

Summary of the Eleventh Meeting of the Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries
21 May, 2020
Virtual Meeting

In Attendance:

Milton Haughton, CRFM (Chair)
Reinaldo Morales, OSPESCA
Yvette Diei-Ouadi, WECAFC-FAO
Patrick Debels, CLME+ PCU
Laverne Walker, CLME+ PCU

Meeting Summary:

The Meeting Chair, Mr. Milton Haughton, welcomed the participants to the Eleventh Meeting of the Fisheries Interim Coordination Mechanism (FICM) which commenced at 13:06 Cartagena, Colombia time on Thursday, 21 May, 2020

The meeting reviewed and adopted the proposed Meeting Agenda.

Agenda Item 1: Approval of minutes of the Tenth Meeting of the Sustainable Fisheries Interim Coordination Mechanism

The Meeting reviewed and made some amendments to the Summary Report of the Tenth Fisheries Interim Coordination Mechanism which was then adopted by the Meeting.

The CRFM representative queried as to whether WECAFC was able to reach out to NAFO and WCPFC in relation to the issue on the reorientation of WECAFC. The WECAFC representative indicated that her office had obtained feedback from NAFO and had sent reminders to WCPFC. The CRFM representative recommended that it may also be worthwhile to engage the Coastal States of the WCPFC, as they are the ones who drive the arrangements.

The CRFM representative informed the Meeting of their agency's concern that the EU was lobbying some of their countries in relation to putting in place an arrangement to make legally binding decisions for species under national jurisdiction within the EEZ.

Agenda Items 2 and 3: Review, status update and revision of Fisheries ICM workplan and Status Update 3 fisheries sub-projects and opportunities for enhanced coordination

Queen conch: The Meeting was informed that a Meeting of the Queen Conch Working Group was convened in December 2019 to review the status of the management plan. They were also informed that a study was being conducted to assess the implementation of the plan by countries. The response to the questionnaire has been very low although a number of reminders were sent out. The WECAFC

representative also informed the Meeting that a queen stock assessment manual was being developed in three languages with the hope that training in its use could take place electronically once completed.

A virtual Meeting of the Working Group in both English and Spanish is being planned for the end of 2020.

The WECAFC representative also informed the Meeting that they were able to obtain funding from the Global Programme on Small Scale Fisheries to undertake a safe diving consultancy. As part of the consultancy they will engage with stakeholders to discuss the issues faced by conch divers to support the development of an Action Plan.

The CRFM representative informed the Meeting that it was important that the region follows the case in the Federal Court in the United States regarding the placement of Queen Conch on the threatened or endangered species list. The three RFBs acknowledged that they had followed up with their Member States to respond to a request from NOAA regarding whether they thought listing queen conch as endangered is unwarranted.

The Meeting was informed by the WECAFC representative that a scientific, statistical and advisory sub-group was being established under the Queen Conch Working Group. The sub-group will use genomic connectivity in an attempt to determine the connectivity of queen conch amongst its distribution of throughout the Caribbean. She indicated that CFMC is partnering with the University of Rhode Island to see how this innovative scientific technique can be used within the region.

Spiny Lobster: The OSPESCA representative informed the Meeting that the OSPESCA Council of Ministers, in December 2019, approved Addendum 5 of Regulation OSP-02-09 on Lobster Fisheries. The modifications are based on defining the number of pots allowed into the fishery based on data and the ban of Scuba Diving for the fishery.

He further went on to indicate that the two projects that OSPESCA has been implementing on Spiny Lobster, the first under the CLME+ and the second with the support of the US State Department, through The Nature Conservancy, have been completed. He went on to indicate that the MARPLESCA Plan has been approved at the regional level, a methodology for evaluating the lobster stock is in place, including an application for its implementation. The OSPESCA representative also indicated that the MARPLESCA Plan is also considered in the CRFM – OSPESCA Action Plan 2020-2025. The traceability standard for aquaculture and livestock products was successfully concluded and it has been recommended by the OIRSA Technical Commission for approval at their Council of Ministers, which due to COVID-19 has not been able to take place.

He went on to indicate that there is concern of the impact that COVID 19 is having on market prices for lobster. Authorities from the main producing countries (Honduras and Nicaragua) will be meeting to analyze the situation and the opening of the fishery.

In relation to recommendations on the way forward, he stated that there is a need to support management efforts at the regional, national and local levels in relation to capacity building for data collection and stock assessments. There is also the need to assess the impact of fishing gear on the ecosystem and the need to establish sustainable marine fishing areas.

Flyingfish: The CRFM representative informed the meeting that the sub-project was winding down, with most of the activities having been completed. The exception was the agreement with France. CRFM was still engaged in discussions with France and was in the process of organizing an electronic meeting to discuss a MoU.

