



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  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

<b>WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)</b>
<b>EIGHTEENTH (VIRTUAL) SESSION</b>
<b>Managua, Nicaragua, 26-29 July 2022</b>
<b>WECAFC 2022-2027 Strategic Plan</b>

This document provides brief information on the review process of the 2014-2022 strategic plan of the Commission, and presents the new (2022-2027) strategic plan resulted from the extensive consultations that took place from 22 July to 30 November 2021, then from 18 January to 4 March 2022, to gather inputs from (i) the working groups, (ii) the Executive Committee, (iii) SAG members, then (iv) WECAFC members.

#### **Suggested Action by the Commission**

The Commission is invited to (i) review, amend as appropriate, and endorse the strategic plan, (ii) provide way forward for development of indicators and targets for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating implementation progress at national and regional, and (iii) guidance for its effective implementation.

## **1. Introduction – WECAFC a regional fishery body established under FAO**

Under Article VI of the FAO Constitution, the FAO Conference or Council may establish commissions to advise Members on the formulation and strategies for implementation of policies related to food, nutrition, and related issues including the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources. These commissions' functions are generally to recommend policy, to take measures, to advise Members on policy formulation and implementation, to facilitate exchange of information, and to recommend lines of inquiry and research. The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) was established in 1973 by Resolution 4/61 of the FAO Council under Article VI (1) of the FAO Constitution. Its Statutes were amended by the FAO Council at its Seventy-fourth Session in December 1978 and by the Hundred and Thirty-first Session of the FAO Council in November 2006. Apart from WECAFC, there are currently five other regional fishery bodies (RFBs) operating under Article VI of the Constitution.

At the Thirty-first Session of COFI (June 2014) a review and analysis of the FAO Article VI and XIV Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) concluded that FAO will continue to provide a framework and technical support for the RFBs established under Article VI and XIV of its Constitution. Key recommendations were to increase the availability of financial resources and the number of staff working in the WECAFC Secretariat. The review also underlined the regional-level coordination function of WECAFC and that further strengthening and increased institutionalization of this function is needed in the future.<sup>1</sup> In each of its subsequent sessions, COFI has reiterated the call for FAO to further increase its support to WECAFC and other marine and inland RFBs.

A more effective WECAFC is essential and beneficial for the sustainable management of our shared living marine resources and for healthy oceans of the whole region. It is also critical to steer up the others regional fisheries bodies and bolster coordinated regional actions and international cooperation. This is the framework within which the discussions on the strategic reorientation started in 2012, at the 14<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission. Various (strategic reorientation) workshops were held since then until the 16th WECAFC session of the Commission held in 2016 in Guadeloupe (France) when this was specifically tabled and agreement was reached that practical steps are required given that the business as usual status cannot stand any longer.

The Thirty-third Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) held in Rome from 9 to 13 July 2018 requested FAO to continue supporting the reorientation from advisory bodies to management bodies of the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) and the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC), facilitate the strengthening of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) and provide support for the establishment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Aquaculture and Fisheries Organization.

In endorsing the report of the landmark process reached at the First WECAFC Preparatory meeting held in Bridgetown, Barbados on 25-26 March 2019, the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission held 15-18 July 2019, Miami, Florida, United States of America recognized that any regional fisheries management entity/arrangement (RFME/A) would need to consider the unique geopolitical nature

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<sup>1</sup> See Paragraph 16, RFBs established under the FAO Framework – COFI/2014/Inf.11 (May, 2014)  
<http://www.fao.org/3/a-mk346e.pdf>

of the region and the need to identify an entity/arrangement that would serve the specific needs of the region. Moving with this common understanding, in a spirit of trust and confidence Members developed a Roadmap for Progressing towards the Development of a Model for a RFME/A in the WECAFC Area. The endorsed report of the Seventeenth Session of the Commission (WECAFC17) can be found at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8259t/CA8259T.pdf>. The Roadmap establishes a WECAFC Ad hoc Intersessional Working Group (IWG) with the Chair of WECAFC as Chair and representing the other WECAFC members while Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and the Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organisation (OSPESCA) members lead through two Vice-chairs.

