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[The Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network]

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Abstract

The Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN) is a unique coordination mechanism consisting of Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) and Regional Fishery Advisory Bodies (RFABs) from around the world. This information paper provides a brief overview of RSN, its scope and activities that have the ultimate goal of promoting and highlighting the essential role of regional cooperation for fishery and aquaculture sustainability and development. The active role of the SIOFA Secretariat in RSN is highlighted. SIOFA Members are invited to note the scope of RSN and consider the benefit of SIOFA participation in RSN.

The Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN) is a unique coordination framework consisting of Regional Fishery Advisory Bodies (RFABs) and Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) from around the world. The present information paper reports on the FAO commitment to bolstering regional cooperation through the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN), which provides a forum for promoting consultation and regional dialogue, addressing priority issues of common concern and fostering ongoing cooperation and exchange of information.

There are some fifty Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs)¹ worldwide², half of them provide only scientific and technical advice to their members, they are regional fishery advisory bodies (RFABs); while others, called regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) have mandates to adopt legally binding conservation and management measures based on best scientific evidence.

The RSN includes more than fifty RFB secretariats and partners. RSN decisions are non-binding to its members and the organizations represented by them. The Network has celebrated in 2019 twenty years since its establishment.

The main objective of the RSN is to enhance cooperation and collaboration among RFBs to achieve fisheries and aquaculture sustainable development through effective regional mechanisms, also in consideration of SDG 14 and the 2030 Agenda. RSN promotes information sharing and discussion among secretariats on emerging issues or subjects covered by the mandate of RFMOs and RFABs. RSN supports the central role played by RFBs in the conservation, management and sustainable use of fishery resources, and it promotes cooperation and coordination among RFBs as one of the most effective ways to strengthen regional fisheries governance.

RSN is supported by FAO and its Committee on Fisheries (COFI), which hosts and provides secretariat services and the venue for meetings; maintains a dedicated website³, RSN publishes a magazine that includes the updated information provided by member organizations⁴, and technical publications. FAO in cooperation with RSN have produced a corporate video on the work of RFBs⁵.

The Network is increasingly recognised as well suited to support the work done by its member organizations on the regional dimension of fisheries (and aquaculture when appropriate) governance and sustainable development. In particular through: providing a neutral forum for discussion; supporting sharing of experiences and practices and access to information; making information readily available to members and institutions engaged on fisheries and aquaculture matters, as well as to civil society organizations and the general public; facilitating RFBs presence in relevant international fora including those in where global policy for fishery and aquaculture governance are discussed; stimulating cooperation between RFBs and with other key stakeholders and actors; and enhancing communication among RFBs.

¹ The term Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) is used throughout the paper to mean both Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) and Regional Fishery Advisory Bodies (RFABs).

² <http://www.fao.org/fishery/rfb/en>

³ <http://www.fao.org/fishery/rsn/en>

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/fishery/rsn/newsletter/en>

⁵ <https://youtu.be/XR8uBMsvVc0>

The work of RSN is becoming progressively relevant also in the framework of current discussions in various international fora where particular consideration is given to global, regional and sectoral bodies such as RFBs, including at the UN, for instance, on an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (General Assembly resolution 72/249), or at the WTO on an international legally binding instrument on the prohibition of certain fishery subsidies related to overfishing , overcapacity, and IUU fishing.

SIOFA through its Secretariat is an active member of RSN. SIOFA contributed to the last issue of the RSN Magazine (No.19) entitled “Chronicles from the Secretariats” published in July 2020⁶. SIOFA has also participated in the FAO/RSN study on “The impact of COVID-19 on fisheries and aquaculture – A global assessment from the perspective of regional fishery bodies: Initial assessment” released in May 2020⁷. Furthermore, SIOFA has taken part in the FAO overview “Regional fisheries management organizations and advisory bodies. Activities and developments, 2000–2017” (FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper No. 651⁸), promoted and coordinated by the RSN Secretariat and published in March 2020.

The RSN Secretariat is in the process of updating the SIOFA fact sheet in the FAO website dedicated to RFBs⁹, which has become the main source of information for fishery stakeholders and the general public.

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9919en>

⁷ <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9279en>

⁸ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7843en/CA7843EN.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/fishery/rfb/siofa/en>