



GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN
Twenty-third Session
Rome, Italy, 7-10 July 1998
Intersessional Activities

1. This paper summarizes the main activities that have been carried out by members of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and its Secretariat since the Twenty-second Session held in October 1997.

FOLLOW-UP ON DECISIONS OF THE TWENTY-SECOND SESSION OF GFCM

2. The Twenty-second Session was a milestone in the long life of the GFCM. The main issue discussed during the meeting was the strengthening of GFCM through amendments to the Agreement and Rules of Procedure. The principle of an autonomous budget was agreed upon. The discussions, however, regarding modalities and scale of members' contributions to such a budget were postponed until the present Session. By the adoption of the amendments, the name of the Council was changed into the Commission; regional economic integration organizations could become members of GFCM; the Committee on Fisheries Management was replaced by a Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC); the Executive Committee was abolished; and periodicity of the main session of the Commission would be every year instead of every two years.
3. In accordance with Article X of the Agreement, the FAO Council at its Hundred and thirteenth Session (Rome, Italy, 4-6 November 1997) approved the amendments to the GFCM Agreement and, in accordance with Article II.7, the Director-General of FAO has approved the amendments to the Rules of Procedure.

4. A circular state letter was sent to the members of the Commission on 12 February 1998, transmitting copies of the amended Agreement and Rules of Procedure, and inviting their acceptance of those amendments that involved new obligations for them.

5. At its Twenty-second Session, the Commission adopted the following three resolutions:
 - Resolution 97/1 on the length of driftnets permitted to be kept on board or used for fishing;
 - Resolution 97/2 concerning non-members of GFCM whose vessels engage in fishing activities in the region; and
 - Resolution 97/3 on the prohibition of the bluefin tuna purse-seine fishery and the use of airplanes and helicopters in support of such fishing operations in certain periods of the year.

6. In accordance with Article V.1 of the GFCM Agreement, the Chairman of GFCM communicated to the members of GFCM by a circular letter dated 4 November 1997 Recommendations 97/1 and 97/3, indicating that any member may within 120 days from the date of notification of a recommendation object to it, and in that event, shall not be under obligation to give effect to that recommendation. No objection had been received by 4 April 1998, when this period expired, and therefore these two recommendations have now become binding on all members.

7. While urging FAO to continue to provide support through its Regular Programme, GFCM "... requested that extra budgetary funds be sought to fund the Second Session of the Committee on Aquaculture..." (paragraph 33 of the report of the Twenty-second Session). France agreed to finance the session in two languages (French and English). The Secretariat is continuing its efforts to seek funds for the financing of the First Session of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC).

8. At the same Session, GFCM also requested the Secretariat to prepare and communicate to members the status of the FAO contribution to GFCM for 1998.

This was done on 16 January 1998, when details of the FAO budget allocation to the Fisheries Department was notified to the GFCM Secretariat.

**SECOND SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON FISHERIES
ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS (Rome, Italy, 2-5 March 1998)**

9. The GFCM Working Party on Fisheries Economics and Statistics held its Second Session at FAO Headquarters in Rome, from 2 to 5 March 1998. The meeting was attended by 29 representatives from 15 countries and observers from the European Community and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

10. The Working Party expressed the opinion that promoting responsible fisheries in the Mediterranean would require increased consideration of the economic, social and human dimensions in fisheries management, and recommended the establishment by GFCM of a regional monitoring system on socio-economic issues related to fisheries management. The regional monitoring system proposed would focus on the monitoring of a set of selected economic and social data, ratios and indicators, and thus provide concrete and cost-effective inputs for improving the basis on which fisheries management decisions would be taken at regional level.

11. More particularly, the Working Party agreed that assembling and analysing straightforward and precise indicators could constitute an alternative to overcome the problem of the prohibitive costs for many GFCM countries of collecting the full range of socio-economic data and information required for responsible management of complex fisheries. In this connection, the Working Party agreed on a methodological framework for the collection of data necessary for assembling a minimum set of socio-economic indicators on Mediterranean fisheries with emphasis on fishing effort and fleet capacity parameters. The Working Party also suggested that the methodological framework be further assessed in terms of its feasibility and implementing arrangements both, at national and regional levels, by an *ad hoc* group of experts from the region.

12. The Working Party reviewed the national statistical systems on the basis of country report, and stressed the need to promote standardized data collection methodologies and harmonized systems at national level.

13. The Working Party also reviewed existing regional fisheries information systems in the Mediterranean, including the FAO/GFCM database relying on the STATLANT reporting schemes and the Regional Information System Model for the Mediterranean (MEDFISH) presently promoted by the COPEMED project in the Western and Central Mediterranean. The Working Party suggested that efforts be made to expand MEDFISH to other Mediterranean sub-areas.
14. The Working Party discussed the recurring problems associated with STATLANT 37B on catch and fishing effort data and agreed that this issue should be properly addressed by a group of experts composed of biologists, statisticians and economists. It was also suggested, subject to availability of funds and decision concerning the structure of the GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee, that a meeting of an *ad hoc* GFCM/EUROSTAT working group be envisaged to promote the harmonization and exchange of relevant fisheries statistical data in the Mediterranean.
15. The meeting reviewed the Secretariat's proposal for a medium- to long-term programme of work as well as short- to medium-term priority activities for the Working Party (paragraphs 60 to 64 of the report). Without prejudice to the decisions that the Commission would be taking on the structure and role of its subsidiary bodies, there was a consensus among delegations on the need to pursue and strengthen the activities related to the mandate of the Working Party.

