



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

PROSPECTUS

FIRST MEETING OF THE CRFM/WECAFC FLYINGFISH-DOLPHINFISH WORKING GROUP

San Juan, Puerto Rico, USA & Virtual, 4-5 June 2024

a. Background

The 17th Session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) held in July 2019 agreed to expand the mandate of the existing Joint Working Group on Flyingfish in the Eastern Caribbean to incorporate flyingfish, dolphinfish and other pelagic species not managed by ICCAT (ref. <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8748t> in paragraph 32). As such, updates on the progress made and current gaps regarding the two species, flyingfish and dolphinfish (and by default fisheries with similar characteristics) are provided below.

The first WECAFC Ad Hoc Working Group meeting was held in 1999 and during this meeting it was agreed that the Eastern Caribbean flyingfish resource should be treated as a single stock, since this would provide the opportunity to establish regional cooperation in research and management and the 'precautionary approach' should be followed in further expansion of fishing effort, given the observed interannual variability in the available catch data.

The 9th Session of WECAFC held in 1999 endorsed the establishment of the Ad Hoc Working Group and recommended that its activities should be continued with the active participation and support of member countries.

A major outcome of the Second meeting of the WECAFC Ad Hoc Working Group on Flyingfish in the Eastern Caribbean held on 12 January 2001 (<http://www.fao.org/3/Y3856E/Y3856E00.htm>) was the first draft of the Eastern Caribbean Flyingfish Fisheries Management Plan (ECFF-FMP).

Subsequently, WECAFC further developed and amended the plan in 2008 at the group's Third Meeting. The 2008 version and subsequent 2014 update of the ECFF-FMP provided valuable guidance to countries for the management and conservation of flyingfish resources in the Eastern Caribbean. Barbados, Dominica, and Grenada have adopted the ECFF-FMP. Several developments have occurred since 2014 that warranted an update of the 2014 management plan. Chief among these is the recurring influx of Sargassum during the summer months from 2011

onwards, which could be linked to global climate change. The ECFF-FMP 2020 – 2025¹ was updated under the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem and Adjacent Regions (CLME +) project and takes an ecosystem-based approach with a greater focus on the impacts of climate change, Sargassum, and the impacts of marine and terrestrial-based pollution on flyingfish habitat.

Sub-strategy 5A of the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for the Sustainable Management of the shared Living Marine Resources of the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem and Adjacent Regions (CLME+ SAP) aims to enhance the governance arrangements for implementing an ecosystem approach for the management of flyingfish fisheries. CRFM was the lead organisation on a number of strategic actions which were identified and completed, namely:

- (i) Strengthening the FAO-WECAFC and CRFM sub-regional arrangements for the assessment and management of the flyingfish fisheries;
- (ii) Establishing and operationalising a formal agreement between the CRFM and France on the management of the flyingfish fisheries; operationalise and strengthen an integrated, sub-regional Decision Support System (DSS) for the flyingfish fisheries (in coordination with the large pelagics arrangements);
- (iii) Strengthening the FAO-WECAFC and CRFM capacity to develop, adopt and implement management and conservation measures for the flyingfish fisheries;
- (iv) Implementing the CRFM/FAO-WECAFC Sub-Regional Management Plan for Flyingfish Fisheries in the Eastern Caribbean; and,
- (v) Developing and implementing education and awareness building initiatives to improve understanding and enhanced stakeholder commitment and participation in planning and decision-making in the flyingfish fisheries.

The newly established joint FFDF WG will seek to support the continued implementation of these actions.

