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منظمة الأغذية
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Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

Fourth Session

Cairo, Egypt, 7-9 June 2004

HOSTING OF SESSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

Background

1. In the early seventies, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) established a Cooperative Programme on Research in Aquaculture (COPRAQ) organised around the holding of occasional meetings in which the participating institutions presented advances in research in their respective laboratories. In 1989, GFCM decided to institutionalize COPRAQ as a subsidiary body called the Working Party on Artificial Reefs and Mariculture. The Working Party enjoyed the technical and financial support of the Mediterranean Regional Aquaculture Projects, namely MEDRAP I and MEDRAP II.

2. MEDRAP II established the four networks (SIPAM, EAM, SELAM and TECAM) before being terminated in 1995. GFCM took over as overall coordinating mechanism to ensure follow-up to the activities of these networks. As to the SIPAM, it was more formally related to the GFCM through its Secretariat. The Regional Centre was subsequently based in Tunis thanks to the support from the Tunisian Government. It was further decided that SELAM and TECAM would be coordinated by the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) and EAM would be coordinated by the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP-PAP/RAC), through its Centre in Split, Croatia.

3. GFCM acknowledged the increasing importance of aquaculture in the countries of the region and decided, at its Twenty-first Session (Alicante, Spain, 22-26 May 1995), to establish a Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ). CAQ was expected, among other things to become the institutional mechanism to ensure continued coordination of MEDRAP with primary concern on marine and brackishwater aquaculture. It was further agreed that the Committee would meet every two years. The need to identify extra budgetary resources in the form of specific projects, or direct financial coverage by the country hosting or participating to CAQ regular and *ad hoc* activities was recognized at the early stage of the inception of the Committee. The Twenty-second Session of the Commission (Rome, Italy, 13-16 October 1997) operationalized the above decisions through amending, as necessary, the GFCM Agreement and its rules of procedure.

Organization of CAQ Sessions

4. The First and Second Sessions of the Committee were organized in Rome, respectively in September 1996 and June 2000, thanks to the generous support from the Government of Italy. Eleven Members out of twenty and fourteen Members out of twenty-three were represented at these sessions respectively. The Third Session was held in Zaragoza, Spain, in September 2002, thanks to generous co-sharing arrangements between the Government of Spain, CIHEAM and FAO. The Session was attended by ten out of twenty four Members. The Fourth Session is being organized following the kind offer made by the Government of Egypt through a cost sharing arrangement with FAO.

5. The organization of CAQ sessions when the meeting takes place outside FAO Headquarters has proved cumbersome as compared to those of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC). This derives essentially from difficulties encountered in securing the necessary funds to cover all inputs for the meeting. Indeed, the costs of holding CAQ have substantially increased with the decision taken by the Commission at its Twenty-fifth Session (Sliema, Malta, 12-15 September 2000) to have sessions in four languages instead of two as was the case at the First Session. It was expected that this decision would eventually induce enhanced participation. This has not materialized. The reduced participation referred to above may be partly attributable to the fact that most of CAQ intersessional undertakings, including networks activities, are subject to *ad hoc* financial support.

6. The hosting of CAQ sessions, as for any FAO statutory bodies, follows precise procedures which are laid down in the GFCM Agreement and regulations. Matters not specifically provided for by the Agreement or its Rules, are governed *mutatis mutandis* by the General Rules of FAO.

7. The organization of GFCM sessions and its two Committees follows precise guidelines in order, *inter alia*, to ensure that the deadlines for informing and inviting Members, preparing and translating documents are adequately met. FAO Conference arrangements and guidelines contain detailed provisions on procedures to be followed, e.g. for negotiations with the host government, for preparing terms and conditions of Agreement letters, for the dispatch of invitations, etc. Any disruption or delay in applying these rules endangers participation in the meeting and ultimately increase final costs.

8. When a GFCM statutory session takes place outside FAO Headquarters, e.g. at the invitation of a Member, the meeting is further governed by the terms and conditions laid down in a "Memorandum of Responsibilities" which stipulates the responsibilities to be assumed by the host Government and by FAO respectively, in particular in relation with financial costs. The memorandum also covers issues such as privileges and immunities of participants and operational responsibilities for servicing the meeting (including provision of staff, material, supplies, facilities and equipment, transport arrangements). An annex to the Memorandum provides also for the minimum standards required for simultaneous interpretation.

Conclusion and Suggested Action by the Committee

9. Issues that could have implications for the organization of meetings have been addressed through the evaluation of CAQ and are dealt with in documents GFCM:CAQ/IV/2004/4 and GFCM:CAQ/IV/2004/Inf.12.

10. As to the organization of CAQ sessions, experience derived from the previous three sessions led the Secretariat to consider that improvements could be made. Streamlining the running of the meeting in two languages would facilitate the organization of future sessions and possibly save funds which could be channelled to implementing other CAQ activities. Ensuring greater participation of Members to CAQ sessions is also an important issue. With regard to procedural aspects concerning the organization of sessions of CAQ and other statutory bodies, it might be timely for the Committee to identify shortcomings and make recommendations to the Commission, which could possibly review them during its forthcoming Extraordinary Session. That Extraordinary Session will address procedural, legal and technical issues in order to ensure the good operation of the autonomous budget and the strengthening of the Commission.