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**Report on aquaculture intersessional activities in 2013–2014,
recommendations and work plan for 2014–2015**

INTRODUCTION

1. This document provides a summary of the work carried out by the Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) and its subsidiary bodies during the intersessional period. It also provides the main conclusions, management advice and programme of work for 2014–2015.

ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE (CAQ)

2. During the intersessional period, no aquaculture statutory meeting has taken place. Therefore, since the eighth session of the CAQ (France, March 2013) the Committee has implemented its programme of work as agreed upon and advised at its last session and at the thirty-seventh session of the Commission (Croatia, May 2013).

3. The work implemented by CAQ has been relying on active networks of regional experts from Members countries and the work has been implemented using the IT SharePoint facilities provided by the GFCM Secretariat and through the regular exchange of information and the mutual participation in projects workshops. The activities set out below are consistent with the GFCM Framework Programme (FWP) as specified in document GFCM:XXXVIII/2014/7.

4. The list of convened meetings is as follows:

- Aquaculture Reflection Day, aimed at defining steps towards the establishment of an aquaculture multi-stakeholder platform (Tunisia, June 2013)
- Pilot study step I on the identification of indicators and AZA for sustainable aquaculture in Montenegro (Montenegro, July 2013)
- Pilot study step III on the implementation of a system of indicators for sustainable aquaculture (Tunisia, November 2013)
- Regional workshop on the identification of reference points for economic, environmental, social and governance indicators on aquaculture (Turkey, December 2013)
- Workshop on the role of aquaculture farmers' organizations in the GFCM area (Turkey, December 2013)
- Ad hoc meeting to launch the GFCM Aquaculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform (AMSHP) (Turkey, December 2013)

- Meetings on Indicators for sustainable aquaculture (InDAM) and its application and on Cooperation between Morocco and GFCM on sustainable aquaculture (Morocco, January 2014)
- Third session of the Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS) (Turkey, February 2014).

MAIN ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES OF CAQ SUBSIDIARY BODIES

5. The activities of the Working Groups on Sustainability in Aquaculture (WGSA) and on Site Selection and Carrying Capacity (WGSC) have been undertaken within the GFCM Framework Programme (FWP)¹.

6. The main outcomes of CAQ activities, including meetings listed above, can be summarized as follows:

Working Group on Sustainability in Aquaculture (WGSA)

7. The **Pilot study in Montenegro** was organized in cooperation with the FAO AdriaMed regional project. It addressed the development of offshore marine aquaculture and consisted in a practical application and identification of potential mariculture zones through the use of indicators and the definition of potential allocated zones for aquaculture (AZA) in Montenegro.

8. The **Pilot study step III in Tunisia** reviewed a set of indicators and their practical use by farmers and other key actors. It focused on the use of real data from a series of fish farms and by the traffic-light method. Awareness-raising and the effective use of indicators to monitor aquaculture operations are among the achievements of all the steps of the pilot study.

9. The **Workshop on the identification of reference points** for aquaculture discussed and identified reference points for regional indicators covering the social, economic and governance dimensions of sustainable aquaculture. Some of them were reviewed and their methodological sheets completed (i.e. level of applicability, methodology for calculation and reference point, data source). A back-to-back meeting with WGSC focused on reference points for environmental indicators and discussed key elements for the finalization of the Environmental Monitoring Programme. Preliminary work was also done on specific indicators for mollusc culture and for lagoons management. Both achievements were also presented during the meeting to launch the aquaculture platform.

10. The **Meeting on indicators for sustainable aquaculture and its application in Morocco** provided an introduction to InDAM methodology and achievements; national aquaculture priorities were discussed and the application of indicators on aquaculture including possible future steps for cooperation on aquaculture in Morocco were outlined.

11. The **Workshop “The future of Greek aquaculture: building a sustainable industry in the framework of integrated coastal zone management”** organized by the FP7 EU-funded Pegaso project and the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (Greece, November 2013) presented outcomes and methodologies on the identification and selection of indicators.

Working Group on Site Selection and Carrying Capacity (WGSC)

12. **Technical support to Montenegro** to include AZAs in the national spatial plan for coastal zones has been provided in cooperation with AdriaMed. This support consisted in national capacity-

¹Namely within the projects InDAM (Indicators for Sustainable Development of Aquaculture and Guidelines for their use in the Mediterranean) and SHoCMed (Developing site selection and carrying capacity for Mediterranean aquaculture within aquaculture appropriate areas) both projects co-funded by the European Union (EU), and the phase III of which ended in January 2014.

building in marine spatial planning and aquaculture – e.g. use of geographic information system (GIS) in zoning for aquaculture, exchange of maps and information on the use of coastal areas.

