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PROGRAMME OF WORK AND BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2017-18

INTRODUCTION

1. This document sets out Commission's proposed 2017-18 work programme for discussion and decision making, as identified by the Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) (December 2016); and the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) (April 2016). When reviewing the proposed provisional Programme of Work for the inter-sessional biennium 2017–18, due consideration should be given to anticipating and assessing its budgetary implications in conjunction with the financial status reported in the Working Document RECOFI/IX/2017/2.

2. The full Programme of the Work of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) includes activities that must be performed by the WGFM, WGA, by the Members at national levels, and by any other ad hoc working group that RECOFI may deem necessary to establish, on a temporary or longer-term basis.

3. Furthermore, the present document contains an estimate of the cost to implement the proposed work plan and its activities and that will be charged to the RECOFI budget (Members' annual contributions inclusive of the arrears). The outstanding budget required to achieve the full implementation of the proposed work plan is also highlighted.

ASSUMPTIONS AND UNCERTAINTIES*Assumptions*

4. The following assumptions, which have budgetary implications, are made for consideration by the Commission:

- The estimated budget principally relies on Member's contributions to the budget of RECOFI,
- Members will pay annual contributions when due and will settle their arrears,

- Subsidiary bodies of the Commission (i.e. WGFM and WGA) will be adequately supported in order to address in a timely manner the various logistic aspects for the organization of the meetings and activities planned for the next inter-sessional period,
- Members will make every effort to provide the Secretariat with the data and information requested to support the work of its subsidiary bodies,
- Members will support the work of the FAO Secretariat in a timely and efficient manner to ensure the quality and completeness of the activities conducted and the products produced,
- Members will effectively support the work of national scientists, experts, administrators and RECOFI National and WGFM/WGA Focal Points and will guarantee the costs of all national inputs associated with the Commission's programme of work, including those related to the Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS),
- Within the limits of the current fixed annual budget, the Commission could not be financially self-sufficient unless direct external financial resources are made available,
- The Commission will strive to increase its annual budget to a more comfortable and sustainable level for effective functioning,
- FAO will maintain to the extent possible the technical backstopping capacity in support to the Commission, and
- The Commission will continue to receive logistic and administrative support from FAO, directly via its Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (SEC).

Uncertainties

5. The adopted scale of the RECOFI budget is based on a fixed USD 5,000 yearly contribution by each Member, amounting to a total annual budget of USD 40,000. This level of budget has been proven to be insufficient to carry out the activities of the Commission. The Programme of Work formulated by the subsidiary bodies of the Commission envisages financial requirements that cannot be funded through the current annual Members' contributions only. This element of uncertainty is not taken into consideration in the proposed draft budget as it should be discussed and assessed by the Commission.

6. IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF 2015-16 INTER-SESSIONAL WORK PROGRAMME

7. Over the last biennia, a considerable number of work programme activities endorsed by the Commission have not been fully undertaken, mainly due to budgetary restrictions or to organizational problems. A similar but relatively better trend was witnessed during the 2015-16 intersessional period. The list of the 2015-16 intersessional activities, as endorsed by RECOFI at its eighth session (2015), and their implementation status is given in Appendix I.

PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2017-18

8. The provisional 2017-18 inter-sessional work programme of the Commission basically includes the activities proposed by its subsidiary bodies, namely WGFM and WGA.

Provisional programme on capture fisheries

9. At its tenth meeting (2016), the WGFM agreed on a provisional work programme for 2017-18. Table I below shows the proposed activities and budget for the 2017-18 WGFM work programme. It should be noted that the regional joint assessment of kingfish stock was also a first priority work programme activity item for the previous intersessional period (i.e. 2015-16). This activity was not realized due to unforeseen circumstances.

Table I: Proposed WGFM programme of work and budget for 2017-18.

Activity	Tentative date	Location	Duration (days)	Indicative cost (USD)*	Priority
<i>Technical Activities/Workshops</i>					
Regional joint assessment of kingfish stock	2017-18	Oman	3-4	30,000	1 st
Development of a monitoring programme for socio-economic parameters for use in fisheries management (follow-up to the outcome of the socioeconomic workshop held in Bahrain in 2012)	TBD	TBD	3-4	20,000	2 nd
<i>Annual meetings of the WGFM</i>					
11 th meeting of the WGFM	Nov/Dec 2017	RNE TBC		15,000	Annual meeting
12 th meeting of the WGFM	Nov/Dec 2018	TBD		15,000	Annual meeting

* The indicative budget includes consultancy fees, documents printing and dispatching, travel and DSA. These may vary depending on where the activity is organized in the region and who is invited to implement it.

Provisional programme on aquaculture

10. The WGA, at its seventh meeting (2016), did not propose a specified provisional work programme for the 2017-18, with the exception of the organization of its eighth meeting of the WGA at the end of 2016 or early 2017 (for details please see Table II). This approach was in line with the common understanding reached at the sixth meeting of the WGA (2014) where availability of funds was identified as a limiting factor for the formulation and implementation of a programme of work for the WGA. It however creates further uncertainty in terms of formulating a provisional programme of work and programme budgeting for 2017-18.

Table II: Proposed WGA activities for consideration in 2017–18

Activity	Tentative Date	Location	Duration (days)	Indicative cost (USD)
8 th Meeting of WGA	End 2017	TBD	3	15,000

INDICATIVE RECOFI BUDGET FOR 2017–18

11. In accordance with the provisions of Article VII and IX of the RECOFI Agreement, before making any decision involving expenditures in connection with the implementation of the approved work plan for the intersession period, including the establishment of committees and working groups and the recruitment or appointment of specialists, the Commission shall have available the basic information on the financial implications thereof.

