



COORDINATING WORKING PARTY ON FISHERY STATISTICS

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Recommendations relating to CWP from the FAO Expert Consultation on Data Formats and Procedures for Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (Bergen, Norway, 25-27 October 2004)

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1. The Expert Consultation on Data Formats and Procedures for Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) was held in Bergen, Norway, 25–27 October 2004. The Expert Consultation was convened in accordance with the recommendation of the FAO's Committee on Fisheries, with a view to facilitating implementation of the International Plan of Action to Deter, Prevent and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU). The full text of the Expert Consultation has been distributed to CWP members and is made available to COFI.
2. The Consultation focused on approaches to the harmonization of data formats and procedures for MCS information that is exchanged internationally, such as lists of vessels and information generated by Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), by vessel licensing, or as a result of violations.
3. Many of the the conclusions and recommendations are of relevance to the CWP. These fall into two categories: general and technical.

General conclusions and recommendations

4. The Consultation noted the convergence between the data sets used for fisheries statistics and for MCS and the blurring of the distinctions between the two at the level of raw data. While the Consultation concentrated on data generated at sea, it was conscious that the electronic data generated at sea was increasingly being retransmitted along the fish handling chain for the purposes of cross-checking, tracing and sale of fish, and in order to verify that fish, which is internationally traded, is harvested in a sustainable manner and/ or in conformity with regulations.
5. The Consultation concluded that the CWP was the most appropriate body to recommend upon data formats and associated procedures in fisheries. The Consultation recognised that CWP's mandate is with

respect to statistical information, but concluded that there was currently no alternative mechanism to advance the harmonisation MCS data formats.

6. The Consultation recommended that formats, codes and data sets already recommended by the CWP be used in MCS operations (text of recommendation in *italics*).

Recommendation (a) When establishing data formats and procedures for MCS, States, RFMOs and other entities that are concerned with the international exchange of MCS data, are encouraged, wherever possible, to make use of the existing international codes and standards as recommended by the CWP.

7. Where the necessary formats, data sets, or procedures have not been the subject of CWP recommendations, the Consultation recommended that the CWP should identify these needs and make the appropriate recommendations; and that the CWP should adopt a procedure for this activity.

8. The CWP should consider a formal procedure for establishing internationally-approved fisheries data formats and standards, i.e. certain data sets and formats recommended by the CWP should be elevated to the status of “internationally approved standards”.

Recommendation (c) The CWP should establish procedures for the proposal and adoption of internationally acceptable data formats and procedures for MCS ...

and a comment in paragraph 45,

... there appeared to be no formal procedure for establishing international standards for fisheries data and [the Experts] were of the view that FAO, through the CWP, could propose a formal procedure to propose, review and recommend upon such standards as may be required. The procedures used by other international bodies such as ISO may provide a suitable model.

9. International awareness of the work of the CWP should be promoted.

Recommendation (b) FAO should take measures to increase awareness of the mission and objectives of the CWP, improve access to the CWP web site and documents, and facilitate greater use of standards already agreed for fisheries data formats and procedures.

Recommendation (e) The CWP should encourage newly established RFMOs and current non-member RFMOs to adopt existing international standards for data collection, recording and international exchange, and to seek membership in the CWP with a view to playing an active role in its activities.

Technical recommendations

10. The Consultation recognised that, in some cases, data codes and formats may be difficult to harmonise, but that tables of correspondence, or equivalence (such as that available on the CWP web site under FAO's International Standard Statistical Classification of Fishery Commodities) can facilitate international data exchange.

Recommendation (f) Where different coding schemes are used for describing equivalent data elements, FAO should prepare and make available, through the CWP web site and reports,

tables indicating the correspondence between the codes as a step towards possible harmonization of such codes.

11. One of the most important technical recommendations concerns the adoption of the North Atlantic Format (NAF) as the model for developing an international standard for VMS position and catch reporting. The NAF is used by NAFO and NEAFC (not currently a CWP member) and by most European states in bilateral and multilateral VMS data exchange arrangements. It is understood that a similar format is being adopted by CCAMLR. The NAF provides for both reports generated automatically (e.g. vessel position); and for reports generated manually (e.g. catch on board on entry to an EEZ). Details of the NAF are available at: <http://www.neafc.org/measures/docs/Scheme-2005.pdf>

Recommendation (i) The CWP should consider the “North Atlantic Format” for adoption as the model for developing an international standard for VMS position and catch reporting, and the CWP should enter into a dialogue with NEAFC with regard to the custodianship of the international format, and establish protocols for future alterations of the international format.

12. Recommendation (k) (i) on harmonising fields and codes in vessel databases reinforces part of the CWP’s ongoing programme of work.

Recommendation (k) The CWP, with assistance from FAO and CWP members, should:
(i) recommend field codes and data formats, or database interchange formats, for fishing vessel databases, such as those required under the Compliance Agreement, in order to facilitate the crosschecking in, and exchange among, databases of fishing vessels;

13. The addition of the UN-LOCODES¹ to the suite of CWP recommended codes may be of considerable value and does not imply any additional work for the CWP.

Recommendation (k) (iii) adopt the UN-LOCODE as a standard for identification of fishing ports in fisheries-related databases and international exchange of data;

14. If CWP members were to require the CWP to address recommendations (k) (ii) and (k) (iv), which refer to MCS operational matters, the mandate of the CWP is likely to require review:

Recommendation (k) The CWP, with assistance from FAO and CWP members, should:
(ii) recommend standards for the international exchange of information on fishing vessel authorizations;
(iv) recommend definitions of for major fisheries violations and the respective codes for violations to facilitate international exchange of information on violations.

¹ United Nations rules for Electronic Data Interchange For Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) is a set of internationally agreed standards, directories and guidelines for the electronic interchange of structured data, and in particular that related to trade in goods and services between independent, computerized information systems. the rules are approved and published by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (<http://www.unece.org/etrades/download/downloadmain.htm#edifact>).

Implications for the CWP

15. The 21st Session of the CWP may just wish to indicate which of the recommendations fall within its mandate and those which do not. For those that fall within its mandate, CWP may wish to address only those fall under the general recommendations of the Expert Consultation at the current Session, as the technical issues are likely to require prior internal discussion by each of the CWP members.

16. The Expert Consultation recommendations raise several closely-related questions and issues with respect to the mandate of the CWP. These include:

- a) Are “internationally approved” fisheries data formats, standards and procedures necessary?
- b) If so, how can they be established?
- c) Is the CWP the appropriate body to advise on issues related to MCS data formats and standards and does this fall within the mandate of CWP?
- d) If so, which standards? Providing definitions for fisheries violations are legal issues.
- e) Even if the CWP considers that “international-approval” of formats, standards and procedures is not required, should formal procedures be established to propose, review and recommend upon additional formats and codes as may be required by CWP members?

17. CWP members may wish to form a CWP working group to examine and recommend on some, or all of these issues. To reduce costs such a group could convene through video links.

18. The CWP may wish to form a working group to consider and advise upon issues related to VMS and the to the North Atlantic Format in particular.

19. The CWP may wish to seek the advice of COFI with regard to these issues, in particular as an increase in the CWP work programme implies additional resources for the CWP Secretariat.