13. **Guidelines for a harmonized environmental monitoring programme (EMP)** for finfish marine cages aquaculture within an AZA were developed through the elaboration of key elements (GFCM:XXXVIII/2014/Inf.8). The EMP consists in a series of technical indications aimed at evaluating the effects and impacts of aquaculture on the environment and on aquaculture itself.

Information System for the Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM)

14. The activities carried out by SIPAM in collaboration with the national focal points are summarized hereafter.

15. A **data reporting scheme** for aquaculture production centres to improve the data submission procedure within SIPAM was released, in line with Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/6 and according to the structure agreed with national focal points (production segment, environment, number of production centres, species group and species name).

16. Within the framework of the **Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics (CWP)**, collaboration was established with Eurostat for the revision of global standard aquaculture questionnaires and the development of aquaculture guidelines to be carried out during the CWP intersessional period (2013–2016).

17. Following the adoption of Recommendations GFCM/33/2009/4 and GFCM/35/2011/6, **GFCM Members have submitted aquaculture data** through the SIPAM information system for the reference years from 2008 to 2012 (2012 submission is still ongoing).

Mediterranean coastal lagoons management: interactions between aquaculture and capture fisheries (LAMED)

18. The LaMed project (Mediterranean coastal lagoons management: interactions between aquaculture and capture fisheries) ended in December 2013 and the technical **document** *Mediterranean coastal lagoons: sustainable management and interactions among aquaculture, capture fisheries and the environment* was finalized and published (GFCM:XXXVIII/2014/Dma.2).

19. The database **on the Mediterranean coastal lagoons** was updated. In addition the “Guidelines for the sustainable management of coastal lagoons in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea” prepared by the secretariat were complemented with key elements to develop specific indicators (GFCM:XXXVIII/2014/Inf.15).

Working Group on Marketing of Aquaculture products (WGMA)

20. The **regional survey on aquaculture farmers’ organizations** has been finalized. It was implemented in cooperation with the International Organisation for the Development of Fisheries in Eastern and Central Europe (Eurofish), and it enabled to carry out a preliminary assessment of aquaculture farmers’ organizations.

21. The **Meeting on the aquaculture farmers’ organizations** (AFOs) addressed their key role in the aquaculture sector and underlined the current lack of market data and unregulated market demand-supply as well as the scarce communication between farmers and society.

Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS)

22. The **Working Group on the Black Sea** (aquaculture component) reviewed the progress made in the collection of aquaculture production statistics and production centres. Advances were also made

in the preparation of guidelines for restocking activities with farmed fish and of a monitoring scheme to assess the impacts on wild stocks as well as information on restocking design.

Aquaculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform (AMShP)

23. The **Aquaculture reflection day** concretely initiated discussions within the GFCM towards the establishment of the AMShP. The outcomes were summarized in a discussion paper which was further enriched by regional experts and served as a building block to set up the platform.

24. The **Meeting to launch the AMShP** saw the participation of a wide range of stakeholders (administration, farmers, research, NGOs) who discussed the main priorities for aquaculture in the region and agreed on the following aspects connected to the AMShP: thematic forums and strategic areas; nature and scope; main challenges to be addressed; objectives and beneficiaries; benefits for countries; functioning and general approach; strategic approach and *modus operandi* (GFCM:XXXVIII/2014/Inf.7).

Other matters

25. Within the framework of the Italian Presidency of the European Union (second semester 2014), a **high level regional conference** will be organized by Italy focusing on the sustainable development of aquaculture in the GFCM area and addressing the relevance of this strategic sector for food security and economic growth. In this respect, the Commission is invited to consider its role in this very important event and to request the Secretariat to ensure a close cooperation in its organization. The GFCM would be instrumental in providing a valuable technical contribution and, in turn, would take advantage of its active participation obtaining valuable results and supporting the development of sustainable aquaculture in the region.

26. **Cooperation** has been established with Eurofish and FAO-Globefish as well as with European Institute of Mediterranean Food (IEAMED) in Spain for the organization of two meetings: the first dealing with market data on aquaculture products and the second with the quality and safety of aquaculture products.

27. A **project proposal** was submitted in March 2014 within the EU Horizon 2020 call "Implementation of an Ecosystem-based approach for European aquaculture" by a consortium led by the Scottish Marine Institute and including FAO-FIRA/GFCM among a total of 22 institutions in and out of the EU. Should the consortium win the call, FAO-FIRA/GFCM would conduct a regional analysis on current practices for aquaculture marine spatial planning to be presented and discussed in a regional workshop.

