



**GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION
FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN
COMMISSION GÉNÉRALE DES PÊCHES
POUR LA MÉDITERRANÉE**



Ad hoc meeting to launch the GFCM Aquaculture Multi-stakeholder Platform
(AMShP)

Izmir, Turkey, 12–13 December 2013

DISCUSSION PAPER

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. This document synthesizes the outcomes of a series of initiatives undertaken by the General Fisheries Commission of the Mediterranean (GFCM) to support the establishment of a GFCM Aquaculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform (AMShP). It has been continuously revised and adjusted to take into consideration ongoing developments (including the production of key documents), and the results of fervid regional discussions among experts and other stakeholders.
2. Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture consists of various production segments (technologies; species; environment) at different levels of maturity, which shows heterogeneity at the national and sub-regional level. However, there are also common elements and shared environmental and socio-economic issues which need to be urgently tackled for a greater sustainability and for the further development of the sector. In recent years, challenges relating to the development of aquaculture in the Mediterranean and Black Sea have come to the attention of the GFCM, which has engaged in a series of initiatives addressing the sustainability of coastal and marine aquaculture in its economic, social and environmental dimensions as well as governance.
3. As a result, the GFCM has launched an in-depth reflection to identify new working methods supporting the development of aquaculture in its competent area and to consolidate the work of its Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ).
4. At its thirty-seven session (May 2013, Croatia), the GFCM decided to set up a regional aquaculture multi-stakeholder platform (AMShP) as an instrument to enhance dialogue and facilitate visioning, priority-setting and consultation process to support CAQ activities. GFCM Members have expressed strong interest towards such platform. Moreover, the recent successful commitment of regional research institutes and other stakeholders in the EU-funded AQUAMED project and the consultations held within this framework clearly show a wide interest in the region for such a sustained initiative to bring together stakeholders and try facing the present and future challenges of the sector.
5. As a follow-up, a GFCM Aquaculture Reflection Day (GFCM-ARD) was organized in Tunis, Tunisia, on 19 June 2013, to concretely initiate discussions within the GFCM towards the establishment of the AMShP. The main outcomes of this meeting are summarized in this discussion paper, which has been enriched with the outcomes of discussions among regional experts and practitioners held after the GFCM-ARD.

OBJECTIVES AND MISSION OF THE GFCM AMShP

6. The general objective of the GFCM AMShP is to facilitate in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders having a common interest in aquaculture in order to address complex problems towards a harmonized development of aquaculture and consistent policies in the region.
7. The AMShP also aims at helping stakeholders work together in order to identify priorities, discuss current and future challenges and propose policies, strategies, actions and coordinated activities for the responsible development of the aquaculture sector.
8. Activities within the platform include consultation, sharing of knowledge and best practices, mobilization of human and financial resources, cooperation in research activities, promotion of R&D coordination and projects with tangible benefits to the sector.
9. In particular, the AMShP should:
 - serve as a consultation body to propose policies and action plans at the regional, sub-regional or country level;
 - formulate guidelines for effective management and sustainability of aquaculture;
 - promote industry-driven research and applied studies to enhance the competitiveness and effectiveness of aquaculture in the GFCM area;
 - identify reliable objectives and implement innovative actions to produce strategic outputs;
 - facilitate scientific and technical cooperation and networking among GFCM countries;
 - support innovation, knowledge transfer and capacity-building in the whole region;
 - open new possibilities and market opportunities to contribute to the development of the sector.
10. The AMShP should also provide support to CAQ in evaluating current trends and promoting the sustainable development and responsible management of coastal and marine aquaculture in the region, in accordance with the GFCM Rules of Procedures.

Specific short-term objectives of the AMShP

- **To support the implementation of harmonized aquaculture regulatory frameworks, strategic planning** and to assist countries in drafting guidelines for the elaboration of aquaculture strategies, according to identified priorities and national targets. Initiatives should promote a responsible behaviour towards aquaculture, fully integrated within the general development process of each country.
- **To improve communication by establishing a regional aquaculture knowledge repository centre (regional aquaculture hub) to document and monitor the progress and trends of aquaculture in the region.** The repository centre will benefit from and build upon the already established knowledge in the region and bring together: (i) the SIPAM database; (ii) the AQUAMED database; (iii) technical outputs from the InDAM, SHoCMed, MedAquaMarket and LaMed projects (e.g. indicators on economic, social, environmental sustainability; environmental quality standards (EQS) and from other relevant databases and projects on aquaculture in the region; (iv) the results of a GFCM regional review of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture (planned in 2014). Furthermore, the repository centre will also be regularly documented and updated with the main outcomes of research activities on aquaculture in the GFCM member countries.
- **To strengthen GFCM members' capacity to develop sustainable aquaculture.** This includes national capacity-building through: scientific/technical cooperation, training or networking to deal with identified regional priorities and GFCM decisions and advices on

aquaculture. The aim is to support a participatory approach to ensure better representativeness as an essential way to pursue sustainability.

