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Proposal

New CMM for Research Cruise and Scientific Research

Delegation of the European Union

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Abstract	
<p>Research cruises have been conducted already in the SIOFA area, and Scientific research is considered in the SIOFA Agreement in Articles 1 (Definitions), Article 6 (Functions of the meeting of the parties), 7 (Subsidiary bodies) and 13 (Special requirements of developing States). However, the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement has not developed a framework providing how research cruises and scientific research should be considered.</p> <p>To address that loophole, the European Union submits this working paper that builds on our working paper presented to MoP12 in 2025 (MoP-12-48-Rev1), while considering the MoP-12 and the Scientific Committee (SC) Workshop: Window of Opportunity - Research Vessels in SIOFA (WS2025-ORS) discussions and recommendations.</p> <p>The main objective of this Working Paper is launching a discussion on such a framework for research cruises and scientific research in the SIOFA Area at SC11, acknowledging that if SIOFA adopts a CMM for research cruises, it may become necessary to amend CMM 02(2025) (Data Standards) to clearly identify data derived from research cruises and scientific research and its data access arrangements.</p> <p>The EU acknowledges that further development of this working paper could be required and welcomes SC11 comments and intersessional engagement from CCPs towards the adoption of a new CMM at MoP13.</p>	

¹ Restricted documents may contain confidential information. Please do not distribute restricted documents in any form without the explicit permission of the SIOFA Secretariat and the data owner(s)/provider(s).

² Documents available only to members invited to closed sessions.

Recommendations

- Consider the working paper and submit comments and language suggestion

New CMM 19(2026)
Research Cruise and Scientific Research in the SIOFA Area

The Meeting of the Parties to the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement;

RECALLING that Article 6(1) (b) of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (the Agreement) calls on the Meeting of the Parties to promote and, as appropriate, coordinate research activities as required on the fishery resources and on straddling stocks occurring in waters under national jurisdiction adjacent to the Area, including discarded catch and the impact of fishing on the marine environment;

FURTHER RECALLING that Article 10(1)(c) set out the duties relevant to the collection and exchange of scientific, technical and statistical data for Contracting Parties;

RECOGNISING the importance of developing comprehensive arrangements for relevant scientific research to assist the Scientific Committee in performing its functions as outlined in Article 7 of the Agreement;

NOTING the relevance of Articles 238-240 of the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the right to conduct marine scientific research, the promotion of marine scientific research and the general principles to conduct marine scientific research;

NOTING the importance of collecting independent fishery data and cost-effective fishery-dependent data for the purposes of ensuring scientific stock assessment and implementing an ecosystem approach to fisheries management;

NOTING the recommendation by the Ninth meeting of the Scientific Committee, and endorsed by the Eleventh Meeting of the Parties, to develop a specific “research cruise CMM” that is separate from the process that is proposed for exploratory fisheries.

FURTHER NOTING that the Meeting of Parties has adopted policies and procedures for the maintenance of data standards CMM 02(2025) and data confidentiality (CMM 03(2025));

ADOPTS the following conservation and management measure (CMM) in accordance with Article 6 of the Agreement:

Objective

1. The objective of the “Research Cruise and Scientific Research CMM” is to govern the undertaking of fisheries-related scientific research in the SIOFA Area and to set out a clear framework and consistent approaches for research cruises and scientific research.

2. The specific “Research Cruise and Scientific Research CMM” are separated from the process adopted for exploratory fisheries (CMM 17(2025)) ensuring that all three activities are appropriately sanctioned prior to the activity being undertaken and subsequently reported.

Application

3. This CMM should apply to all Contracting Parties, cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CNCs), participating fishing entities (PFEs) and any third party engaged in fishing operations for scientific research purposes in the SIOFA Area to all gears for any fishery falling under SIOFA’s competence.

Terminology

4. For the purpose of this CMM, “research cruises” is defined as single trips conducted by a dedicated research vessel (RV), actively engaged in any scientific research under the scope of the SIOFA Scientific Committee (SC)³, where the sale of commercial catch is not the primary objective of the trip.
5. For the purpose of this CMM, “research vessel” means a purpose-build and equipped vessel, permanently dedicated and used for research at sea.
6. For the purposes of this CMM “scientific research” is defined as:
 - a) Fishing vessel (FV) based scientific activities collecting environmental data under the scope of a Scientific Research Plan (SRP) that includes information gathering without extraction of fisheries resources;
 - b) Fishing vessel conducting fishing⁴ and collecting data from marine living resources in established fisheries under the scope of an SRP.

Specific provisions for Research Cruises

7. All RV commissioned by a CCP need to be registered on the SIOFA Record of authorised vessels (RAV) and comply with the provisions of all SIOFA CMMs.
8. All research cruises, regardless of the RV flag, require SIOFA authorisation on the basis of a Research Cruise Plan (RCP).
9. A RV shall not conduct fishing activities inconsistent with its RCP.
10. Any RCP should underline where RV provide an added scientific value that would not be achieved otherwise.

³ SIOFA Agreement Article 7.

⁴ SIOFA Agreement Article 1g.

11. A RCP is submitted to the SIOFA SC for assessment and potential approval prior to conducting the cruise.
12. The data collected during the research cruise regarding the scope of the SC activity are submitted to the Secretariat within 9 months of the end of the cruise.
13. The results of the research cruise are to be reported to the next meeting of the SC.
14. No subsequent research cruise will be permitted by the organisation undertaking the cruise unless the data emanating from the cruise and a final detailed research cruise report is submitted to the SIOFA Secretariat.
15. The SC will evaluate the research cruise report to assess the outcomes and to refine future operations.
16. Research cruise operators shall facilitate scientists from other CCPs to participate in the research cruise as early career development or to provide relevant expertise.