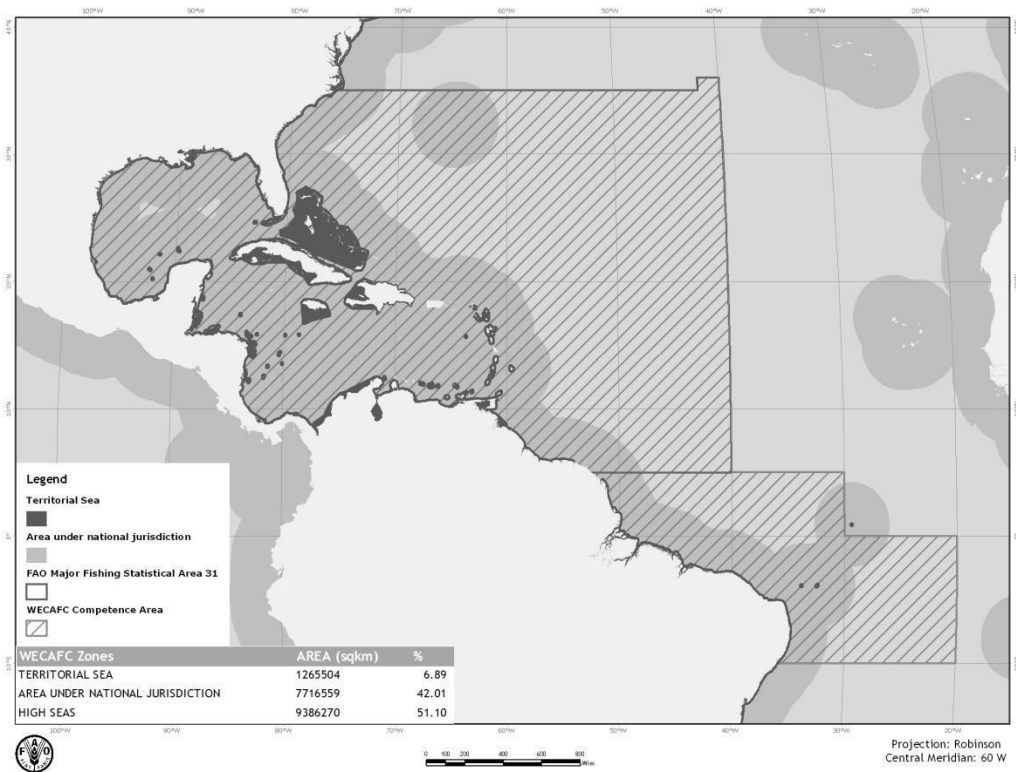
The IWG with the facilitation role of the WECAFC, organized on 23 October 2020 a virtual meeting to prepare for the Second Preparatory Meeting for the Strategic Reorientation of WECAFC. It led to the strengthening of the co-chairs with the establishment of a drafting group including other members of the Commission to develop specific text options related to the mandate and objectives. The developments within the transformation of the Commission is dependent upon the implementation of the agreed Roadmap.

## **2. The WECAFC area**

The WECAFC area of competence includes all marine waters of the Western Central Atlantic. WECAFC's statutes<sup>2</sup> provide for the exact coordinates. The main area of competence is FAO Major Fishing Statistical Area 31, but the Commission is also mandated to work in the northern part of Area 41. For comparison, the size of the area of competence of WECAFC is larger than the land area of the United States of America and Brazil combined.

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<sup>2</sup> The statutes of WECAFC are available at: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/wecafc/statutes.pdf>



The WECAFC Secretariat and its members coordinate their efforts to avoid overlap and duplication and to ensure compatibility with the work of other regional and subregional fishery bodies active in the WECAFC mandate area, such as CRFM, OSPESCA, Commission of Small Scale, Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture of Latin America and the Caribbean (COPPESAALC), and International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT).

### 3. The objectives, principles and functions of WECAFC

The objectives, principles and functions of WECAFC are outlined in its statutes. The objectives, principles and functions of WECAFC are broad and enable the Commission to provide advice on the conservation, management and development of fisheries as well as on the sustainable use of the marine and aquatic resources in the widest sense.<sup>3</sup>

The current objective and list of functions allows the Commission to deal with any of the emerging issues of common interest, such as climate change adaptation, lionfish invasion, shark conservation and management, safe and decent working conditions and social protection, and biodiversity conservation, as captured in this Strategic Plan 2022–2027.