The WECAFC representative queried about the intersessional decision which called for one Working Group to assess both flyingfish and dolphinfish populations, particularly how it linked to the existing negotiations that CRFM was having with France. She also reminded the meeting that NOAA had agreed to support the first few meetings of this Working Group. The CRFM representative responded by suggesting two options going forward, the first being that the Working Group cover both fisheries when it convenes, or secondly that the Working Group alternates between the two fisheries.

It was recommended that the first meeting of the Working Group should be a face-to-face meeting to determine its approach and develop its TORs. In light of the current situation with COVID-19, the WECAFC representative indicated that the meeting of the Working Group would take place during the first quarter of 2021.

The CRFM representative then went on to debrief the Meeting on the status of the Gender Mainstreaming Project, funded by the Government of Canada and implemented through UNDP (CLME+ Project).

Lastly he informed the meeting that although flyingfish populations have been negatively impacted by the sargassum influx, there were unprecedented landings of flyingfish in the last few days in some of the islands which would need to be further monitored.

Shrimp and Groundfish: The WECAFC representative provided an overview of the achievements of the Shrimp and Groundfish sub-project to date. These included: stock assessment for data limited situations training which took place in Brazil in August 2019; 2 EAF training workshops were held in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana; development of an investment plan for the shrimp and groundfish fishery in Guyana; and the 3rd Meeting of the Shrimp and Groundfish Working Group in November 2019.

She also went on to indicate that they are hoping to have a meeting of the Shrimp and Groundfish Working Group to approve the Shrimp and Groundfish management plan in 2020.

Reference was made to the CRFM Working Group on Shrimp, Groundfish and Seabob and the need to ensure that the two working groups do not duplicate efforts.

Sharks and Rays: The WECAFC representative informed the Meeting that the WECAFC Commission during their last meeting endorsed a recommendation on the management and conservation of sharks and rays. However, they are not sure if additional work on these fisheries would be advanced until the MoU with ICCAT has been finalized as any work on sharks should be done in collaboration with ICCAT. It was suggested that a Working Group meeting could take place either in the last quarter of 2020, or the first quarter of 2021. She also indicated that the US had committed USD 250,000 to supporting a joint ICCAT/WECAFC Working Group Meeting.

IUU: The WECAFC Secretary informed the Meeting that the Regional Plan of Action on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing was endorsed during WECAFC 17 in 2019. She went on to indicate that WECAFC had issued a questionnaire to countries to determine their readiness in implementing the

Plan. The responses are expected to influence a new project under GEF 7. She urged the other RFBs to work with their Member States to respond to the questionnaire, particularly those in IUU hotspots. She went on to indicate that a meeting of the IUU Working Group was being planned for the third quarter of 2020 to discuss the key elements of a new PIF for the consideration of the GEF Secretariat.

The WECAFC Secretary informed the meeting that she and Mr. Mendoza were working on a new PIF to support the implementation of the RPOA. She indicated that the intent is for the project to have a regional scope with some targeted country interventions; focusing in 2 hotspot areas and maybe some of the OECS countries. It will seek to address policy and legislative framework, capacity building and supporting countries accede to international instruments. The intent is that the PIF will be guided by the responses to the questionnaire administered to countries.

The OSPESCA representative asked the WECAFC representative for information on the WECAFC focal points for OSPESCA countries. He indicated that it is at times easier to follow-up with these focal points than with the Fisheries Directors. The WECAFC representative indicated that the names of the WECAFC focal points are listed on their website, however if someone wanted their contact information, they would need to send an email requesting this information to WECAFC Secretariat.

The CRFM representative shared that during the Joint CRFM-OSPESCA Ministerial Meeting there was a good discussion on how the countries could work together to address IUU.

The WECAFC representative indicated that it would be good to track the implementation of the RPOA. One way to do so would be to get Working Group members to report on the status of RPOA implementation. She went on to indicate that a systematic review of the RPOA is planned for 5 years after its endorsement. The CLME+ RPC stated that the region needs to be more proactive in showing progress with the RPOA and SAP. The WECAFC Secretary responded by indicating that the administered questionnaire will support the development of an implementation plan.

Spawning Aggregation: The WECAFC representative informed the Meeting that the Working Group met in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 2019. She also indicated that a Spawning Aggregation Management Plan has been developed and WECAFC is seeking to have it translated so that it can be circulated to countries for comments before the next meeting of the SAG. She further went on to indicate that report of the Working Group Meeting is being prepared. CFMC is hoping to have an electronic meeting of the Working Group in November.

The OSPESCA representative informed the Meeting that Ms. Aida Maria of the Inter-American Organisation for the Defense of the Environment has expressed interest in working with WECAFC on spawning aggregations. The WECAFC representative suggested that their email be shared with Ms. Maria.