Specific provisions for Scientific Research and associated catches

17. Only Contracting Parties, CNCP, PFE can undertake scientific research in the SIOFA area for fishery falling under SIOFA's competence.
18. Any Contracting Party, CNCP, PFE planning to use a fishing vessel or vessels for Scientific Research purposes as defined in paragraph 4, shall:
 - a. Provide the Scientific Research Plan no less than thirty days in advance of the opening of the Scientific Committee meeting.
 - b. The Scientific Research Plan shall contain at a minimum the following information:
 - i. CCP Lead
 - ii. Fishing vessel identification,
 - iii. Purpose,
 - iv. Objectives,
 - v. Summary of scientific methods or procedures,
 - vi. Location and dates of the scientific research,
 - vii. Name and position of the lead investigator,
 - viii. Whether any catches retained on board will be marketed,
 - ix. Total estimated scientific research catch of the targeted species,
 - x. Presence of a CCP observer with sufficient scientific expertise on board,
 - xi. Information on when the research results will be presented to the Scientific Committee, and a plan for dissemination of scientific outputs,
 - xii. Where relevant, indication that the scientific research constitutes non-recurrent new scientific research,
 - xiii. Budget,

- xiv. Funding source,
 - xv. Identification of relevant CMMs being applied during planned scientific research.
- c. Notify the SIOFA Secretariat at least 30 days prior to the commencement of the Scientific Research.
 - d. Ensure that its fishing vessel keep on board a copy of the Scientific Research Plan.

Associated catches

- 19. Catches taken by any vessel during the implementation of a Scientific Research shall be counted against the quota allocated to the flag CCP for each species taken.
- 20. Catches taken during the implementation of a Scientific Research shall not exceed the amount recommended by the Scientific Committee and adopted by the MoP per season.
- 21. Should a scientific research catch exceed the catch limit adopted by the MoP, the excess shall be counted against the allocation to the vessel's flag Contracting Party, CNCP and PFE.
- 22. Catches of SIOFA fisheries resources taken during the implementation of a notified Scientific Research activity will be recorded and reported as per CMM 02(2025).

Specific provisions for data collected in the context of a research cruise or scientific research

- 23. Data made available shall be used only for the purpose of research within the scope of the Scientific Committee.
- 24. Any publication of scientific results should be in an aggregated format without any confidential information regarding individual vessels or flag States as per CMM 03(2025).

Minimising the harmful impacts of Research Cruises and Scientific Research

- 25. Contracting Parties who intend to conduct Research Cruises or Scientific Research in Benthic Fishery Closures (BFCs) in the Agreement Area, shall:
 - a. Align their Research Cruise Plan and Scientific Research Plan with the research and monitoring plan for the BFCs listed in Table 1 of CMM 18 (2025).
 - b. Elaborate in their RCP and SRP on the potential harmful impact that such activities may have on the BFCs and how to minimise them.
- 26. Contracting Parties who intend to conduct Research Cruises or Scientific Research in areas where VMEs are known to occur, or likely to occur in the Agreement Area shall

- a. Elaborate in their RCP and SRP on the potential harmful impact that such activities may have on the VMEs and how to minimise them.

Scientific Committee

Research Cruises

27. The SC will comprehensively review the RCP assessing the scientific goals, technical requirements, logistics, operational constraints and safety protocols.
28. The SC would also need to consider whether the objectives of any proposed research cruise address the objectives of the SC and the MoP.
29. The SC should prioritise those RCP tasks that cannot easily be undertaken by fishing vessel during their normal operations.

Scientific Research

30. The Scientific Committee shall develop a template for the SIOFA Scientific Research Plan (SRP).

Research Cruises and Scientific Research

31. At its annual meeting, the Scientific Committee shall consider any new SRP and RCP submitted, and any other relevant information.
32. The Scientific Committee at each annual meeting shall review available data and reports from ongoing or ended SRPs and RCP, in view to enabling an assessment of the stocks covered by these plans, the feasibility and appropriateness of establishing a fishery and the impact of fishing activities on non-target, associated or dependent species and the marine ecosystem in which these plans apply.
33. The SC would need to consider the objectives of any proposed research and evaluate whether the importance of research activities is greater than their impact on resources in the SIOFA Area.
34. The Scientific Committee may request updated reports on the outcomes of SRPs and RCPs and amend the SRPs and RCPs as necessary.
35. The SC shall provide recommendations considering that scientific research activities as well as fisheries management can be implemented differently and meaningfully under this framework.
36. The Scientific Committee shall provide recommendations and advice on SRPs and RCPs to the Meeting of the Parties.

Meeting of the Parties

37. The Meeting of the Parties, taking into account the recommendations and advice of the Scientific Committee, shall decide whether to authorise SRPs and RCPs.
38. Once the Meeting of the Parties authorise the SRP, this will be shared with relevant international fisheries agreements, organisations and arrangements scientific/technical committees.
39. The Meeting of the Parties may consider cost-effective ways to fund relevant SRPs and RCPs in the SIOFA Area.

Secretariat

Research Cruises

40. The Secretariat shall keep a Research Cruises outcome inventory, including placing it on the SIOFA website, in a manner consistent with any applicable confidentiality requirements.

Scientific Research

41. The Secretariat shall post in the SIOFA vessel registry website and annually update the names of those fishing vessels authorised to carry out Scientific Research including in such posting the Scientific Research Plan.

Review

42. When a SRP expires, any Contracting Party CNCP and PFE may submit a new SRP to the Scientific Committee in accordance with paragraph 8.
43. The CMM shall be reviewed no later at than two years of its implementation. The review shall also take into account the latest advice of the Scientific Committee on previous or ongoing scientific research activities in the SIOFA Area.