- **To facilitate communication, dissemination, knowledge-sharing and transfer from research to the stakeholders along the aquaculture value chain including decision-makers.** This includes the identification of target users and selection of relevant aquaculture research activities, studies and projects to generate knowledge to be effectively transferred. This should result in uptake and application leading to tangible value creation.
- **To facilitate dialogue among aquaculture farmers' representative organizations in the Mediterranean and Black Sea and support their role in stabilizing markets and marketing.** This should include in particular the organization of a workshop on the role of aquaculture farmers' organisations in the GFCM area. This event would be essential to take stock of the present status of aquaculture farmers' organizations in the region, focusing on the legal aspects, scope of activities and functions of such entities, and to discuss challenges and opportunities with a view to strengthening their role within the aquaculture industry. The outcomes of this workshop would also inform the Ad hoc meeting to launch the GFCM Aquaculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform in December 2013¹.

PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE AMSHP

11. The priorities to be addressed – within general thematic and/or strategic areas – will potentially address a number of key policy/governance objectives which are relevant for the region, sub-regions or specific countries as well as main constraints and challenges for future competitiveness and sustainability of aquaculture. A preliminary list of possible key priorities has already been identified at different levels (CAQ², EU-funded projects such as AQUAMED as well as at country level) and should be further detailed and discussed at the regional level through a participatory process.
12. In particular, the following issues should be tackled: lack of appropriate policy measures and long-term spatial planning; conflicts with other sectors; red tape in licensing procedures; poor access to capital and funds; inadequate transfer of knowledge and of linkages between industry, research and extension services; lack of market data and information for production planning; need for improvement of environmental monitoring system; and need of improvement of disease management; certification and biosecurity. An articulated list of possible priority actions is hereunder summarized:
 - **Aquaculture legal frameworks and aquaculture strategic plans.** The lack of regulatory frameworks for aquaculture, namely rules and procedures regulating the sector, represents one of the main constraints for the development of aquaculture in the region. Aquaculture legal frameworks should be accompanied by harmonized procedures, national strategic plans and guidelines, and should be supported by a system of reliable indicators (based on common principles and criteria) to enhance aquaculture policies.
 - **Allocated zones for aquaculture (AZA) and criteria for site selection.** The lack of criteria for site selection, overlapping in licensing and leasing procedures is a limiting factor for the development of aquaculture and for its integration at the local, national and regional level. Space limiting factors, administrative and local conflicts should be reduced through the adoption of AZA, marine spatial planning and national strategic plans for aquaculture.

¹ **Update:** The meeting on 'The role of aquaculture farmers' organizations in the GFCM Area' will take place on 11 December 2013 in Izmir, Turkey as a pre-meeting to the GFCM Aquaculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform (AMShP) event on 12-13 December 2013 in Izmir.

² In 2008, the GFCM CAQ had already started to record the main issues affecting aquaculture and to identify priority needs in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, as reported at the sixth session of the CAQ (December 2008, Albania).

