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REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES

Report of the

TWELFTH MEETING OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES (RECOFI) WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Virtual meeting, 4–5 October 2021

REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES

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TWELFTH MEETING OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES (RECOFI)
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Virtual meeting, 4–5 October 2021

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PREPARATION OF THE DOCUMENT

This is the final version of the report as approved by the twelfth meeting of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM), over a virtual platform from 4 to 5 October 2021. The report was prepared by the RECOFI Secretariat. The material contained in the appendixes is reproduced as submitted.

ABSTRACT

The twelfth meeting of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) was held virtually, from 4 to 5 October 2021. The WGFM discussed and agreed on a number of matters over the course of this meeting. Notably, the meeting agreed on a template for collecting information on management measures and research undertaken related the RECOFI List of Priority Species, which will be used prior to each meeting of the WGFM. Further, the WGFM acknowledged recommendations made by the workshop on the implementation of the Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 on Minimum Data Reporting in the RECOFI Area (MDR), including that the RECOFI Secretariat and FAO should move forward with the creation of templates to provide clear and accessible definition and facilitate the submission of all variables under the MDR Recommendation.

Regarding FIRMS, the meeting called on focal points to consult with all colleagues with relevant expertise to facilitate the needed submission of data. The meeting appreciated the areas of work included in the ROPME workplan and emphasized the need for joint activities to take place under the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding between RECOFI and ROPME as soon as possible. On the SDG 14.4.1 questionnaire, the meeting agreed upon a template to be completed by all RECOFI Member Countries in order to assist them in filling out the SDG 14.4.1 Questionnaire and reaffirmed the request to receive the SDG 14.4.1 questionnaire in Arabic.

The meeting noted that the closure for Kingfish is for all gears with the exception of hook and line, requested that this was clearly noted in communication with RECOFI member countries. meeting also requested that, for ease of data submission, supporting documentation for the form in English and Arabic be prepared by the Secretariat for member countries to use to submit. The Secretariat reiterated the call for member countries to submit their data on length frequency and catch and effort for the previous 10 years.

The meeting agreed on a workplan proposal to be submitted to the Eleventh Session of RECOFI for the 2022–2023 intersessional period.

CONTENTS

	Page
OPENING OF THE MEETING	1
ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MEETING	1
ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON	1
REVIEW OF RELEVANT OUTCOMES OF THE 10th SESSION OF RECOFI, THE 11th MEETING OF THE WGFM 34th SESSION OF COFI AND 35th SESSION OF NERC	1
CURRENT WORK ON RECOFI PRIORITY SPECIES.	1
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOFI IMPLEMENTATION ON MINIMUM DATA REPORTING AND OUTCOMES OF THE RECOFI WORKSHOP ON MINIMUM DATA REPORTING DATABASE.....	2
OUTCOMES OF THE RECOFI WORKSHOP ON FIRMS DATA CALL	2
OUTCOMES OF THE RECOFI WORKSHOP ON 14.4.1.....	2
IMPLEMENTATION ON THE RECOFI RECOMMENDATION ON KINGFISH STOCK.	3
UPDATE ON HOSTING OF THE CAPTURE FISHERIES REGIONAL DATA SET ON RAIS.....	3
COOPERATION BETWEEN RECOFI AND THE REGIONAL ORGANISATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT (ROPME).....	3
DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING	4
 <u>APPENDIXES</u>	
1. Agenda.....	5
2. List of participants.....	6
3. List of documents.....	9
4. Table to compile information on the RECOFI species.....	10
5. Table to facilitate the completion of the SDG 14.4.1 questionnaire.....	13

OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The twelfth meeting of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) was held from 4 to 5 October 2021, over a virtual platform due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The meeting was convened by RECOFI and FAO and attended by 36 participants from the following seven RECOFI member countries: Iraq, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates in addition to the FAO Secretariat. Bahrain did not attend. The list of participants is attached as Appendix 2.