SUGGESTIONS AND ADVICE ON AQUACULTURE

28. On the basis of the main conclusions and achievements of activities carried out within the CAQ subsidiary bodies and projects, the following conclusions and salient advice for aquaculture management were made:

Interactions between aquaculture and environment and environmental monitoring programme

- According to Resolution GFCM/36/2012/1 on Guidelines on Allocated Zones for Aquaculture (AZA), the establishment of AZA should be accompanied by an environmental monitoring programme (EMP) to evaluate the quality of the environment and the impact of aquaculture. The Commission at its thirty-sixth session (Morocco, May 2012) gave mandate to the Secretariat and to the CAQ to proceed with the preparation of specific guidelines on environmental monitoring for aquaculture. The key elements to develop Guidelines for a harmonized environmental monitoring programme (EMP) have been elaborated (GFCM:XXXVIII/2014/Inf.8). These guidelines should be considered as a management instrument at the disposal of authorities and aquaculture farmers to optimize the use of AZA. The guidelines target the

marine finfish cage farming activities and their main purposes are to: i) respect the ecological service provided by the ecosystems and minimize local impacts on the environment; ii) define actions to set up a recording system for environmental parameters related to aquaculture activities.

Restocking with aquaculture products

- Activities of fish restocking with cultured marine juvenile (i.e. turbot or other farmed species) into wild populations have been deeply discussed by the WGBS. Those activities should take into account a “responsible and precautionary approach” and the conservation of marine biodiversity. This approach should consider, among others, the implementation of a data recording system in order to assess the interaction with fisheries activities and results.

Aquaculture management practices

- Promote, in cooperation with farmers and farmers’ organizations, the production and implementation of better management practices (BMPs) for responsible aquaculture addressing the economic, social and environmental components of sustainability. BMPs should aim at increasing both the quantity and quality of products taking into consideration food safety and animal health. The adoption of BMPs could also improve, among other things, the public perception of aquaculture and the acceptability of aquaculture products by consumers. BMPs should be species-specific and adaptable to the local specificities.

Aquaculture statistics

- Improve the GFCM regional data collection system on aquaculture production statistics and production centres according to Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/6. Distinction should be made between Subareas (i.e. 37.3 and 37.4) when the culture of a given species occurs in more than one of these subareas.

Aquaculture Multi-stakeholder Platform (AMShP)

- Support the sustainable development of aquaculture in the region through the establishment of the AMShP in order to facilitate a wider involvement of aquaculture stakeholders, improve exchange of experience, information and knowledge, and to strengthen the cooperation.

- Support the establishment of the AMShP according to its four thematic forums and ten strategic areas (SA) as indicated below, taking into consideration the priorities for the development of aquaculture in the region (GFCM:XXXVIII/2014/Inf.7):

- Thematic Forum 1: Regulatory Framework (*SA: Spatial planning and allocated zones for aquaculture; Governance and regulatory frameworks*)
- Thematic Forum 2: Environment and disease management (*SA: Aquaculture and environment interactions; Disease management and aquatic animal health*)
- Thematic Forum 3: Quality and markets for aquaculture product (*SA: Quality and safety of products, markets and consumers; Social responsibility; and Empowering aquaculture farmers’ organizations*)
- Thematic Forum 4: Technology and feed production (*SA: Research, knowledge sharing and technology transfer; Sustainable feed production and management; and Technology innovation and diversification*)

- Mobilize extrabudgetary funds and prepare concrete actions and project proposals within the FWP, also in support to the AMShP.

Advice on lagoons management

- The *Guidelines for the sustainable management of coastal lagoons in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea*, aimed at providing general guidance and key elements for the management of coastal lagoons in the GFCM area, have been complemented and finalized with key elements for the development of specific indicators. These guidelines should be considered for possible adoption (GFCM:XXXVIII/2014/Inf.15).

PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME 2014–2015

29. The proposed list of activities for the intersessional period (2014–2015) will focus on the follow-up of activities as adopted by the CAQ at its eighth session, based on the priorities addressed by the CAQ subsidiary bodies.

Working Group on Sustainability in Aquaculture (WGSA)

- Carry on the dissemination of results and outcomes and keep supporting the involvement of concerned stakeholders in the use of indicators, including through pilot studies, in order to plan and monitor aquaculture development;
- Finalize the work on indicators for mollusc culture and land-based marine aquaculture;
- Finalize the reference points for regional indicators and their methodological sheets.