AQUACULTURE ACTIVITIES

16. Aquaculture activities were carried out in the context of the programme of work of three of the four established networks, and on topics of concern to the Committee on Aquaculture. No activities related to the Environment and Aquaculture network (EAM) could be implemented due to lack of funding by the MAP/PAP/RAC. It is proposed to incorporate environmental matters into the Technology and Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (TECAM) and Socio-economic and Legal Aspects of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SELAM) networks until an alternative solution is found.
17. The Information System for Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM) network carried out the following activities:

- a meeting of the SIPAM National Co-ordinators held in Salerno, Italy, from 30 October to 1 November 1997 to discuss the progress in the utilization of the new Windows version of the software, and to suggest the necessary corrections as well as to revise the situation of the various data bases;

- a visit of the Regional Coordinator to Turkey to review the situation of the SIPAM National Coordination Office;

- the preparation of a new contract with the Institute of Marine Biology of Crete (IMBC), Greece, to implement the modifications to the software decided upon in Salerno by the National Coordinators;

- the negotiation of a new agreement with the Istituto Centrale per la Ricerca Scientifica e Tecnologica Applicata al Mare (ICRAM), Italy. The agreement would include:
 - a. the organization of a regional meeting of the SIPAM National Coordinators (similar in terms of agenda to the ones held in 1997 in Bari and Salerno and which could also serve as SIPAM Steering Committee);
 - b. a contract for the preparation of the software under Windows environment for a new version of the APS module for project analysis;
 - c. funds for the test of the APS programme at national level for Italy, which should represent an improvement for the analysis of survey data carried out by ICRAM on Italian farms; and
 - d. the expansion, for a duration of six months, of the ITAFISH programme, which collects the national data to be inserted in the Italian SIPAM module.

- the expansion of the network which now includes also Algeria and which is hoping to send technicians for training to the SIPAM Regional Centre in Tunis,;

- the release of the second issue of the regional data base in February 1998 including over 4 700 records for 12 countries;

- the organization of a SIPAM/SELAM/FEAP meeting on 4 and 5 February 1998 held at FAO Headquarters in Rome, in which the specialized SIPAM marketing data base was discussed and an agreement with the European Federation of Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) for the downloading of the marketing data collected by FEAP was negotiated;
- the preparation of an Internet version of SIPAM which is being carried out in collaboration with the World Agricultural Information Centre (WAICENT) of FAO.

18. Problems encountered with the SIPAM network relate mainly to the difficulties experienced by some of the National Coordinators to complete the various data bases in an homogeneous manner. In the case of the main producing countries, the complexity of the sector and the amount of data to be transferred to the SIPAM systems are also discouraging some of the National Coordinators who are not receiving much support at national level in their work.

19. Activities undertaken by TECAM and SELAM networks with the collaboration of FAO and national institutions included:

- the organization of two advanced courses; the first on Mediterranean Off-shore Mariculture (Zaragoza, Spain, 20-24 October 1997), and the second on Mediterranean Aquaculture: New Techniques for Marine Hatcheries (Mazarron, Spain, February/March 1998);

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- the organization of two workshops on Aquaculture Planning in Mediterranean Countries (Tangiers, Morocco, 12-14 March 1998), in cooperation with the Institut National de la Recherche Halieutique (INRH), where the participants discussed the general context of aquaculture planning in the Mediterranean; they also reviewed specific case studies to get a better idea of the situation in the region and the planning process, and also reviewed the supranational and international guidelines for planning. The meeting addressed the issue of regional cooperation;
- aquaculture Feed Manufacturing Practices (Reus, Spain, 25-27 March 1998), to review trends and outlooks in commercial aquafeed manufacture in the Mediterranean, feeding practices in the Mediterranean region,

- guidelines for feed manufacturing and aspects of legislation related to feed production; and
 - the preparation of a synopsis on the new finfish species being cultured in the Mediterranean, linking the various research groups involved in diversification, has been started and it is due for completion in 1998.
20. It is recalled that the TECAM and SECAM networks are coordinated by the International Centre for Advanced Agronomic Studies for the Mediterranean (ICAMAS) on behalf of GFCM.
21. The work carried out in the framework of the GFCM networks, was reported in the FAO Aquaculture Newsletter, issue No. 17, and posted on the FAO Web page.
22. Italy has agreed to finance the organization of a Technical Consultation on the Application of Article 9 of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (Aquaculture Development) to the Mediterranean region. This meeting would be held in Rome by the end of 1998. GFCM members are expected to participate. The contribution of the Italian Government for this event amounts to It. Lire 548.8 million.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

23. The GFCM Secretariat published the document *Studies and Reviews* No. 69 entitled: "Long- and short-term trends of Mediterranean fishery resources" and contributed to the preparation of a document entitled: "Virtual Encyclopedia of the Marine Resources of the Western Mediterranean" for the workshop organized by the Regional Project COPEMED on Artisanal Fisheries" Malta, 9-13 March 1998. The GFCM Secretariat also participated in the MEDITA Symposium on "Assessment of Demersal Resources by Direct Methods in the Mediterranean and the Adjacent Seas", Pisa, Italy, 8-21 March 1998.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

24. The Commission may wish to review the follow-up activities to the GFCM Resolutions and recommend further action that would facilitate the full implementation of these Resolutions.

25. The Commission is invited to review the recommendations and suggestions made by the Working Party on Fisheries Economics and Statistics and provide guidance for follow-up action; the attention of the Commission is notably drawn to the proposed programme of work of the Working Party and in particular the establishment of a regional monitoring system on socio-economic parameters for fisheries management.

26. The Commission is invited to provide guidance on the suggestion made to organize a joint meeting of an *ad hoc* GFCM/EUROSTAT group of experts. The Commission is also invited to review the proposals on the possible process for revising the STATLANT 37B reporting scheme when considering the actual need for stock assessment in the region.