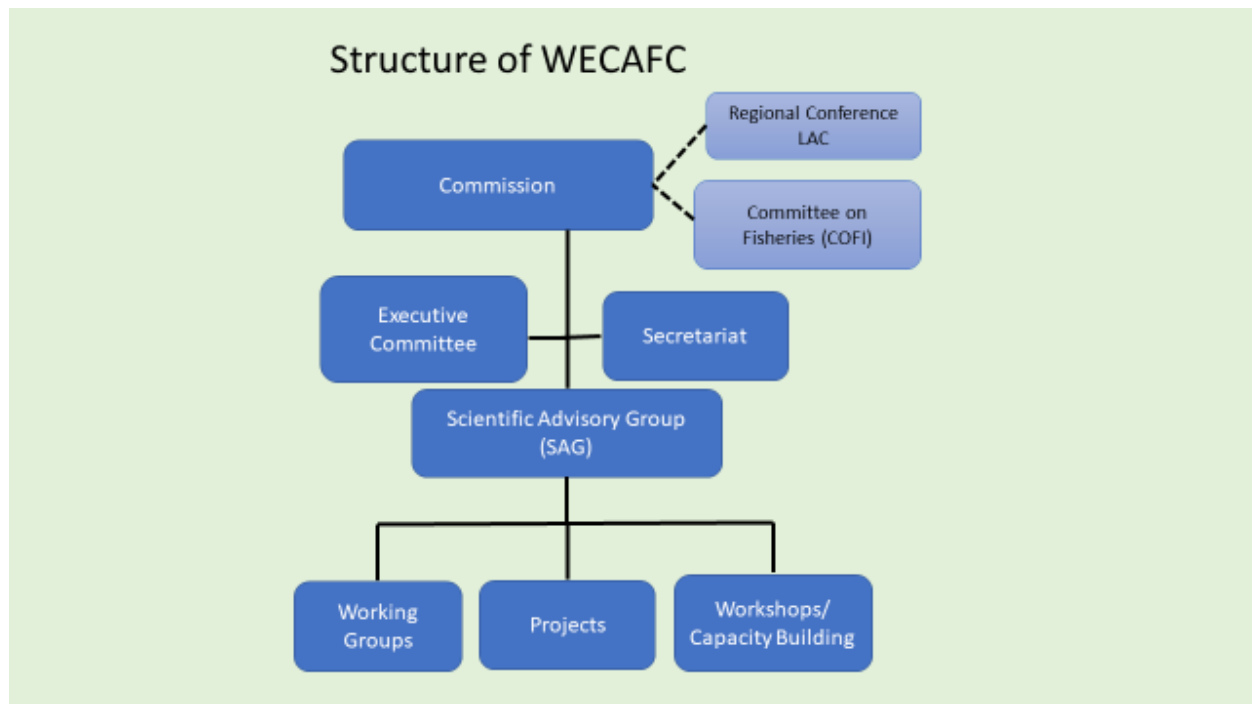
### 4. The structure of the Commission

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<sup>3</sup> Aquaculture has implicitly been covered under the term fisheries in the work of the Commission.

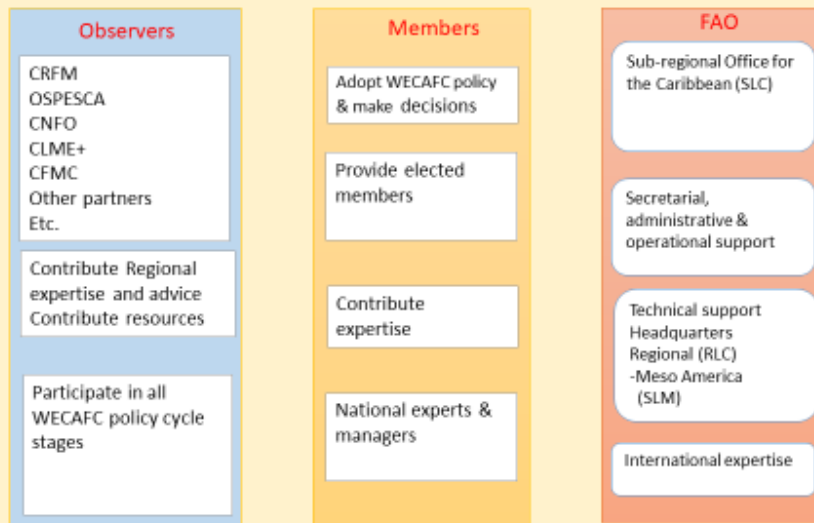
The fifteenth session of WECAFC in 2014 enlarged the scope and transformed the Bureau into an Executive Committee, and confirmed the role of [established] the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) as laid out 2014 in the Rules of Procedure<sup>4</sup>. There are 11 thematic or species related Working Groups (WGs), whose terms of reference have been reviewed intersessionally, in 2021.

The current structure of the Commission is:



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/i5096t/i5096t.pdf#page=42>

## Governance of WECAFC



### 5. The WECAFC Secretariat

The WECAFC Secretariat is hosted by the FAO Subregional Office for the Caribbean (SLC) in Barbados. At present the Secretariat is composed of the secretary, the SLC fishery and aquaculture officer, who receive administrative and operational support from other SLC staff, and secretariat matters on functional contacts, policy, governance and management support in fisheries and aquaculture are provided by the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division and other technical units at FAO headquarters and the FAO Subregional Office for Meso-America (SLM).

The functions and responsibilities of the secretary are outlined in the revised procedures accepted by the fourteenth session in 2012. The secretary is responsible, *inter alia*, for the receipt, collation and circulation of documents, reports, recommendations and resolutions of the sessions of the Commission, SAG and WGs.

The Secretariat also provides technical support to the workshops and meetings convened by WECAFC and acts in a liaison function with FAO headquarters-based fisheries professionals. In this manner, technical support from the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division can be accessed in support of the Commission's activities.

The Secretariat officers also have regular functions as FAO technical officers, which means that their work for WECAFC is integrated into the work of FAO in the Latin American and Caribbean region (LAC). Additional regular programme staffing support has not been available; however, the Commission will continue to consider a variety of possible arrangements, including additional direct staff support as resources allow secondments from member countries or donor-supported positions as part of assistance to the activities of the Commission.

## 6. The strategic planning process

The draft strategic plan has been prepared by the WECAFC Secretariat in close cooperation with the WECAFC Executive Committee. The review exercise was discussed at the first and second meetings of the Executive Committee of WECAFC held on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 21 June 2021. It was also agreed to get open-ended feedback from the working groups conveners and the SAG members. The Secretariat was asked to circulate to the working group conveners to review the 2014-2020 strategic plan to see what is still relevant and what needs to be removed or changed. Considering that the earlier section of the plan, which speaks to the overall structure of the Commission, the performance review, and the sub-bodies, would not need to be modified, the conveners were encouraged to propose any new focus areas, in an effort to improve and upgrade the document, concentrating on the four focus areas as well as the following section that lays out initial priorities.

