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	منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة	联合国 粮食及 农业组织	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture	Продовольственная и сельскохозяйственная организация Объединенных Наций	Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura
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REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES (RECOFI)

Eighth Session

Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, 12–14 May 2015

Sixth meeting of the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA)

Executive Summary

This document provides a summary of the work carried out by the RECOFI Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) during the last intersessional period. The importance of sharing updated data and information is reiterated as an important tool to enable the RECOFI member countries to adequately and timely discuss issues of regional interest, to strengthen dialogue, consolidate and further improve the advisory services of the WGA. The document introduces the discussions held by the WGA in drafting of recommendation on minimum reporting of aquaculture data and information. The important role played by the officially nominated WGA Focal Points in engaging relevant national agencies and authorities in the activities of the Commission is highlighted and draft terms of reference for the WGA Focal Points are presented. Finally, the proposed work programme for the next intersessional period is introduced noting the need for extrabudgetary funds to implement a comprehensive aquaculture programme under the current funding scheme of the Commission.

The Commission is invited to:

- Endorse the importance of timely collecting and sharing updated and relevant aquaculture data and information of regional interest that enables constructive dialogues towards the development of a sustainable aquaculture industry.
- Endorse and adopt the terms of reference of the RECOFI WGA Focal Points.
- Endorse and adopt the terms of reference of the Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS) Regional Centre staff.
- Comment on the proposed work plan activities for the next biennium and to provide guidance on how to further consolidate the advisory and technical services of the WGA.

1. The sixth meeting of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) was held in Muscat, Oman, in October 2014 as agreed at the seventh session of the Commission held in Iran (Islamic Republic of) in May 2013. The meeting was attended by seven members of the Commission. This session of the WGA should have been held in Iran (Islamic Republic of) in 2012, but owing to a number of technical difficulties, including the late confirmations from the various RECOFI members, the meeting had to be cancelled.

2. In view of the unforeseen time lapse between the sixth WGA meeting and the previous one, the WGA reviewed the discussions held and decisions taken at the fifth meeting of the WGA noting that its proposed work programme included six priority activities that had been endorsed by the Commission at its sixth session (Rome, Italy, 10–12 May 2011). However, in view of the limited funds available and allocated by the Commission through its annual contributions, the Commission had approved three out of the six WGA activities.

Review of the WGA 2011-2013 intersessional programme of work

3. The WGA noted that its programme of work as approved by the sixth session of RECOFI (Rome, Italy, 10–12 May 2011) had only been partly implemented with the sole organization of the joint WGA/WGFM workshop on Spatial Planning Development Programme for Marine Capture Fisheries and Aquaculture (Cairo, Egypt, 25–27 November 2011). The organization of the other two approved training activities on aquaculture risk analysis and environmental monitoring in cage aquaculture had not been organized, mainly owing to a lack of funds. The financial constraint that has hampered the implementation of the endorsed WGA activities was reported to the Commission at its seventh session (Tehran, Iran IR, 14–16 May 2013).

4. At its seventh session (Tehran, Iran IR, 14–16 May 2013), the Commission revised the WGA work programme and agreed on the following three activities: Priority 1 – a planning workshop on the development of a national strategy on aquatic animal health; Priority 2 – a technical workshop on aquaculture recirculation technologies; and Priority 3 – a training workshop on aquaculture risk analysis. The Commission also noted that important initiatives resulting from discussions held at the WGA meetings had been undertaken by individual countries during the intersessional period however it fully recognized the benefit of conducting such initiatives through the RECOFI mechanism in order to involve other countries in the Region and, hence, strengthening cooperation. The example of the marine fish cage site selection work being carried out in Saudi Arabia was presented which then prompted Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Oman to inform that their respective countries were conducting similar activities.

5. With regard to strengthening the Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS) a tailored training activity had been conducted in Kuwait in 2011 to upgrade the RAIS management system and to consolidate and reinforce the technical capacity for the RAIS Regional Centre staff. The WGA also reiterated the importance of updating the National Aquaculture Sector Overview (NASO) for all of the RECOFI countries and to undertake such updating every two years prior to the session of the Commission. It noted that the last update had been undertaken in October 2010 on the occasion of the fifth meeting of the WGA. This and the limited data entry in RAIS had been raised at the six session of the Commission (Rome, Italy, 10–12 May 2011) at which time the WGA Focal Points had been invited to ensure efficient data collection, data entry and validation.