2. The meeting was opened with a welcome address by Ali Mohammad Alshaikhi, Director-General, Directorate of Fish Resources, Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MEETING

3. Ahmed AlMazrouai, Senior Fishery and Aquaculture Officer and Secretary of RECOFI introduced the Agenda, attached as Appendix 1, which was adopted without modification. The list of documents for the meeting is attached as Appendix 3.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON

4. The meeting unanimously agreed on the nomination of Nabil Fita, Fisheries Advisor to the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for an additional term as chairperson. The meeting unanimously agreed on the nomination of Hussain Mohamed Al-Muscatai, Director of Development and Management of Fisheries Resources, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and Water Resources, Sultanate of Oman, as the vice-chairperson.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT OUTCOMES OF THE 10TH SESSION OF RECOFI, THE 11TH MEETING OF THE WGFM 34TH SESSION OF COFI AND 35TH SESSION OF NERC

5. Ahmed AlMazrouai presented the working document RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/2: Review of relevant outcomes of the 10th session of RECOFI, 11th meeting of the WGFM, and 34th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and 35th session of Session of Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC). He highlighted the outcomes from each meeting that had a particular relevance to the RECOFI WGFM.

6. The meeting took note of the outcomes of these relevant activities in the intersessional period.

CURRENT WORK ON RECOFI PRIORITY SPECIES

7. Ahmed AlMazrouai, presented the working document RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/3: Current work on RECOFI Priority Species, and invited the meeting to comment on information that will be useful to be collected prior to each meeting of the WGFM to better understand research and management measures ongoing at the national level.

8. The meeting recalled that the priority species included in the RECOFI list are not necessarily shared but are important at the national level across RECOFI member countries. It was noted that some member countries have often taken management measures for these species and other successful initiatives which would be useful to be shared. The meeting agreed that collecting information on management measures for the priority species would be useful, and perhaps specifying more specific measures would be useful in the table used to collect information on RECOFI priority species. It was also noted that an additional column be added so that member countries can indicate whether or not each species is targeted in their fisheries. The template table to be used is included below in Appendix 4.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOFI RECOMMENDATION ON MINIMUM DATA REPORTING AND OUTCOMES OF THE RECOFI WORKSHOP ON MINIMUM DATA REPORTING REGIONAL DATABASE

9. Stefania Savore, Fishery Information Officer, FAO, presented working document RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/4 Implementation of the RECOFI Recommendation on Minimum Data Reporting (MDR) and outcomes of the RECOFI Workshop on Minimum Data Reporting Regional Database.

10. The meeting agreed with the recommendations from the workshop on MDR in July and noted that in terms of reviewing and reassessing the current MDR indicators, information could be collected using the previously noted tables on current work on RECOFI priority species, in particular the information regarding management measures and targeted fisheries.

11. The meeting noted the importance for the Secretariat to create templates to provide clear and accessible definitions and facilitate submission of all MDR variables.

12. The meeting was informed that, related to the workshop recommendation to streamline and harmonize workflow between the GCC Statistical Center in Oman, the Secretariat has initiated communication with the GCC Statistical Center on this matter.

13. The Secretariat called on those countries that have not yet submitted their data under the latest MDR call to do so.

OUTCOMES OF THE RECOFI WORKSHOP ON THE FIRMS DATA CALL

14. Aureliano Gentile, Information Manager, FAO, presented RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/6 Outcomes of the RECOFI Workshop on the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) Data Call. The meeting noted the outcomes of the workshop and acknowledged the recommendations.

15. The meeting noted the importance of having a variety of expertise providing input to FIRMS; it was acknowledged that while the Focal Point may not be an expert in all areas, they should consult with colleagues with relevant expertise as needed. Additionally, the meeting recognized it could be useful for the Focal Point and Alternate Focal Point to have complementary expertise to facilitate all the needed information.

OUTCOMES OF THE RECOFI WORKSHOP ON SDG 14.4.1

16. Anne-Elise Nieblas, Fisheries Consultant, FAO, presented the document RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/7: Outcomes of the RECOFI Workshop on SDG 14.4.1, including the workshop outcomes and recommendations. IUU fishing was found a major issue affecting the sustainable exploitation and conservation of marine fishery resources. There was an agreement that IUU fishing-related issues, on the many occasions, were brought to the attention of the WGFM. Therefore, no specific recommendation was made at the meeting to further combat IUU fishing in the RECOFI Area. However, inter alia, increased compliance with the respective international instruments and strengthening of fisheries Monitoring, Surveillance and Control were considered favourable to combat IUU fishing in the RECOFI Area.

17. The meeting noted that the reference list of stocks reported to the SDG 14.4.1 should represent at least 60 percent of the national total landed and/or reported catch, excluding landings from straddling stocks, and shared stocks should be explicitly noted. Stocks of economic, ecological, historical, and cultural importance should be included, regardless of whether they have been assessed. The meeting noted that importantly, the national reference list of stocks should remain stable for at least 5 years.