- **Aquaculture and environment interactions.** Assessing interactions between aquaculture and environment (taking also into consideration other coastal and land-based activities), and monitoring aquaculture operations are essential to evaluate the effects and impacts of aquaculture on the environment and on aquaculture itself. Legislation and guidelines on environmental monitoring, environmental quality standards (EQS) and environmental monitoring programmes, including procedures for the prevention and control of contaminant, should be defined and harmonized at the regional level. Moreover, a risk analysis method should be developed for different types of aquaculture at the level of AZAs, and biosafety measures should be harmonized to reduce the impacts of escapes, pathogens and alien species in aquaculture at the regional level. Green production systems such as integrated multi-trophic aquaculture should be promoted to enable an efficient use of water resources and maintain good water quality. Aspects related to aquaculture for restocking purposes should also be considered.
- **Marketing strategy for aquaculture products.** The lack of a market data collection and of a market-oriented approach in production planning still remain among the main constraints for the competitiveness of the aquaculture industry in GFCM member countries, which also face a harsh competition with imported farmed products. Moreover, the sometimes uneven negotiation power along the value chain and the lack of dissemination tools on consumption and market trends are also weakening the sector. Overcoming these obstacles would require an aquaculture production/ marketing strategy and vision, a well-structured market data and information collection as well as efficient dissemination tools. Furthermore, the public perception and image of aquaculture should be improved and the consumption of aquaculture products should be enhanced, also thanks to the improvement of certification and traceability procedures and continuous communication with consumers.
- **Species and production diversification.** The current production models applied for the main farmed fish species show market limits when supply and costs increase. Research on new species for aquaculture, innovative farming technologies and the diversification of production is necessary to promote new market and product opportunities for both farmers and consumers.
- **Sustainable fish feed.** There is a need to enhance technology to reduce the cost of production related to fish feed and to find alternative raw materials to complement those traditionally used (fish oil and fish meal). Moreover, research on farmed non-carnivorous species should be fostered.
- **Diseases management and aquatic animal health.** There is a strong need to improve biosecurity in aquaculture, especially regarding aquatic animal diseases and the risk of spreading pathogens from aquaculture into the wild. The following aspects should be addressed at the regional level: fish disease and health management, responsible use of drugs and vaccines, risk assessment for disease prevention, introduction and safe management of invasive alien species and genotypes.
- **Climate change.** There is a worldwide consensus that the effects of climate change and the increasing acidification of oceans will affect environment, livelihoods and global food production in the near future. Climate variability and its potential multiple stressors will have a direct and/or indirect impact on the aquaculture sector, and its degree of vulnerability depends on production segments, latitude and farming technology. This vulnerability should be translated in the implementation of an adaptation strategy to prevent, where possible, negative impacts and possibly redirect production policies and target applied research. Furthermore, climate change awareness should be increased in the region, in particular through risk assessment analysis and the implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures to increase the resilience of the aquaculture sector.
- **Effective R&D coordination and knowledge transfer.** As far as aquaculture research structures and capacities are concerned, the GFCM region shows diverse levels of development, which call for enhanced synergies through a common research strategy,

improved coordination and an effective dissemination and application of results. Hence, mechanisms to foster transnational cooperation in the field of research and to share scientific knowledge and data across institutions should be enhanced. Appropriate transfer activities should also ensure that knowledge is transferred effectively among the stakeholders groups (science, policy, industry and society at large), thus resulting in uptake and application.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE AMShP PARTICIPANTS, STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING

13. Participation in the AMShP will be open to all aquaculture and other interested stakeholders in the region.
14. The AMShP should operate as a subsidiary body of the GFCM CAQ to ensure transparency, participation and representativeness, in accordance with the GFCM Rules of Procedures and within the framework of a possible reorganisation process of the CAQ. It should be conceived as a flexible and dynamic instrument yet soundly structured with a clear vision and mandate.
15. A steering committee should be established to provide advice, facilitate and guide the entire process of establishing and launching the AMShP. It should be composed of key experts in the sector and concerned stakeholders.
16. The AMShP could be articulated according to several priorities within thematic or strategic areas, in line with a common long-term vision of aquaculture in the region.
17. The work of the Aquaculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform should be supported by national, sub-regional and regional projects as appropriate and according to identified priorities, and resulting projects should be also developed within the first GFCM Framework Programme 2013-2018 (FWP). The Aquaculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform should then be used to share and disseminate the outcomes and outputs of projects and activities.
18. A plan of action or work plan, consistent with the aquaculture development plans of GFCM Members and based on thematic or strategic and sub-regional areas, should then be developed³. The AMShP working agenda should include priorities for (i) production/ marketing, (ii) research, and (iii) regional development. Priorities and identified goals of the platform should also be reflected in regional R&D activities on aquaculture.
19. For an efficient and well-performing AMShP, GFCM Members should be strongly committed in supporting it and promoting mirror platforms or equivalent national aquaculture committee/networks, which are considered of a strategic importance and would serve as a permanent interface with the regional platform in each country and maintain a link between national and regional commitments and priorities.
20. The AMShP will work together with aquaculture farmers' organizations and the private sector, research institutes, governmental and intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other aquaculture stakeholders. It will be open to sectorial, regional platforms and GFCM partner organizations and to other international organizations or parties that could facilitate the process towards the achievement of the platform objectives (e.g. EATiP, FEAP, EUROFISH, INFOSAMAK, IUCN, CIHEAM, etc.).

³ Update: A draft work plan will be made available and discussed at the ad hoc meeting in Izmir, 12-13 December 2013.

NEXT STEPS

21. This discussion paper is a living document to prepare the ground for the creation of the GFCM-AMShP through a participatory process. It will also serve as a basis to draft other key documents to be presented and discussed at the Ad hoc meeting to launch the GFCM Aquaculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform (Izmir, Turkey, 12-13 December 2013). Specific terms of reference for the AMShP will be developed as a first step⁴.
22. The outcomes of the ad hoc meeting will be used to produce a reference document, which will include the draft AMShP terms of reference and work plan and should be presented to the thirty-eight session of the Commission in May 2014.

⁴ Update: Draft terms of reference will be available and discussed at the ad hoc meeting in Izmir, 12-13 December 2013.