Under Sub-Strategy 5B, the CLME Strategic Action Plan also calls for increased attention to large pelagic conservation and fisheries management. Dolphinfinch is a highly migratory pelagic species that supports important commercial fisheries throughout the Western Central Atlantic area. Dolphinfinch is also an important target species for sports fisheries and is not subject to catch-and-release regulations from the large game fishing associations. Therefore, a substantial share of the catch is not accounted for in production statistics. The current trend in the use of anchored FADs in small-scale fisheries also has the potential to cause substantial increases in catches of dolphinfinch by some countries and territories. There has also been concern about the capture of juvenile dolphinfinch in CRFM Member States associated with the Sargassum influxes. As a result, the CRFM Ministerial Council endorsed the following precautionary management measures in 2016 for the prohibition of the capture, landing, possession, sale or purchase of the following sizes of dolphinfinch : 6 lbs (2.7 kilos) or less; or 25 inches (65 cm) Fork Length or less.

¹ <https://clmeplus.org/doculibrary/eastern-caribbean-flyingfish-management-plan/>

For the dolphinfish fisheries, the main gaps and shortcomings which have been identified during the 16th Session of WECAFC included the lack of scientific information on the resource and accurate fisheries production and trade statistics. Given that it is a regional resource, there is a need to increase data collection efforts and a stock assessment should be done at a regional level. The increase in anchored FADs deployment, particularly in the Eastern Caribbean could have an impact on the migration patterns of the species, however further investigation on this matter is required. It is expected that the region wide adoption and implementation of the Caribbean Regional Management Plan for the Anchored Fish Aggregating Device (aFAD) Fishery² and the Guide for Improved Monitoring of aFAD Catches and Improved Assessment of aFAD Impacts on Stocks in the WECAFC Region³, will contribute to improved research, stock assessment and management of pelagic fisheries resources including dolphinfish. The Management Plan and Monitoring Guide are outputs of the WECAFC Working Group on Fisheries using Fish Aggregating Devices and both documents have been adopted by the 19th Session of WECAFC.

a.1 Scope

The scope of the Working Group is to facilitate the achievement of management objectives as outlined in the respective sub-regional management plan for flyingfish in the Eastern Caribbean, through the application of international best practices consistent with the precautionary, ecosystem and participatory approaches to fisheries management. These management objectives are: a) sustained flyingfish resources (biological objective), b) optimal use of the flyingfish resource for long-term benefit (socio- economic objective) and c) sustained ecosystem health (ecological objective). With regards to dolphinfish the Working Group is expected to support increased data collection efforts, facilitate a regional stock assessment and improve the management of the regional fisheries. The Working Group is to function in a technical and advisory capacity.

1.2 Goals

The goals for this meeting of the working group are to identify regional needs and priorities, highlight areas for potential collaboration, develop new Terms of Reference using the standardized WECAFC template adopted at WECAFC18, and develop a workplan and recommendations related to the future work of the group.

b. Objectives

The purpose of the 1st meeting of the CRFM/WECAFC Working Group on Flyingfish and Dolphinfish is to make progress on the following activities:

- a. Develop new Terms of Reference to cover flyingfish and accommodate for the extended mandate which will include dolphinfish and potentially other pelagic species not covered by ICCAT, as identified by the WG;
- b. To provide an update on the progress of implementation of the ECFF-FMP 2020 - 2025;

² <https://www.fao.org/3/cc9706en/cc9706en.pdf>

³ <https://www.fao.org/3/cc9705en/cc9705en.pdf>

- c. To strengthen the collaborative framework with the regional organizations, and among members regarding: identification of priorities related to dolphinfish research and management, including improved data collection and a regional stock assessment; and implementation of precautionary management measures;
- d. Establish the practical arrangements for operation of this joint WG;
- e. To discuss and identify additional pelagic species not covered by ICCAT that may be appropriate to consider for future inclusion in the mandate of this WG;
- f. To define the potential areas and modalities for collaboration with other WGs, such as the Fisheries Data and Statistics WG and the FAD Working Group, as appropriate;

At this meeting, the group will review recent developments and the state of play in Member Countries with flyingfish and dolphinfish fisheries, review progress of relevant regional and sub-regional activities, propose new Terms of Reference, and develop recommendations and a proposed work plan for future work.

c. Participants

Foreseen participants include all WECAFC members' representatives with flyingfish and dolphinfish fisheries, as well as participants from regional partner organizations, IFREMER, OSPESCA, CFMC and CRFM. These are officers of national institutions, entities, and authorities responsible for development and implementation of policy, legal, and operational aspects of the management of pelagic fisheries and specifically flyingfish and dolphinfish. Invitations for participants will be sent to WECAFC members and relevant partners in the region.