The review process by the conveners in consultation with selected members of the working groups took place from 22 July to 30 November 2021. The consolidated document was then shared with the Executive Committee and SAG members on 29 December 2021 for a preliminary review before the circulation to WECAFC members followed on from 18 January to 04 March 2022. The final review and endorsement of this 2022-2027 strategic plan took place at the eighteenth session of WECAFC, held on 26-29 July 2022.

The planning process embraces the important ongoing collaboration with other subregional fishery bodies, fishers and fishworkers organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), research institutions, development banks and projects. The process also takes into consideration the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the FAO Medium Term Plan 2022–2025 and the Strategic Objectives of the Organization.

The five Strategic Objectives of FAO are:

1. Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.
2. Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner.
3. Reduce rural poverty.
4. Enable more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems at local, national and international levels.
5. Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.

The work of the WECAFC is largely integrated into Strategic Objective 2 and by extension Strategic Objective 1, 3, 4 and 5 above. The FAO Secretariat service to WECAFC is considered part of the FAO Corporate Technical Activities, and as such the Commission will maintain close linkages with the FAO framework in the future.

The Strategic Framework of FAO<sup>5</sup> "seeks to support the 2030 Agenda by transforming towards MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems, to achieve better

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/ne577en/ne577en.pdf>

production, better nutrition, better environment and better lives leaving no one behind.". This strategic planning process is similarly inclusive of the Four Betters Strategic Programme of FAO:

#### Better production

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, through efficient and inclusive food and agriculture supply chains at local, regional and global level, ensuring resilient and sustainable agri-food systems in a changing climate and environment.

#### Better nutrition

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition in all its forms, including promoting nutritious food and increasing access to healthy diets.

#### Better environment

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial and marine ecosystems and combat climate change (reduce, reuse, recycle, residual management) through more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems.

#### Better life

Promote inclusive economic growth by reducing inequalities (urban/rural areas, rich/poor countries, men/women).

It is recognized that the strategic plan should address commonly shared sectoral priorities, as expressed by respondents in the online survey, as well as those of the Caribbean Community Common Fishery Policy (CCCFP), FAO Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs), the recommendations from the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean and other important policy and strategy documents. Finally, it builds on the approved 2019–2021 Work Programme of WECAFC as endorsed at the seventeenth session.

## **7. Vision, goal and mission for the period 2022–2027**

### **Vision**

Recognizing that a vision is generally made for the long term, the vision of WECAFC is “to ensure long-term sustainable use of living marine resources and responsible development of aquaculture, taking account of the environmental, economic and social aspects of fisheries in the region in a balanced manner”.

### **Goal**

A sustainable and resilient fisheries and aquaculture sector producing high-quality food and products derived from living marine resources for the WECAFC member States, and providing social and economic benefits to communities, particularly in coastal areas, while operating responsibly and fairly, applying best practices that are in line with the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) and the precautionary and participatory approaches to fisheries management.



## **Mission**

This strategic plan adopts the objective of the Commission as its mission for the period 2022–2027. The mission of WECAFC is thus “to promote the effective conservation, management and development and sustainable use of the living marine resources of the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by Members of the Commission”<sup>6</sup>.

## **8. Guiding principles and considerations**

Recognizing the above vision, goal, mission (section 8) and the objective, general principles and functions of the Commission (section 3), this strategic plan shall have the following guiding principles:

- 1) The members of the Commission shall have ownership of and responsibility for this strategic plan and the intersessional work programmes to be developed in support of its implementation.
- 2) The WECAFC Strategic Plan shall first and foremost reflect the common interests and priorities of all members to the Commission. Implementation arrangements will however strive to address unique problems of WECAFC members.
- 3) The strategic plan and related work programmes shall be implemented (as much as possible) through technical cooperation in line with the principles of South–South Collaboration, Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) and Technical Cooperation among Countries in Transition (TCCT) advocated by FAO.
- 4) This strategic plan shall be implemented by the Commission, which will operate it as a programme for: collecting and analyzing data and exchanging, producing and disseminating relevant information and advice; linking policy-makers, managers, scientists and private sector fish producers; and working in marine fisheries and/or aquaculture with the aim to achieve the objectives of the Commission.
- 5) The core resources (human resources, core funding and institutional participation) to implement the strategic plan and related work programmes will be provided by the members of the Commission and FAO.
- 6) The work programme shall consist of activities and projects that are implemented with the assistance of FAO and other donors and resource partners, and shall outline the specific indicators and targets for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating implementation of the strategic plan.
- 7) The development and implementation of specific projects and activities driven by the strategic plan shall be undertaken by the members with the assistance of the Secretariat and Executive Committee of the Commission.

The implementation of the strategic plan and programme and the activities under it shall be coordinated by the Secretariat and monitored and evaluated, as appropriate, by (SAG)

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<sup>6</sup> <ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/wecafc/statutes.pdf>

## **9. Focus areas of the strategic plan 2022-2027**

The strategic plan contains three technical focus areas and one programme coordination and management focus area. The technical focus areas largely follow the three general principles of the Commission.

