and groundfish fishery” the same members are required to “Strengthen the FAO-WECAFC-CRFM sub-regional arrangement for the management of the shrimp and groundfish fisheries, and establish a decision-making capacity for policy formulation and management”;

NOTING the long history of work of WECAFC (since 1975) on shrimp and groundfish resource assessment and biological and economic modeling of shrimp fisheries, that guided the management of these resources by the members, as well as the more recent CLME project ‘Trans boundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA)’, which demonstrated the current challenges to the sector, including habitat damage and destruction of mangroves, land-based water pollution, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, overexploitation of some resources, piracy, and conflicts between stakeholders within the sector and with other sectors;

REAFFIRMING its commitments, made at the 16th session of WECAFC, to coordinate efforts through the WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Northern Brazil-Guianas Shelf to improve sustainability of these fisheries;

MINDFUL of the discussions and outcomes of the 2nd meeting of the Working Group held in Barbados on 17 and 18 May 2018, financed by the REBYC-II LAC and CLME+ projects;

RECOGNIZING the significant contribution of the shrimp and groundfish fisheries to food and nutrition security, poverty alleviation, income generation, export earnings and employment for present and future generations in WECAFC area;

REAFFIRMING the need for continued action by all stakeholders to ensure the long-term sustainable use and management of the shared shrimp and groundfish fisheries resources in the region based on the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF);

NOTING the concerns of the WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Northern Brazil-Guianas Shelf that available and shared information to inform fisheries management and decision-making processes at the sub-regional level has been reduced over the last 15 years such that researchers and fisheries officers have not received the necessary capacity building to carry out such assessments, most management plans are in draft form only and enforcement capacity and collaboration in fisheries management is weak;

NOTING that the lack of recent stock assessments of commercially important species in the North Brazil Shelf contributes significant impediment to the sustainable management of shrimp and groundfish fisheries;

ACNOWLEDGING that this capacity building should be contingent on the availability of resources and the means to use the knowledge, abilities, and approaches to stock assessment, bioeconomic analysis and management of fisheries of the North Brazil-Guianas Shelf ecosystem.

RECOGNIZING the need to improve data and information to reduce uncertainties to stock assessment methodologies currently used, to investigate whether stocks are shared or not and to monitor the long-term impacts of the trawl and gillnet fisheries on the stocks;

RECOGNIZING that while certain shrimp and groundfish stocks may not be shared by all countries on the Brazil-Guianas Shelf, substantial linkages exist between the fisheries fleets from the different countries and the ecosystems where these stocks are exploited.

CONSIDERING the opportunities offered by the UNDP/ projects on Sustainable management of bycatch in Latin America and Caribbean trawl fisheries (REBYC II LAC) and on Catalyzing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of Shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (CLME+), for introducing and testing shrimp fisheries bycatch reduction technologies and fisheries co-management and for increasing regional collaboration in management of the common and transboundary resources, as well as for combating IUU fishing and building of national capacities;

RECOGNIZING the efforts of the CRFM through its Annual Scientific Meetings and intersessional activities, in facilitating assessment of the commercial seabob fisheries in Guyana and Suriname, the red snapper fishery in Guyana, as well as the shrimp fisheries, including two species of groundfish – the lane

snapper and white mouth croaker, in Trinidad and Tobago, to provide information in support of fisheries management decision making;

RECOGNIZING historical efforts made by France, the IFREMER in French Guiana, and in Brazil to carry out genetic analysis of peneaid shrimps and red snapper;

HIGHLIGHTING the continued certification of the Seabob fishery in Suriname and the improvements made by Guyana to seek certification of its seabob fishery;

PENDING the delivery of additional information by the Working Group, CRFM Continental Shelf Fisheries Working Group meetings;

ADOPTS in conformity with the provision of Article 6 (h) of the Revised Statutes of the WECAFC the **RECOMMENDATION** that:

1. WECAFC members and partners should ensure Shrimp and Groundfish priority species of the North Brazil-Guianas shelf are included in the Regional WECAFC-FIRMS database¹.
2. WECAFC, in close collaboration with FAO, CRFM NOAA and IFREMER build capacity² in the Brazil-Guianas region for relevant and periodic stock assessment and bioeconomic analysis of priority fisheries to overcome significant knowledge gaps on the status of stocks.
3. WECAFC, in close coordination with CRFM and IFREMER should facilitate the provision of samples and mobilize necessary resources to complete population genetic studies required to properly manage stocks of critical shrimp and groundfish species of the North Brazil-Guianas Shelf.

¹ The database should contain raw data of the collected biological and physical/environmental parameters and the required fishery data (catch, effort, length frequencies, etc.), to support outcomes achieved through stock assessments, bio-economic modeling and other relevant information on shrimp and groundfish fisheries for decision making process for the management of these resources in the sub-region. The database outputs concerning state of stocks and fishery management status would be made available through the FIRMS website, applying well-established and agreed protocols for data and information sharing compliant with data policies of the participating countries.

² Specifically, capacity should be built to undertake: (i) robust stock assessments (ii) costs and earnings studies of different fisheries of interest in the country/region, (iii) bioeconomic modelling and analysis of technologically interdependent fisheries (e.g. shrimp and snapper fisheries), (iv) bioeconomic modelling of sequential fisheries with fleets harvesting different components of the population structure (e.g. shrimp fisheries targeted by small-scale and industrial fleets in different stages of their life cycle), and (v) alternative bioeconomic models for different species being targeted (i.e. species with different degrees of mobility) and multi-species fisheries, e.g. groundfish and small-scale fisheries.

4. WECAFC members develop and enforce national level shrimp and groundfish fishery management plans, and put in place appropriate legislation in support of a sustainable shrimp and groundfish fishery.
5. The Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish to assist the Regional Working Group on IUU to develop a regional plan of action to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing (RPOA-IUU).
6. The Working Group on shrimp and Groundfish to collaborate with the Regional Working Group on Fisheries Data and Statistics to identify training opportunities for initializing the WECAFC-FIRMS regional database and developing FIRMS inventories.
7. WECAFC, in close collaboration with partners and Members to evaluate the impact of sargassum on the shrimp and groundfish fisheries and include these fisheries in regional sargassum prediction model and mitigation initiatives.
8. WECAFC to collaborate with OSPESCA and CRFM to develop a regional strategy for management of bycatch in shrimp/bottom trawl fisheries to be completed in a consultative process with the support of REBYC-II LAC project and presented to the 18th Session of WECAFC for its review and endorsement.