The CFMC, with support from the U.S. National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service, will be providing financial support to host the workshop. Airfare, lodging and meal, arrangements will be provided for selected confirmed participants.

CRFM Secretariat is the Convener of the Working Group, while the WECAFC Secretariat serves as secretariat of the Working Group.

d. Structure of the Meeting

An agenda and provisional timetable for the meeting can be found in Appendix 1.

5.1 Location and dates

The meeting will be held 4-5 June 2024 at Courtyard Marriot, Isla Verde, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, United States.

5.2 Languages

The meeting will be conducted in English and Spanish.

6.0 Administrative arrangements and Other Information

Administrative arrangements for the meeting will be handled by the CFMC, in close collaboration with the WECAFC Secretariat. This will include the selection of participants, travel arrangements and other matters before and during the meeting.

Confirmation of participation and inquiries concerning administrative arrangements should be addressed as follows:

Contact for your response:

Please provide your response, including the name, title and contact details of the representative from your Fisheries Authority who will be attending the meeting jointly to CFMC and the WECAFC Secretariat as follows:

To: Mr Miguel Rolón
Executive Director, USDOC/NOAA/NMFS/CFMC
268 Muñoz Riviera Ave., Suite 1108
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cc: Ms Sonya Thompson
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**FIRST MEETING OF THE CRFM/WECAFC FLYINGFISH-DOLPHINFISH
WORKING GROUP**

San Juan, Puerto Rico, USA y Virtual, 4-5 June 2024

Provisional Agenda

DAY 1: 4 June 2024

Morning session

- 0900 1. Opening of the session and welcoming remarks
- 0915 2. Introduction of delegates
- 0930 3. Selection of rapporteur
- 0940 4. Adoption of the agenda and arrangements for the Working Group
- 0945 5. Status updates (10 minutes per presentation followed by 5 minutes for questions)
- (i) Country updates (status of flyingfish/dolphinfish fisheries, recent accomplishments, ongoing challenges and needs)

1030 Break

- 1045 5. Status updates (i) Country updates, continued

1200 Lunch Break

Afternoon session

- 1300 5. Status updates, continued
- (ii) Other relevant sub-regional developments including:
- a. Implementation of the ECFE-FMP
- b. The impacts of Sargassum on the flyingfish and dolphinfish fisheries
- c. Implementation of minimum sizes, or other management measures, for dolphinfish
- 1430 6. Discussion of regional linkages and areas of potential collaboration/synergies amongst partners:
- a. Implementation of the ECFE-FMP

1500 Coffee Break

- 1515 6. Discussion of regional linkages and areas of potential collaboration/synergies amongst partners, continued:

- b. Improved data collection for dolphinfish and way forward for a regional stock assessment
- c. Recommendations for improved precautionary management for dolphinfish based on available information

1630 End of the first day of the meeting

DAY 2: 5 June 2024

Morning session

0900 7. Facilitated discussion on pelagic species not covered by ICCAT and consideration for future inclusion in the mandate of the WG

0930 8. Discussion on the operational arrangements for addressing multiple species, intersessional processes, synergies for the WG, and modalities for collaboration with other WGs and formats of meetings

1030 Break

1045 9. Development of new Terms of Reference

1130 10. Work Plan

1230 Lunch Break

Afternoon session

1330 11. Working group findings and recommendations

1430 12. Adoption of the summary report and recommendations for WECAFC

1500 Coffee Break

1515 13. Any other matters

1545 14. Time and location of next meeting

1600 15. Closing remarks and meeting adjournment

1630 16. End of the meeting