18. The meeting noted the challenge of reporting a stock as national or shared, due to it not being known definitively for each species. This has resulted in some inconsistencies in reporting across RECOFI countries on both RECOFI Priority Species as well as other species commonly reported by

RECOFI member countries on the SDG 14.4.1 questionnaire. The meeting noted that RECOFI could play a role by working with member countries to jointly develop and complete a table on certain stocks which would assist member Countries in filling out the SDG 14.4.1 questionnaire. The WGFM is proposing a template (Appendix 5) which, once adopted by the Commission, will be used by the Secretariat to fill out according to the data already submitted by four RECOFI Countries which submitted their SDG14.4.1 questionnaire as part of the first inquiry launched by FAO in November 2019. The completed table would then be recirculated to RECOFI member countries in the endeavour to facilitate consistency in reporting when completing future versions of the SDG 14.4.1 Questionnaire. Countries which have not yet reported on the SDG14.4.1 questionnaire will be invited to provide inputs to that table.

19. The meeting acknowledged the recommendations of the workshop and reaffirmed the request to receive the SDG 14.4.1 questionnaire in Arabic.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOFI RECOMMENDATION ON KINGFISH STOCK

20. Ahmed AlMazrouai presented document Implementation of the RECOFI Recommendation on Kingfish stock RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/5.

21. Morteza Azadi, Deputy Director-General of Fisheries, Iran Fisheries Organization, Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, Islamic Republic of Iran, presented on the ongoing work being undertaken on the Kingfish stock in Iran (Islamic Republic of).

22. The meeting noted that the closure for Kingfish is for all gears with the exception of hook and line, requested that this was clearly noted in communication with RECOFI member countries. The adopted recommendation is attached as Appendix X. The meeting also requested that, for ease of data submission, supporting documentation for the form in English and Arabic be prepared by the Secretariat for member countries to use to submit.

23. The Secretariat reiterated the call for member countries to submit their data on length frequency and catch and effort for the previous 10 years. United Arab Emirates noted that they have been collecting this information since 2015 only.

UPDATE ON HOSTING OF THE CAPTURE FISHERIES REGIONAL DATA SET IN RAIS

24. Ahmed AlMazrouai provided a brief background on hosting the regional data set under the MDR Recommendation, noting that no update was available on the offer of Kuwait to integrate this information into RAIS.

25. Kuwait informed the meeting that they would follow-up on this matter and provide feedback to the RECOFI Secretariat. The RECOFI Secretariat will also follow-up on this matter.

COOPERATION BETWEEN RECOFI AND THE REGIONAL ORGANISATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT (ROPME)

26. Ahmed AlMazrouai presented the document RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/8 Cooperation between RECOFI and the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME). The meeting appreciated the areas of work included in the ROPME workplan and emphasized the need for joint activities to take place under the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding between RECOFI and ROPME as soon as possible.

27. The meeting discussed the possible causes of the limited data submission according to the minimum data requirements. It was agreed that the Secretariat will share with countries a detailed RECOFI MDR questionnaire in English and Arabic for their review.

28. The meeting agreed on a workplan proposal to be submitted to the upcoming eleventh session of RECOFI, noted below in Table 1.

29. The meeting thanked Nabil Fita for his efforts as Chairperson and excellent leadership.

30. The report was adopted on 5 October 2021 and the 12th meeting of the WGFM was closed.

Table 1: Proposed workplan of the WGFM for 2022–2023

Activity	Tentative Date	Location	Duration (days)	Indicative budget (USD)	Priority
Technical Activities/Workshops					
Regional joint assessment of kingfish stock	Depending on availability of data 2nd /3rd quarter 2022	Oman	3	25 000	1st
MDR Workshop	TBD 2022	Qatar (TBD)	3	25 000	2nd
Socio economic effects of COVID-19 on fishery	1st /2nd quarter 2022	Virtual	2–3	6 000	3rd
Ecosystem-based Approach to Fisheries Management (co-activity with ROPME)	TBD	Kuwait (TBD)	3	25 000	4th
FIRMS/SDG 14.4.1 Workshop	4th quarter 2022	TBD	2–3		5th
Biennial meetings of the WGFM					
13th meeting of the WGFM	1st /2nd quarter 2023 (prior to 12th Session of RECOFI)	Saudi Arabia	3	25 000	1st

DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING

31. The 13th meeting of the WGFM will be hosted by Saudi Arabia, at a date to be determined (early 2023), prior to the 12th Session of RECOFI.

