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**GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN**

COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

Fourth Session

Alexandria, Egypt, 7-9 June 2004

**UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE AUTONOMOUS BUDGET AND
ITS IMPLICATIONS ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE**

Introduction

1. In order to reinforce its functional efficiency, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), decided, at the Twenty-second Session (Rome, Italy, 13-16 October 1997), to amend the GFCM Agreement and relevant provisions of its internal rules and regulations. Among the amendments adopted was the creation of an autonomous budget. The autonomous budget provides for new obligations for the Contracting Parties and thus required, for entering into force, formal acceptance by two-thirds of the Members of the Commission and thereafter for each Member on its acceptance thereof.

2. The modalities for the determination of the budget ceiling, particularly the scale of contribution between Members were further adopted at the Twenty-fifth Session of the Commission (Sliema, Malta, 12-15 September 2000). The scale of contribution was calculated, as an example, on the basis of a hypothetical autonomous budget of US\$ 750 000, and was split as follows: Membership 10%; Wealth Component 35%; Catch Component 55%.

Status of Acceptance of the Autonomous Budget

3. The amendments relative to the autonomous budget entered into force on 29 April 2004 with the deposit of the sixteenth instrument of acceptance. At the time of the preparation of this document, the following GFCM Members had deposited their instrument of acceptance: Albania, Croatia, Cyprus, European Community, France, Greece, Italy, Lybia, Malta, Monaco, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey.

4. The Commission discussed the matter of the autonomous budget at its Twenty-eighth Session (Tangiers, Morocco, 14-17 October 2004) and decided¹ to convene an Extraordinary Session of GFCM as soon as possible after the entry into force of the amendments relative to the autonomous budget. The Session will address the procedural, legal and technical issues that are still pending and must be solved in order to ensure the good operation of the autonomous budget and strengthening of the Commission.

Implications for the Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ)

5. At the Second Session of the CAQ (Rome, Italy, 13-16 June 2000), the proposals presented by the Secretariat and discussed by participants included a clearly identifiable budget for the operation of the Committee and its associated networks. The budget proposed for CAQ did not involve recruitment of permanent personnel. It was intended that the Technical Secretariat for the CAQ would be provided by the FAO Fisheries Department as part-time contribution of several professionals. In addition, it was acknowledged that the organization of the existing operational networks, i.e. the Information Systems for Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM), the Technology and Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (TECAM) and the Socio-Economic and Legal Aspects of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SELAM) was in place with personnel supporting the programmed activities.

6. In several occasions GFCM Members emphasized the importance of aquaculture in the Mediterranean and reiterated the need to increase efforts in supporting steadily the activities of CAQ, and to endow CAQ with a suitable share of the autonomous budget². In this respect, the Commission further requested the Secretariat to consider undertaking an external evaluation of the whole activities of CAQ (see GFCM:CAQ/IV/2004/4 and GFCM:CAQ/IV/2004/Inf.12).

7. The share of the autonomous budget allowed to CAQ for properly performing its mandate will likely be based on a sound short and medium term programme which includes core and *ad hoc* activities. Such a programme of work will have also to consider potential contributions from existing and other partners in support of the CAQ networks.

8. In the past, the basic activities of CAQ which had been identified for regular funding included the following elements:

- a) Statutory meeting of CAQ (one meeting every two years).
- b) SIPAM network: i) one session of the Steering Committee per year; ii) one meeting of National Coordinators per year; iii) functioning of the Regional Centre (which has been and is currently granted by the Government of Tunisia through an agreement with FAO) including temporary assistance by consultants and additional permanent staff to strengthen the system.
- c) TECAM and SELAM networks (coordinated by the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies through the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza, Spain - CIHEAM-IAMZ - in collaboration with the FAO Fisheries Department): organization and delivery of four to five seminars or advanced courses or workshops every year.

9. Taking into consideration the average level of annual activities carried out over the past few years, the estimated minimum budget for CAQ was estimated in the range of US\$ 140 000, including costs of biennial statutory meeting of CAQ in four languages with international interpretation (about US\$ 35-40 000) and the activities of the networks (about US\$ 100 000).

10. It was not in the mandate of the external evaluation of CAQ to identify precise budget needs neither to undertake streamlined strategic planning. The *ad hoc* Meeting of Experts on the

¹ Paragraph 50, Report of the Twenty-eighth Session of GFCM.

² See, e.g. paragraph 43 of the Report of the Twenty-eighth Session of GFCM.

External Evaluation of CAQ which met in March 2004 (see GFCM:CAQ/IV/2004/Inf.12) therefore only alluded to such needs while providing broad principles and advice on devising cost/effective programme of work for CAQ. In addition, some priority activities were also identified through the draft regional aquaculture project (see GFCM:CAQ/IV/2004 /Inf.8) which might need to be confirmed and further explicated in terms of budgeted inputs. Nevertheless, the full implementation of the CAQ Plan of Action identified by the 1999 Consultation of Article 9 of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) would probably require additional funds, in particular for tackling aspects related to institutional strengthening and planning and support to the creation and up-grading of private sector associations.

11. The 2004-2006 Programme of work (document GFCM/CAQ/IV/2004/5) when defined by CAQ would have to be scrutinized by the GFCM, eventually during its forthcoming Extraordinary Session. In doing so, the Commission is likely to revisit issues such as: the use of four languages in CAQ statutory sessions, the role and inputs required by its Technical Secretary, the rationale of holding two SIPAM meetings per year, modalities to revamp EAM, or even if so wished, maintaining CAQ as a permanent GFCM Committee.

Conclusion

12. In order to promote the sustainable development of the fast growing aquaculture sector in the Mediterranean, it is important and necessary to forecast and monitor the appropriate level of activities of CAQ. Furthermore, for cost efficient operations, the level and apportionment of the autonomous budget required for CAQ to be performant may need to be reassessed and submitted to the Extraordinary Session of the GFCM.