FADS: The WECAFC representative informed the Meeting that their office is in the process of finalizing a grant proposal for submission to the EU to support the regional FAD Working Group implement its work plan and the recommendations from the WECAFC Session which include the development of a management plan and guidelines. She indicated that she was hopeful that work on this could commence by July.

The CRFM representative informed the Meeting that ICCAT had expressed an interest regarding the FAD fishery. The WECAFC Secretary responded by indicating that WECAFC remained open regarding the contribution of observers.

Agenda Item 4: WECAFC Reorientation Process

The WECAFC representative informed the Meeting that they were hoping to have a face-to-face meeting on the WECAFC reorientation process before the end of the year. The WECAFC representative asked the CLME+ PCU, when would be the cutoff date for use of the funds to support the planned Meeting. The RPC stated that the PCU did not think that the region would be able to conduct any face-to-face meetings in 2020. He went on to indicate that the CLME+ PCU was considering a 3month extension to the project which would allow for some leeway in relation to the use of the funds.

The WECAFC Secretariat indicated that the Working Group established to advance the reorientation process would be convening soon to analyse the responses to the questionnaire and determine the way forward. She reminded OSPESCA that they were still awaiting their nominee for the Working Group. She went on to indicate that once the Working Group defined the timeline for the work programme, they would be in a better position to propose a date for the next regional consultation.

Agenda Item 5: Impact of COVID-19 on fisheries and aquaculture and other related activities in the region

The CRFM representative stated that CRFM initiated a survey to determine the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on fishers and the fisheries sector in the region. He stated that the results, which he promised to share with the Meeting, showed that the fisheries sector was negatively impacted and that policy makers have asked that protecting food security be elevated to a priority. He indicated that COVID 19 has highlighted the challenges faced within the region in relation to the movement of goods and services. The OSPESCA representative also said the impact has been negative in OSPESCA countries with a 75% decrease in the price of fish products for the export market. He indicated that SICA is working with other sectors to see how they could mitigate these issues in their region.

The CLME+ RPC went on to state that COVID-19 has provided the region with an opportunity to look towards alternative means for hosting physical meeting, which can save time and cost.

The CRFM representative indicated that there will be a need to assess and document the impact of COVID-19 on the economies of the region. He also went on to note that forecasters have also predicted an active hurricane season for 2020.

The WECAFC representative stated that her office was preparing a COVID 19 questionnaire which was expected to be administered soon.

Agenda Item 6: Additional/New Projects under development

The CLME+ RPC informed the Meeting that the CLME+ PCU was working on developing a new proposal for the continuity of the CLME+ initiative: PROCARIBE. He indicated that initial discussion with the GEF Secretariat has highlighted their preference for an increased focus on stress reduction activities.

The CRFM representative provided an update on the BECLME+ project being prepared by CRFM, FAO and CAF. He also informed the Meeting that the Japanese government had approved a proposal for a CARIFICO 2 project which will focus on co-management, value chain, strengthening MPAs, and improving livelihoods of fisherfolk. He also mentioned an evidence based decision making project funded by the Norwegian government and the Gender Project supported by the Government of Canada. He stated that the EU is working with IICA regarding a follow up to the SPS project.

The OSPESCA representative stated that he had spoken to the CLME+ PIF consultant regarding continuity of work with spiny lobster in the region and also activities to support the queen conch fishery under the next phase of CLME+. He also stated that a contract was signed with European Union to support the development of a Blue Economy Strategy for SICA countries.

The WECAFC representative mentioned the new IUU and FAD projects which were brought up earlier in the meeting and said that they have a GCF project in Saint Lucia.

Agenda item 7: CLME+ Hub

The members of the Fisheries ICM committed to participate in the Loomio Platform in preparations for the Project Steering Committee. The WECAFC representative indicated that she would check to see if they are allowed to use the platform. In relation to the Loomio Platform the OSPESCA representative indicated that it was unlikely that the directors would be accessing the platform and instead it should be the National Focal Points who are requested to access the platform.

The RPC went on to speak about the contacts database in the CLME+ Hub.

Agenda Item 8: CLME+ Project Steering Committee Meeting

The Meeting briefly discussed the virtual CLME+ Project Steering Committee which was to take place 16-18 June.

Agenda Item 9: AOB

There was discussion regarding whether the minutes of the Meeting of the Fisheries ICM and the work plan should be made publically available. It was also suggested that the Fisheries ICM and Secretariat look at rephrasing some of the language of the minutes. It was agreed that work on minutes will take place after the Project Steering Committee meeting.

With no further matters down for discussion, the Fisheries ICM Chair adjourned at 16:22 on 21 May 2020.