Working Group on Site Selection and Carrying Capacity (WGSC)

- Provide technical support and transfer knowledge on AZAs and aquaculture zoning;
- Consolidate the network of regional experts on site selection and EMP;
- Carry on the work on environmental quality standard (EQS) and focus on site specificity (e.g. bathymetry, marine currents, type of sea bottom).

Working Group on Marketing of Aquaculture Products (WGMA)

- Identify regional priorities for the quality and safety of products, markets and consumers in connection to aquaculture products;
- Cooperate with farmers and farmers' organisations to promote better management practices.

Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS) – aquaculture component

- Finalize guidelines on responsible activities for fish restocking and stock enhancement purposes;
- Finalize the inventory of marine and brackish aquaculture farms and production centres;
- Identify training requirements and prepare a specific programme based on such requirements;
- Cooperate in the organization of the International Symposium on Fisheries and Aquatic Science (Trabzon, Turkey September 2014).

Work plan of the Information System for the Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM)

- Follow progress in data collection (production centres and production statistics);
- Finalize the data reporting scheme for production centres;
- Finalize the statistical data production and the inventory of marine and brackish aquaculture farms in the Black Sea area;
- Within the framework of the collaboration with the aquaculture group of the CWP and in collaboration with Eurostat, revise the standard aquaculture questionnaires used by CWP members and work on the development of guidelines.

Other key CAQ and FWP activities

Aquaculture Multi-stakeholder Platform (AMShP)

- Organize a planning meeting and identify immediate and long-term actions to make the platform operational, building upon the existing knowledge in relation to each thematic forum and strategic area;
- Liaise with the industry, farms, research institutions and other interested stakeholders to promote their involvement and participation in the activities of the aquaculture platform;
- Initiate a review and analysis of existing regional initiatives, projects, metadata information and data banks in connection to the platform thematic forums and strategic areas;
- Develop the IT component of the platform;
- Prepare proposals for extrabudgetary funded projects to support and feed the platform activities to be included within the GFCM FWP.

Regional conference on sustainable aquaculture

- Cooperate in the organization and implementation of the Regional conference on the sustainable development of aquaculture with the Italian Government during the semester of the Italian Presidency of the EU (second half of 2014, in collaboration with FAO and partners).

Other

30. The proposed work programme also comprises the following:

- Cooperate with Eurofish and Globefish in the organization of a workshop on Production and trade data in the European seabass and gilthead seabream aquaculture sector, focussing in particular on regional marine aquaculture data accessibility and availability, information on data on the market price trends of aquaculture products, forecast production and strategy and cooperation methodologies to improve communications.

- Cooperate with the European Institute of Mediterranean Food (IEAMED) in the organization of the meeting on the role of Mediterranean aquaculture fish food in human health and nutrition, focussing on the relevance of the aquaculture sector in the Mediterranean in connection to human consumption and sustainable food systems, healthiness, quality and nutrition, market competitiveness and quality requirements.

31. The above meetings will address in particular some of the topics tackled by the AMShP strategic area on Quality and safety of products, markets and consumers and will see the participation and involvement of key farmers' organisations and other stakeholders.

32. Finally, it is proposed to:

- Invite the CAQ to address, at its ninth session issues related to its reorganization, in light of the development and functioning of the AMShP and its strategic areas as well as of the GFCM FWP activities.

- Prepare a project proposal within the EU Horizon 2020 initiative related to the work programme on "Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and inland water research and the bio-economy" and in particular on the subjects related to the implementation of an ecosystem-based approach for European aquaculture, in cooperation with the concerned divisions at FAO and with the CAQ experts networks and partners,.

Meetings and trainings scheduled for 2014–2015

TITLE	PERIOD	PLACE
WGSA/WGSC – InDAM/SHoCMed – FAO AdriaMed Pilot study in Albania in support to the development of AZA and on the use of indicators for aquaculture	TBD in 2015	Albania
CAQ – Aquaculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform meeting	TBD	TBD
Ninth session of CAQ including the fifteenth session of SIPAM	February 2015	Marrakech (Morocco)

33. All the mentioned activities and meetings, with the exception of CAQ statutory sessions, should be carried out with extrabudgetary funds within the GFCM Framework Programme (FWP).

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

34. The Commission is invited to review the activities carried out by the CAQ and its subsidiary bodies during the intersessional period and to provide guidance on any follow-up that may be required as well as on the working strategies to be adopted. It is also invited to examine and to endorse, as appropriate, the conclusions and advice emanating from CAQ activities.

35. Finally, the Commission is invited to examine proposed activities as detailed in this report. The Commission may wish to highlight its priorities and to take into consideration budgetary implications in finalizing the programme of work.