12. The budgetary requirements estimated for the intersessional biennium would contribute to support the organization of the meetings of the Commission's subsidiary bodies, and related requirements, such as specialized experts and qualified consultants for specific tasks or publications. Other Secretariat related costs, such as the FAO technical support services and travel costs, are not included and could be charged to the Commissions budget depending on circumstances.

13. The proposed Programme of Work formulated by the technical subsidiary bodies of the Commission has financial requirements that cannot be met only by the current annual contributions. Should the Commission decide to approve all the proposed expenditures, a conservative total estimated budget for 2017–18 based on information and data presently available to the Secretariat would amount to approximately USD 95,000. On the other hand, the 2017-18 intersessional period WGA programme of work should be determined by Commission as the WGA proposed only one annual meeting activity mentioned above in paragraph 10. An estimated additional USD 30,000 would be required for the work programme of WGA, assuming that two more activities would be scheduled for the WGA in addition to its 8th Meeting. With that, the total estimated budget for 2017-18 reaches USD 125,000, in which an estimated amount of USD 50,000 needs to be allocated for Secretariat operational costs including those related to the organization of the 10th session of RECOFI (2019) and the annual WGFM and WGA meetings.

14. In March 2017, the Commission had an approximate usable balance of USD 54,000 for 2017-18 biennium period activities. The current level of members' contributions for the next biennium would amount to USD 80, 000. Should members pay all their overdue contributions, this would make another USD 75 000 available. Thus the total theoretical budget totals to USD 209,000. If Secretariat operational costs mentioned above are taken into account within this total, the implementation of the proposed work plan will be possible with an additional availability of USD 34,000.

15. Over the last years, activities of events of the Commission, to a considerable extent, have remained limited to the biennial regular sessions of Commission and annual regular meetings the WGA and WGFM because of budgetary restrictions. It is worth mentioning that the WGA have had difficulties in organizing its regular annual meetings each year. The Secretariat therefore suggests organization of regular meetings of the WGA and WGFM every two years, rather than on an annual basis, starting from 2017, in the following order:

2017: Meeting of WGA,

2018: Meeting of WGFM, and

2019: Tenth Session of RECOFI.

16. Secretariat thinks that the proposed two years (biennial) meeting frequency for the subsidiary bodies of RECOFI mentioned in above would allow more room for delivery of specific technical activities (i.e. regional workshops, including training: expert group meeting, assessment studies, etc.). Furthermore, it should be noted that the regular sessions of RECOFI area held every two years (biennale). Organization of WGA and WGFM meetings on a biennial basis would help to a certain extent close the budgetary gap of RECOFI.

17. Strengthening the functioning of RECOFI is discussed in the working document RECOFI/IX/2017/7 (RECOFI Review). The document offers the following two alternative scenarios for increased functioning of the Commission: (i) maintain RECOFI activities within current budget and reduced FAO support; and (ii) strengthen RECOFI to function with an increased budget and secretariat ` discussed in the document RECOFI/IX/2017/7. It is worth mentioning that Secretariat's biennial meeting proposal is in line with the former scenario.

18. The current level of RECOFI budget has proven insufficient to carry out the activities of Commission. In addition, the arrears continue to pose an additional challenge to the RECOFI budget and its operations. Therefore, the Secretariat sees it as essential to increase annual RECOFI budget scale.

SUGGESTED ACTION FOR THE COMMISSION

The Commission is invited to:

- Consider the proposed provisional work programme,
- Consider the need of RECOFI annual budget increase,
- Consider Secretariat's suggestion of organization of the regular meeting of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a biennial (two-year) basis starting from 2017,
- Note the limited progress in implementation of the work programme of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission,
- Determine which activities should get priority support from the RECOFI budget, and
- Suggest additional items to add to the work programme.

Appendix I

RECOFI activities endorsed at the eighth session of RECOFI for 2015-2016 and their implementation status

Scheduled activities of WGA and their implementation status

Activity	Date	Location	Duration (days)	Indicative budget (USD)	Remark	Implementation status
7th meeting of WGA	End 2015	Qatar	3		Annual Meeting	Done
8th meeting of WGA	End 2016	Bahrain (to be confirmed)	3		Annual Meeting	Awaiting confirmation for end 2017
Training workshop on aquaculture risk analysis	October 2015	Oman	4	20 000	1 st Priority	Done
Technical workshop on aquaculture recirculation technologies (RAS)	End 2015	Qatar	1		Back to back with 7th WG	Not done
Workshop on the development of a regional biosecurity strategy for aquaculture	October 2015	Oman	1		Together with the 1st priority	Done
Advancement of the Regional Aquaculture Information System	2015-2016	Kuwait	-	15 000		In-progress

Scheduled activities of WGFM for 2015-2016 and their implementation status

Activity	Date	Location	Duration (days)	Indicative budget (USD)	Remark	Implementation status
9th meeting of WGFM	November 2015	Kuwait	3		Annual Meeting	Done
10th meeting of WGFM	November 2016	Qatar	3		Annual Meeting	Done
Regional joint assessment of Kingfish stock	April 2016	Oman	3-4	20 000	1st Priority	Awaiting