

The Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) 6th Meeting of the Parties
01-05 July 2019

Pearle Beach Resort & Spa conference centre, Flic en Flac, Mauritius

MoP6-Doc10_Rev1

SIOFA-FIRMS Partnership

Relates to agenda item: 14.4

Proposal ☐ Working Paper ☒ Information Paper ☐ Other Document ☐

FAO Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS)

Background

At SC4 working paper SC-04-11 (attached) was presented regarding a potential FAO SIOFA-FIRMS Partnership.

FIRMS is a partnership of organisations, which includes many of the R(F)MOs, that displays information of marine fisheries and fish stocks in the EEZ and ABNJ. The information for a region is entered by the partners responsible for that region. FIRMS has two types of membership arrangements: 'Partnership' in which the member is expected to attend the FIRMS Steering Committee meetings (in an average of about once every 18 to 24 months) and assist in the development of FIRMS through a voting process, and 'Collaborative' which is a more passive membership with no voting rights and where meeting attendance is not necessarily expected. In both arrangements the member contributes with its data and information to the FIRMS shared knowledge base. The amount of information submitted and the way it is displayed is the same in both cases. FIRMS invites SIOFA to become a member of FIRMS under a 'Partnership' or 'Collaborative' arrangement. Further details are found in paper SC-04-11.

Joining FIRMS should enable SIOFA to more effectively disseminate SIOFA's work as an RFMO to global stakeholders. Regarding data confidentiality, FAO explained that all data provided by SIOFA to FIRMS would enter the public domain and SIOFA would therefore have to deal with any data confidentiality issues at the input stage. The SC discussed the resourcing implications of joining FIRMS, with the Secretariat required to provide data submissions and potentially participate in meetings. The SC recognised that SIOFA could explore the possibility of seeking funding from FAO for participation in meetings.

The SC recommended that the MoP consider that the SC supported, in principle, joining FIRMS as a Partnership Arrangement, noting the resourcing implications (SC4 Report paras 186-189 <http://apsoi.org/node/110>)

Action

MoP6 are requested to consider joining FIRMS as a Partnership Arrangement

SC-04-11

4th Meeting of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) Scientific
Committee

25-29 March 2019, Yokohama, Japan

SIOFA-FIRMS Partnership

Please note that National Reports and SC Working Group reports shall be classified as working papers

Relates to agenda item: 10.2

Working paper

Info paper

Delegation of FIRMS Secretariat



Abstract

1. Background

1.1. About FIRMS

Since 2004, the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS, <http://firms.fao.org>) draws together a unified partnership of 14 international organizations and 19 regional fishery bodies (RFBs) aiming to provide access to a wide range of high-quality information on the global monitoring and management of fishery marine resources.

On January 2019, the 7th Annual Meeting of the Commission of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) approved the Partnership Arrangement with the FIRMS Partnership, the signature is in progress and eventually it will be the 15th FIRMS Partner.

The backbone information of FIRMS consists of Excel based Marine Resource and Fishery inventories where information provided by the partners is organized in a database and published in the form of Fact sheets, under two domains:

- The biological domain (see example on Orange roughy): <http://firms.fao.org/firms/resource/13377/en>
- The Fisheries domain (see example on the Northeast Atlantic Mackerel fisheries): <http://firms.fao.org/firms/fishery/485/en>

This system provides the data owner with tools to ensure controlled dissemination of high quality and updated information. These Fact sheets can be accessed through dedicated search interfaces and through the recently developed “Stocks and Fisheries map viewer” (<http://firms.fao.org/firms/stocks-fisheries-map-viewer>).

FIRMS only disseminates public data, always acknowledging the provenance and ownership, and its content can be re-used by the partners.

1.2. Potential benefits and opportunities the FIRMS partnership can offer to its partners

At national level: FIRMS supports the need for easy access to high quality information for the development/enhancement of fisheries policies and management plans at national and regional levels. Such high quality is achieved by formalizing, collating, and standardizing information, and disseminating it through a variety of FIRMS data services (e.g. map viewer, analytical tools, fact sheets, status summaries). In the context of SIOFA, FIRMS could disseminate the inventories of fisheries that are included in these FAO publications on world deep seas fisheries¹.

At regional level, the FIRMS monitoring system ensures: i) dissemination of relevant SIOFA's information on the state of deep seas fisheries and resources, and ii) proper visibility of SIOFA's regional information as part of the broader landscape of other deep seas RFMOs. Being part of FIRMS contributes to best practices among RFB agencies (as stipulated by the RSN - Regional Fishery Body

¹ FIRMS inventories based on FAO publications: 1) FAO. Review of the state of world marine Fishery resources. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper No. 569. Rome, FAO. 2011. 334 pp.; 2) Bensch, A.; Gianni, M.; Gréboval, D.; Sanders, J.S.; Hjort, A. Worldwide review of bottom fisheries in the high seas. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper. No. 522, Rev.1. Rome, FAO. 2009. 145p.

Secretariats Network). To date CCAMLR, GFCM, NAFO, NEAFC, SEAFO, and soon SPRFMO are FIRMS members relating to high seas deep seas matters.

At global level: FIRMS ensure national and regional visibility at global level, and thus enabling uptake in the global policy agenda of the global stock status monitoring including the promotion of sustainability of high seas and deep seas fisheries in collaboration with other deep-sea RFMOs, traceability of fishery products, SDGs; as well as access to national, regional and global programs and project opportunities. FIRMS and the complementary FAO Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems database together contribute to the broader “Fisheries and Aquaculture knowledge base”².

2. Cost associated with joining FIRMS

The costs for the system are mostly borne by FAO. There are two options to join FIRMS:

2.1. FIRMS “Partnership Arrangement”³:

The Partnership Arrangement is made of two sections:

- The standard Arrangement signed by FAO (on behalf of FIRMS Secretariat) and the applicant Partner, and
- Two Annexes:
 - Annex 1: Current FIRMS Partners on the date of signature by the two Parties, and
 - Annex 2: Outline and detailed arrangements on the nature of information and the conditions under which it is made available under the partnership arrangement. Find, as example, the Annex 2 of NAFO:
http://www.fao.org/fishery/docs/DOCUMENT/FIGIS_FIRMS/2013/2iNAFOe.pdf

Each Partner submits the agreed information in the formats required and covers the travel to FIRMS Steering Committee (FSC) meetings. Withdrawal from the Arrangement is possible at any time with three months’ notice.

2.2. “FIRMS Collaborative Arrangement”:

The Collaborative Arrangement aims at a more flexible collaboration with focus on content provision but without the right to vote within FIRMS. Thus, the ability for SIOFA to influence FIRMS development, policies and related global standards under this arrangement are much reduced.

Recommendations

1. The SIOFA Scientific Committee is invited to recommend whether SIOFA joins the FIRMS (as a Partnership Arrangement or as a Collaborative Arrangement).

² The Fishery and Aquaculture knowledge base is a public or access-restricted pool of information available as a coherent package of knowledge for easy access by the fisheries and aquaculture community. RSN/2016/10 Our Fishery and Aquaculture knowledge base - A community approach to collective knowledge
<http://www.fao.org/fi/static-media/MeetingDocuments/RSN/sixth/10e.pdf>

³ http://www.fao.org/fishery/docs/DOCUMENT/FIGIS_FIRMS/Partnership_Arrangement/FIRMS_Partnership_Arrangement.pdf