### **9.1 Technical focus areas**

#### **1. Improve regional fisheries governance**

- This focus area relates to WECAFC General Principle 1) Promote the application of the FAO Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries and its related instruments.
- **Goal:** Improved regional governance of the marine fisheries and aquaculture sector for more effective conservation, management and development and sustainable use of the living marine resources in the area of competence of WECAFC.
- **Purpose:** Strengthened policy, legal and institutional frameworks to promote and support fisheries and aquaculture in line with the CCRF, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF guidelines) and other related and applicable regional and international fisheries instruments in the WECAFC region.

#### **2. Increase regional information and collaboration in fisheries**

- This focus area relates to WECAFC General Principle 3) Coordinate and cooperate with other relevant international organizations / regional agreements on matters of common interest.
- **Goal:** Increased quantity, quality and availability of essential information for fisheries management, through interagency/interinstitutional and inter project collaboration in the wider Caribbean region on fisheries, aquaculture and related issues such as coastal/marine pollution, climate change, and labour and safe and decent working conditions, building on the comparative advantages of each in support of responsible development and management of the sector.
- **Purpose:** Strengthened information, research, technology development, management and capacity-building frameworks (including dedicated data portals) and networks for fisheries and aquaculture in the region.

#### **3. Strengthen regional fisheries management and best-practice approaches for fisheries and aquaculture**

- This focus area relates to WECAFC General Principle 2) Support the development and management of responsible fisheries and aquaculture sectors, ensuring adequate attention to small-scale, artisanal and subsistence fisheries.
- **Goal:** Increased capacity of fishers, fishworkers and aquaculturists to apply modern, environmentally friendly and resilient production technologies, to implement better conservation and management practices, and to produce high-quality and safe fish and fishery products for human consumption.
- **Purpose:** Responsible development and management of fisheries and aquaculture, providing a sustainable contribution of the fisheries and aquaculture sector to food security, employment and coastal livelihoods.

## **9.2 Management focus area**

The fourth focus area of this strategic plan is of a functional nature and relates to the internal management and administration of WECAFC, as provided by FAO. This focus area provides the enabling environment for carrying out the technical work. It relates mainly to the mission of the WECAFC Secretariat, which is to provide support to the Commission in achieving its objective and carrying out its functions. In a situation with limited human resources, the functions and responsibilities of the secretary are largely similar to those of the Secretariat as whole. The functions and responsibilities of the secretary are laid out in the revised Rules of Procedure of the Commission.

### **4. Fostering a conducive environment within the WECAFC Secretariat to support the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Commission.**

**Goals:** 1) To deliver high-quality administrative, technical, logistical and scientific support to the Commission, SAG and the Working Groups; and (2) To facilitate communication and collaboration among members and other stakeholders through effective and timely dissemination of information, education, outreach and capacity building.

**Purpose:** Increased management and administrative capacity of the Secretariat of the Commission to address the pertinent needs of its members in the three technical focus areas and other specific gaps in regional fisheries management in a competent and effective manner.

## **10. Priorities for WECAFC for the period 2022-2027**

The WECAFC Secretariat and Executive Committee have prepared the following lists of priority activities, based on the outcomes from the process described above (in section 7) and the focus areas (listed in section 10).

### **Focus area 1. Improve regional fisheries governance**

WECAFC will assist its members to:

1. Implement and monitor implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
2. Plan for and build capacity for implementation of the “Resolution of the members of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission on strengthening the implementation of international fisheries instruments” adopted by the fourteenth session in 2012. This assistance will focus in particular on the following international fisheries instruments, which are either legally-binding or voluntary and best-practice approaches:
  - a. 1993 FAO Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (FAO Compliance Agreement);
  - b. 1995 United Nations Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UN Fish Stocks Agreement);
  - c. 2003 FAO Technical Guidelines on the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries;

- d. 2008 FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas;
  - e. 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (Port State Measures Agreement);
  - f. 2010 FAO International Guidelines on Bycatch Management and Reduction of Discards
3. Take actions and measures to strengthen implementation of regional and international instruments that have been subsequently endorsed, are under development or may be developed in the near future, including the following:
    - 2012 FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security;
    - 2014 FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication (SSF Guidelines);
    - 2014 FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Flag State Performance
    - 2016 FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes
    - 2018 FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear
    - Regional plans of action (RPOA-IUU, RPOA-Sharks in development, etc.)
    - Voluntary guidelines on transshipment (TBD/in development).
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4. Provide fisheries management advice for shared and/or straddling stocks, as well as, for resources in the areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) – the high seas – within the WECAFC mandate area (FAO Area 31).
  5. Develop a regional fisheries governance arrangement that will enable WECAFC to become more effective, and to transform into a regional fisheries management entity/arrangement (RFME/RFMA) (if considered necessary) with powers to issue resolutions, binding and non-binding conservation and management measures and recommendations, support implementation of conservation and management measures, and monitor and evaluate implementation of agreed measures.
  6. Strengthen the institutional capacity of the fisheries authorities (ministries, divisions, departments) within the WECAFC area of competence to carry out their fisheries governance functions and implement at the national level regional action and management plans as well as the resolutions/recommendations of WECAFC should it become a RFMA/RFME.
  7. Strengthen national and regional fisheries policy and legal frameworks and harmonize fisheries policies and legislation among members for the effective management of fisheries and fishery resources.
  8. Coordinate the development of, and updates to, national plans of action and monitoring, control, and surveillance regulatory frameworks to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, consistent with the approaches prescribed by the Regional Plan of Action on IUU Fishing and relevant international instruments. (#Progress could be measured by the national *plans of action to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing*)