6. The WGA strongly recognized that the WGA Technical Workshop on Aquatic Animal Health held in Saudi Arabia in May 2008, and the report produced, provided a clear roadmap for the development of both national and regional aquatic animal health programmes and strategies. It was recognized however that much needed to be implemented in the region, including the development of regional standards for imports/movements of non-endemic aquatic species, and that further technical assistance would be required, including closer interregional collaboration.

Review of aquaculture development, production data and information reporting in the RECOFI countries

7. At the sixth meeting of the WGA (Muscat, Oman, 21–23 May 2014) the country Focal Points and representatives once again recognized the usefulness of the National Aquaculture Sector Overview (NASO) as a concise and informative product. The importance of regularly updating such overviews was reiterated and noted that the WGA had already discussed this matter as indicated in paragraph 5 above. The WGA agreed that short country presentations on recent aquaculture developments would become a standing agenda item in future WGA meetings. It was also agreed that these presentations would be prepared following the NASO template and submitted as written reports. Furthermore the WGA agreed to submit to the Secretariat every two years the full updated NASO.

8. In order to ensure the adequate functioning of the WGA at the national level, particularly in view of information and data reporting, and to fulfill its regional obligations, the WGA recognized the importance of the role and responsibilities of the officially nominated Focal Points. In view of this and to ensure adequate management support and recognition, the WGA adopted specific terms of reference for the WGA Focal Points as only terms of reference for the National RECOFI Focal Points had been developed and adopted by the Commission at its fifth session (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 12–14 May 2009). The RECOFI WGA Focal Points terms of reference adopted by the WGA are attached in Appendix 1 for endorsement by the Commission.

9. The WGA recalled the important role played by the WGA Chairperson, particularly during the intersessional periods, and recalled that the Chairperson was effectively the link between the RECOFI Secretariat and the member countries.

10. The WGA noted that the importance of the timely collection, submission and sharing of accurate aquaculture statistics and other relevant aquaculture information had been repeatedly raised by the WGA and endorsed by the Commission. It also noted that the RECOFI aquaculture statistics available in FAO did not adequately correspond to real aquaculture production in the countries. The WGA reviewed the text of a draft RECOFI recommendation on minimum reporting of aquaculture data and information formulated by the Secretariat and based on the recommendation adopted by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) on reporting of aquaculture data and information (Recommendation: GFCM/35/2011/6).

11. The WGA reviewed the draft recommendation at its sixth meeting (Muscat, Oman, 21–23 May 2014), but concurred that additional time would be required by the individual members to evaluate the drafted text before such draft recommendation could be submitted to the Commission and for it to agree on the mandatory collection of the aquaculture data and information. The participants agreed to revise the recommendation and suggested that possible amendments and approval could be taken up by the Commission at its eighth session in May 2015. The WGA agreed that each member would submit its comments to the relevant national authorities so that the delegates attending the eighth RECOFI session would be in a position to discuss, adopt or reject the proposed recommendation. The draft recommendation will be discussed separately under agenda item RECOFI/VIII/2015/8.

12. The WGA concurred that, in the event the draft recommendation on minimum reporting of aquaculture data and information, is adopted by the Commission, the data and information could be submitted by the individual members through specifically designed and dedicated templates accessible from the RAIS website. The RAIS would also be the tool through which the data and information submitted would be processed and made accessible to the public in an appropriate format. The WGA recognized that reengineering of selected RAIS web pages would be required along with the development of specific data and information reporting templates.

13. With regards to the functioning of the RAIS Regional Centre in Kuwait, the WGA recognized its important role and invited the Centre to ensure that its coordinating services are reinforced and that adequate technical IT support be continuously provided to the Commission members. The WGA

discussed and approved the terms of reference of the RAIS Regional Centre staff drafted by the Secretariat. The terms of reference are attached in Appendix 2 for endorsement by the Commission.

14. The WGA discussed the current performance of the RAIS and issues affecting the efficient and full functioning of the system and recommended a series of follow-up actions and financial support needed. The performance assessment and future outlook of RAIS is dealt separately under agenda item RECOFI/VIII/2015/5.

WGA proposed programme of work and budget for the 2015-2017 biennium

15. The WGA at its sixth meeting (Muscat, Oman, 21–23 May 2014) finalized its proposed programme of work for the next intersessional period, based also on the WGA programme adopted by the Commission at its seventh session (Tehran, Iran IR, 14–16 May 2013) and other emerging issues that required regional attention.

16. The main activities identified for the next work plan include: a training workshop on aquaculture risk analysis; a technical workshop on aquaculture recirculation technologies; a training workshop on aquaponics; hands-on training in marine hatchery technologies; and a technical meeting to share regional experiences in the use of geographic information systems (GIS) and spatial analysis in coastal zone management and marine aquaculture planning and development.