Agenda

Monday, 4 October 2021	
Morning session 09.00–12.00	1. Opening of the meeting
	2. Adoption of the agenda (document: <i>RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/1</i>)
	3. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chairs
	4. Review the relevant outcomes of the 10th Session of RECOFI, 11th Meeting of WGFM, 34th Session COFI (document: <i>RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/2, RECOFI/WGFM12/Inf.3</i>)
	5. Current work on RECOFI Priority Species (document: <i>RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/3</i>)
12.00–12.15	Coffee break
Afternoon Session 12.15–14.00	6. Implementation of the RECOFI Recommendation on Minimum Data Reporting and outcomes of the RECOFI Workshop on Minimum Data Reporting Regional Database (document: <i>RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/4</i>)
	7. Implementation of the RECOFI Recommendation on Kingfish stock (document: <i>RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/5</i>)
	8. Outcomes of the RECOFI Workshop on the FIRMS Data Call (document: <i>RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/6</i>)
	9. Outcomes of the RECOFI Workshop on SDG 14.4.1 (document: <i>RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/7</i>)
Tuesday, 5 October 2021	
Morning Session 09.00–10.30	10. Cooperation between RECOFI and the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) (document: <i>RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/8</i>)
	11. Workplan of the RECOFI WGFM for the period 2021–2022 (document: <i>RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/9</i>)
	12. Any other matters
	13. Date and place of the next meeting
10.30–14.00	Lunch break
Afternoon Session 14.00–17.00	14. Adoption of the WGFM report

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List of documents

RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/1	Provisional agenda
RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/2	Review of relevant outcomes of the 10th session of RECOFI, the 11th Meeting of the WGFM and 34th Session of COFI
RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/3	Current Work on RECOFI Priority Species
RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/4	Implementation of the RECOFI Recommendation on Minimum Data Reporting and outcomes of the RECOFI Workshop on Minimum Data Reporting Regional Database
RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/5	Implementation of the RECOFI Recommendation on Kingfish Stock
RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/6	Outcomes of the Workshop on the RECOFI FIRMS Data Call: Updating stocks and fisheries inventories
RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/7	Outcomes of the RECOFI special workshop on SDG Indicator 14.4.1: Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels
RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/8	Cooperation between RECOFI and the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME)
RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/9	WGFM Programme of work for 2022-2023
RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/Inf.1	List of documents
RECOFI/WGFM12/2021/Inf.2	List of participants

The twelfth meeting of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM) was held virtually, from 4 to 5 October 2021. The WGFM discussed and agreed on a number of matters over the course of this meeting. Notably, the meeting agreed on a template for collecting information on management measures and research undertaken related the RECOFI List of Priority Species, which will be used prior to each meeting of the WGFM. Further, the WGFM acknowledged recommendations made by the workshop on the implementation of the Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 on Minimum Data Reporting in the RECOFI Area (MDR), including that the RECOFI Secretariat and FAO should move forward with the creation of templates to provide clear and accessible definition and facilitate the submission of all variables under the MDR Recommendation. Regarding FIRMS, the meeting called on focal points to consult with all colleagues with relevant expertise to facilitate the needed submission of data. The meeting appreciated the areas of work included in the ROPME workplan and emphasized the need for joint activities to take place under the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding between RECOFI and ROPME as soon as possible. On the SDG 14.4.1 questionnaire, the meeting agreed upon a template to be completed by all RECOFI Member Countries in order to assist them in filling out the SDG 14.4.1 Questionnaire and reaffirmed the request to receive the SDG 14.4.1 questionnaire in Arabic. The meeting noted that the closure for Kingfish is for all gears with the exception of hook and line, requested that this was clearly noted in communication with RECOFI member countries. meeting also requested that, for ease of data submission, supporting documentation for the form in English and Arabic be prepared by the Secretariat for member countries to use to submit. The Secretariat reiterated the call for member countries to submit their data on length frequency and catch and effort for the previous 10 years. The meeting agreed on a workplan proposal to be submitted to the Eleventh Session of RECOFI for the 2022–2023 intersessional period.

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