9. Promote Member State ratification, acceptance, approval or accession to relevant international instruments, such as the FAO Compliance Agreement and the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, as soon as possible. (*#Progress could be measured by the countries ratified, accepted, approved or acceded to the PSMA; # Countries ratified, accepted, approved or acceded to the Compliance Agreement*)
10. [Encourage] strengthening of national and subregional institutional arrangements for monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) and law enforcement capacities in member States, especially regarding training of fisheries inspectors and maritime security agents. (*#Progress could be measured by the regional partnerships for fisheries monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement; # persons trained in support of monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement*)
11. Promote the attainment of safe, healthy and decent working conditions for all in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, and support efforts to prevent and halt forced labour, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, including the International Labour Organization and the International Maritime Organization.
12. Facilitate access to social protection programmes for fishers and aquaculture producers and their communities, support measures to improve safety at sea, and work towards enhancing the standards of living for all in the sector, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, including the International Labour Organization and the International Maritime Organization.
13. Encourage the participation of indigenous communities and actors on matters concerning the fisheries management of the territories they occupy and support women's empowerment by enhancing women's full access to and equal opportunities in the fisheries and aquaculture sector through gender-based policies, taking effective action against discrimination and abuse in the workplace.
14. Promote the right to prior, free and informed consultation processes with sector actors in advance of decision-making.
15. Support scientific research focused on generating new fishing and aquaculture technologies that are more efficient, selective, and minimally invasive.

**Focus area 2. Increase regional information exchange and collaboration in fisheries management**

WECAFC will assist its members to:

1. Assess the status of transboundary fisheries resources and straddling fish stocks of the main commercially targeted species in the WECAFC area.<sup>7</sup> Specifically with respect to the queen conch stock(s) WECAFC will:

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<sup>7</sup> In this respect, specific emphasis was requested by members on monitoring the queen conch stock status and work on the development of a regional management plan for queen conch.

- a. Periodically assess the implementation status of the 14 management measures in the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan<sup>8</sup>.
  - b. Progressively advance in developing priority research at the regional level identified by the Queen Conch Working Group (i.e., genetic connectivity, reproductive success and update of population dynamics parameters), which are fundamental stock parameters used for sound stock assessments and consequently providing information to advise fisheries management.
  - c. Expand the collection of biological and socio-economic information in order to analyze how current declines in the queen conch stock may impact income, livelihoods, trade, coping strategies including safe and decent work and access to social protection, and determine the need for innovative management strategies.
2. Collect, exchange and analyse data and information for sound stock assessments in support of fisheries resource management and the decision-making processes for fisheries resource management at the national and regional levels.
  3. Monitor the status of stocks, and trends in fisheries and aquaculture in the WECAFC area.
  4. Manage regional fisheries inventories – through the Fisheries Resource Management System (FIRMS) partnership – with all members and ensure that up-to-date and accessible information is available in support of responsible fisheries management.
  5. Develop new or strengthen existing national vessel registries to provide comprehensive and accurate information for fisheries conservation and management, including addressing issues and challenges in reducing IUU fishing in the region.
  6. Develop online databases of vessel registries and explore online tools for self-updating vessel registries.
  7. Publish online a list of vessels identified to be participating in IUU fishing, including relevant details such as vessel name, vessel identification, owner name and contact if available.
  8. Increase attention to marine biodiversity and its conservation in the region, including management of bioprospecting of marine resources.
  9. Through a dedicated forum for the exchange of scientific information on fisheries, to:
    - Strengthen interagency/interinstitutional- and interproject- collaboration in the wider Caribbean region on fisheries, aquaculture and related issues, building on the comparative advantages of each, in support of responsible development and management of the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/i7818e/i7818E>.