17. Furthermore, in view of emerging aquatic animal health issues, the WGA recommended and agreed that, during the implementation of the workshop on aquaculture risk analysis, the qualified technical experts from the member countries would also discuss priority issues related to aquatic animal biosecurity and identify activities that required further actions at both the national and regional levels as a follow up to the RECOFI-WGA Regional Technical Workshop on Aquatic Animal Health held in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in April 2008¹.

18. The WGA recognized that the Commission, based on its current level of financial contribution, might not have the required autonomous budget to implement a comprehensive aquaculture programme, and it recommended that some activities could be implemented with extrabudgetary funds.

19. Details on the WGA work programme for the next intersessional period is presented separately under agenda item RECOFI/VIII/2015/11.

20. The Commission is invited to reaffirm its support to the WGA and to ensure that all activities endorsed by the Commission are efficiently implemented through the facilitated coordination of the WGA Focal Points and by endorsing the terms of reference developed.

¹ **FAO/Regional Commission for Fisheries**, 2009. *Report of the Regional Technical Workshop on Aquatic Animal Health. Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 6–10 April 2008*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report. No. 876. Rome, FAO. 119pp.

Appendix 1

**Terms of reference²
of the
RECOFI WGA Focal Points**

The national RECOFI Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) Focal Points will:

- Promote and support the activities of the Working Group, especially in the intersessional periods.
- Disseminate information concerning aquaculture nationally and in the region.
- Facilitate the exchange of information related to aquaculture.
- Facilitate the collection of national data and information for publication in the RAIS Web site.
- Promote and enhance regional cooperation among Members.
- Bring national aquaculture development issues of regional interest to the attention of the Working Group on Aquaculture and the Commission.
- Advise on, and assist in the formulation of, *inter alia*, work programmes, projects and other activities.
- Act to support the implementation of activities consistent with the above responsibilities.
- The RECOFI-WGA Chairperson will be the main interface between the RECOFI-WGA Focal Points and the Commission Secretariat.

Furthermore, the RECOFI-WGA Focal Points will ensure that the RECOFI National Focal Points are fully briefed on the activities of the Working Group on Aquaculture and, as appropriate, provide advice on the Commission's programme of work and budget and other activities, including on their relevance to national policy.

To ensure that the national RECOFI-WGA Focal Points are in a position to undertake these responsibilities, they should be experienced aquaculture officers with ready and regular access to RECOFI National Focal Points and other national policy makers.

The Working Group on Aquaculture may review these terms of reference from time-to-time and make recommendations for their amendment.

² The Commission endorsed the Terms of Reference of the RECOFI National Focal Points at its fifth session held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 12 to 14 May 2009.

Appendix 2

**Terms of reference
of the
Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS)
Regional Centre Staff**

The RAIS Regional Centre staff will be responsible for the management, maintenance, assessment and exchange of aquaculture related data and information among all RECOFI member countries and networking with national governmental institutions, scientific and non-governmental organizations, regional and specialised agencies, for the effective information dissemination and implementation of network activities. The staff should accomplish the following tasks:

- Liaise with all WGA Focal Points to implement and ensure an efficient data and information flow in RAIS.
- Encourage the WGA Focal Points to submit data and news on a regular basis.
- Prepare and distribute news releases and technical reports, as appropriate, and produce a brief annual report on the status, trends and prospective of aquaculture development in the region.
- Carry out regular revision and validation of submitted data to ensure correctness and consistency.
- Ensure the regular maintenance of the information system, supervising ongoing publishing activities and administration of the system including backups and security patches.
- Conduct web analysis to assess the impact of RAIS on aquaculture stockholders, and prepare bi-annual standardized web analysis reports to be presented during the annual meetings of WGA and RECOFI sessions.
- Handle relevant correspondence and reply to inquiries for public information materials;
- Liaise with public/private organizations which may support the RAIS Network.
- Participate when possible in national and regional events (e.g. meetings, conferences, workshops, fairs) and deliver presentations for promoting the services of RAIS in the region.

Man-power requirements:

- Aquaculture Officer: with university degree or equivalent in aquaculture science with at least 5 years of experience in the Gulf region.
- Information Officer: University degree or equivalent in information or communications sciences with at least 5 years of practical experience in information and communication.
- IT Officer: University degree or equivalent in computer science with at least 5 years of practical experience in information architecture of web sites, content management and maintenance tools.

All should satisfy the following criteria:

- Excellent and proven communication skills with government officials, scientific organizations and other stakeholders engaged in the Gulf aquaculture sector.
- Fluency in written and spoken Arabic and English.
- Excellent team working skills.