- Exchange information and establish partnerships among stakeholders from the fisheries sector and marine and coastal ecosystems, as well as the trade and tourism sectors.
10. Apply 'best practices' for data collection/information management through improvements that follow accepted standards. This could be achieved through initiating new collaborations for training on an annual/biennial basis on best practices including: identifying priority areas of need (e.g., procedures for sampling, procedures for stock assessment) and also on steps towards further progressing the work of WECAFC-FIRMS and FDS-WG on DCRF across groups (e.g., WECAFC species WGs and neighboring RFMOs (ICCAT) and RFBs (CRFM, OSPESCA)). Effective collaboration (across multiple groups (e.g., WGS, management bodies) is vital to improvements in information collection and to reaching consensus in proposed management decisions in a timely manner.
  11. Support further training to inform on stocks status/trends- e.g., such as to inform SDGs throughout the region (e.g., online workshops currently being sponsored through World Bank to develop indicators of SDG 14.4.1). Activities needed to identify the effectiveness of these workshops (learning challenges, results achieved, identification of further gaps) and prepare a roadmap to progress the work in the future. For the short term (<2-3 years) this could require additional virtual training initiatives and one-on-one site visits at a national/sub-regional level to identify issues/remaining gaps/and to optimize timetables. Particular prioritization towards increasing information/establishing stock status for shared species within the region is recommended (e.g., transboundary, straddling species and species of interest at a sub-regional level (e.g., conch, lobster, coastal pelagics-dolphinfish, wahoo)).
  12. Prioritize advance the use of e-tools for collection of basic data on landings/effort/biological sampling including mobile applications and applications could link to RDB and possible online FIRMs inventory data templates.
  13. Identify means to improve the acquisition of information from stakeholder perspectives on needs (i.e., community/fisher folk level, individual fisher level) that could lead to potential economic improvements (to fisheries and aquaculture) and improvements in human capacity conditions. This would require identification and application of possible new/emerging tools (e.g., new surveys and novel ways of reaching stakeholders) to better engage inputs from all stakeholders. This focus area also impacts the long-term management process in increasing representation of stakeholder groups in the process.
  14. Support/facilitate collaboration with other national, regional and international entities and their inputs in the implementation of the Regional Plan. (*#Progress could be measured by the regional partnerships for fisheries monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement; [%] [#] WECAFC Member countries involved in the Blue Justice Initiative*)
  15. Support strengthening of regional and international cooperation to combat transnational organized crime associated with the fisheries sector (*[%]Progress could be measured by the [#] WECAFC Member countries involved in the Blue Justice Initiative; # regional partnerships for fisheries monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement*)

16. Facilitate bilateral and subregional exchanges to address IUU fishing between and among two or more countries to address specific IUU fishing problems. (#Progress could be measured by the *bilateral and/or regional exchanges in support of addressing IUU fishing*)
17. Support and encourage the development of data collection programs, promote fisheries research, in order to improve the obtaining of reliable data, and collection of biological information for the accurate evaluation of the fisheries resources.
18. Create knowledge exchange programs in institutions or fisheries authorities with scientific experience in evaluations, which can be used for the evaluation processes of each country.
19. Help refine programs or protocols for data collection, while creating investment opportunities to improve the quality of data collected.
20. Provide training opportunities for regional scientists and technicians.

**Focus area 3. Strengthen regional fisheries management and best-practice approaches for fisheries and aquaculture**

WECAFC will assist its members to:

1. Maintain and organize (joint) regional Working Groups that address specific fisheries management and conservation needs that are common to large parts of the membership. These Working Groups can be species or fisheries specific. Current Working Groups that should be maintained for the near future include:
  - OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Spiny Lobster;
  - WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries;
  - CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Queen Conch Working Group;
  - JICA/IFREMER/CRFM/WECAFC Working Group on Development of Sustainable Moored Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) Fishing in the Lesser Antilles;
  - CRFM/WECAFC Flying fish and Dolphinfish Working Group;
  - WECAFC Working Group on the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries;
  - CFMC/WECAFC Spawning Aggregations Working Group;
  - WECAFC/CRFM/IFREMER Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish of the North Brazil–Guianas Shelf;
  - WECAFC/CITES/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Shark Conservation and Management.
2. Prepare, regional management and conservation plans and support their implementation for key fisheries resources, such as:
  - queen conch,
  - spiny lobster,
  - billfishes (in collaboration with ICCAT),
  - groupers,
  - shrimps,
  - flying fish,
  - dolphinfish,
  - red snapper,
  - fish spawning aggregations, and



- other species, such as sea cucumbers, sea urchins, lionfish, relevant species of parrotfish and sharks.
3. Establish regional approaches and schemes for cooperation in MCS of fisheries activities, including the introduction of a regional fishing vessel register linked to FAO's Global Record of Fishing Vessels Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels (Global Record).
  4. Develop / monitor / update regional plans of action (RPOAs) – for fishing capacity, IUU fishing, shark conservation and management, seabirds, etc. – and support development and build capacity for implementation, of national plans of action (NPOAs).
  5. Support implementation of the Eastern Caribbean Flyingfish Management Plan 2020-2025.
  6. Develop regional aquaculture best management practices (BMPs), regional guidelines and codes of practice for responsible aquaculture.
  7. Strengthen human capacity in fisheries administrations and fishers and fishworkers organizations at the national and regional levels to participate effectively in management planning and implementation of management plans.
  8. Strengthen fisheries and aquaculture value chains at the national and regional levels, with particular attention to bycatch and discards, fish loss and waste and promotion of any other value addition practices and traceability schemes that support increased incomes without necessarily increasing fishing effort and negatively impacting the environment.
  9. Strengthen climate change adaptation and disaster risk management in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors at the national and regional levels, including improvement of vessel and infrastructure safety and climate resilience.
  10. Incorporate gender mainstreaming, youth empowerment and safe and decent work strategies in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors at the national and regional levels.
  11. Consider further use of the recently applied pilot testing of the Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) matrix as an instrument to better inform WECAFC SSF relation to data collection/management distinctions necessary for small scale versus industrial fisheries.
  12. Increase sensitization of the judiciary at the national and regional levels in recognizing the socio-environmental and transnational dimensions of IUU fishing (*#. Progress could be measured by the of persons charged for IUU fishing offences; % of successful legal actions taken in IUU fishing cases; # of successful applications for forfeiture of illegal equipment*)
  13. Strengthen technology-driven traceability programmes (e.g. VMS, data loggers, electronic monitoring, e-logbooks, etc.) and/or reporting frameworks at the national and regional (and sub-regional) levels in support of deterring IUU fishing practices (*%.* *Progress could be*

measured by the of *licensed vessels with VMS [and/or other] tracking technology*; # [sub-regional reports on IUU fishing [vessels]]

14. Support (sub-) regional network(s) for implementation of the regional plan of action on IUU fishing. (*%Progress could be measured by the increase in capacities for monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement; # regional partnerships for fisheries monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement; # RWG-IUU recommendations endorsed by WECAFC*)
15. Strengthen the competencies of fishermen in regional fisheries management by applying best practices in fishing and aquaculture.
16. Support the development of scientific research focused on generating new fishing and aquaculture technologies that are more efficient, selective, and less invasive.

**Focus area 4. Fostering a conducive environment within the WECAFC Secretariat to support the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Commission.**

The WECAFC Secretariat will assist the WECAFC members to:

*(A) Organize or facilitate meetings of the WECAFC entities/organs*

1. Organize the sessions of the Commission and the Scientific Advisory Group, including the preparation of meetings' background documents and session reports in a timely manner.
2. Facilitate the organization of (joint) Working Group meetings and workshops.

*(B) Develop projects and mobilize resources*

3. Develop projects and seek funding for the long-term and effective functioning of the Commission, implementation of its biennial programmes of work and prioritized projects, as well as through management of a dedicated WECAFC trust fund, established to facilitate member and resource partner contributions to the work of the Commission.

*(C) Strengthen networking, cooperation and coordination with other regional entities and with international entities*

4. Review, propose amendments to and develop, as necessary, the statutes, structure and rules of procedure of WECAFC, and partnerships with other agencies, in support of greater effectiveness and increased impact of WECAFC.
5. Coordinate and act as liaison for FAO fisheries and aquaculture activities in the region with other regional fishery bodies (RFBs) and relevant regional and international organizations on a regular or ad hoc basis, including:
  - ACS/CSC
  - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
  - COPPESAALC
  - CRFM

- Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI)
  - ICCAT
  - Centre for Marketing Information and Advisory Service for Fishery Products in Latin America and the Caribbean (INFOPECSA)
  - North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)
  - Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)
  - OSPESCA
  - Regional Security System Caribbean (RSS)
  - Caribbean Environment Programme of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP CEP)
  - United Nations Environment Programme Regional Activity Center for Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife of the Caribbean (UNEP/SPAW RAC Protocol)
6. Establish partnerships and collaboration with international and regional, governmental and nongovernmental organizations and civil society as part of an effort to improve linkages and understanding of grass-roots issues, environmental conservation, advocacy and private sector investment in resource management, including but not limited to:
- World Bank
  - European Commission
  - Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)
  - Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)
  - Caribbean Network of Fisherfolks Organization CNFO
  - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries
  - The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
  - Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer/ French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (IFREMER)
  - Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
  - PetroCaribe
  - University of West Indies-Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (UWI-CERMES)
  - International Game Fish Association (IGFA)
  - TBF
  - The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
  - Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
  - World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
  - Conservation International (CI)
  - Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)
  - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
  - Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks (CMS/CMS Shark MOU)
  - International Labour Organization of the United Nations (ILO)
  - International Maritime Organization (IMO)

*(D) Expand and strengthen communication, awareness-building, education and networking with stakeholders and members of the public;*

7. Support communication and collaboration among members and other stakeholders through effective dissemination of information, education, outreach and capacity building.
8. Communicate results, decisions and outcomes of WECAFC sessions and activities through official channels of communication, press messages and other means to increase visibility and awareness on the work of the Commission.
9. Improve public awareness and education on IUU fishing and seafood fraud and facilitate the sharing and exchange of information to improve monitoring, control and surveillance to prevent IUU fishing (e.g. information/public awareness/education products on IUU fishing and seafood fraud, improvement in sharing and exchange of information to support monitoring, control and surveillance).
10. Establish and manage the WECAFC website as a portal for those interested in accessing information online and for disseminating information related to the work of WECAFC, FAO and its members in the region.
11. Consider developing a 'NEWS' Portal for submitting/sharing (online) news items relating to important upcoming issues/projects/training opportunities, etc. of interest to WGs and also to all stakeholders (e.g., fisher groups).
12. Consider online portals for stakeholder submission on a variety of topics.