



SIOFA | APSOI

Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement  
Accord relatif aux Pêches dans le Sud de l'Océan Indien

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# Progress status of the SIOFA EU grants

The SIOFA Secretariat

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<b>Abstract</b>	
<p>The EU has recently funded several projects that boost the capacity of SIOFA, especially in its scientific part, to carry out the implementation of the agreement.</p> <p>After his recruitment, the Science Officer has been tasked with the coordination of all EU grants agreements signed by SIOFA. The Executive Secretary is the legal signatory and administrative responsible for all these projects.</p> <p>To showcase the work that SIOFA is implementing thanks to the EU grants, a dedicated page has been published on the SIOFA website: <a href="https://siofa.org/eu-grants">https://siofa.org/eu-grants</a>. The webpage collects information (info sheet) on each of the projects, including projects already completed, and thus also satisfies the requirements of transparency and information enshrined in the EU funding rules. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the current progress of the SIOFA EU grants and provide information on their expected timelines.</p>	

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<sup>2</sup> Documents available only to members invited to closed sessions.

## Background

The EU has recently funded several projects that boost the capacity of SIOFA, especially in its scientific part, to carry out the implementation of the agreement.

After his recruitment, the Science Officer has been tasked with the coordination of all EU grants agreements signed by SIOFA. The Executive Secretary is the legal signatory and administrative responsible for all these projects.

To showcase the work that SIOFA is implementing thanks to the EU grants, a dedicated page has been published on the SIOFA website: <https://siofa.org/eu-grants>. The webpage collects information (info sheet) on each of the projects, including projects already completed, and thus also satisfies the requirements of transparency and information enshrined in the EU funding rules.

## Aims

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the current progress of the SIOFA EU grants and provide information on their expected timelines.

## Progress status of the SIOFA EU grants

The following list attempts to provide a brief background and a current status of the each EU grant project that SIOFA has been responsible for, in order of expected completion.

### SIOFA Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem Mapping (SI2.815850) - Completed

This project started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2021 and was completed at the end of June 2022. The total budget was of 78,380 EUR, all of which were contributed by the EU.

The general objective is to map biogeographical regions of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the agreement area. The objective would be reached following well defined steps: compile, clean and verify occurrence and environmental data, evaluate the quality of occurrence data and determine an optimal resolution for analyses, develop and compare multiple bioregionalisation schemes, project future trends according to different climate change scenarios and synthesis.

The main output is to be able to implement specific conservation measures in regards of the fishing activity to prevent the negative impact on those vulnerable marine ecosystems.

The funds were used to contract the PAE2021-02 VME Mapping project, carried out by the Museum National D'Histoire Naturelle (MNHN). The outcomes of this projects have been presented to SC7, and ultimately [published on the SIOFA website](#).

### Support for the 8th meeting of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries agreement Scientific Committee in Canary Islands (SIOFA-SC8) - Ongoing

This project started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2022 and is scheduled to be completed at the end of April 2023. The total budget is of 147,900.75 EUR, with a EU Contribution of 118,320.60 EUR.

The objective of this project is to support science-based decision-making in SIOFA, notably by supporting the organisation of meetings of the Scientific Committee and ad-hoc workshops on dedicated topics.

The main objectives and priorities of this action are:

1. The organisation of a 2-day joint Meeting of the Parties-Scientific Committee (MoP-SC) Workshop with a strong preference for a virtual format to accommodate logistical constraints, with the aim to enhance cooperation between scientists and managers once the Harvest Strategies are developed in 2022 for the three key SIOFA stocks (orange roughy, splendid alfonsino, and Patagonian toothfish).
2. The organisation of a 2-day workshop on deepwater sharks, to be organized in a hybrid format (in-person/virtual), in view of the shark catches by the Spanish fleet fishing for toothfish in the SIOFA area; and
3. The organisation of the 8th SC meeting (including its subsidiary WG meetings), to be organized in a hybrid format (in-person/virtual).

As participants of the SC8 and its Workshops, you can see first hand the current status of this project. After the meeting ends, the Secretariat will draft a final report of the project.

### SIOFA agreement performance review (SIOFA-REV) - Ongoing

This project started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2022 and is scheduled to be completed at the end of September 2023. The total budget is of 149,800 EUR, with a EU Contribution of 119,840 EUR.

This project is aimed to fund the process for conducting the first performance review of SIOFA.

As 2022 will mark the 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the SIOFA Agreement, and therefore ten years of operation of SIOFA, the SIOFA Meeting of Parties agreed to assess the performance of the organisation to ensure that it achieves the objectives set out in Article 2 of the Agreement. Article 2 aims to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources in the Area through cooperation among the Contracting Parties, and to promote the sustainable development of fisheries in the Area, taking into account the needs of developing States bordering the Area that are Contracting Parties to the Agreement, and in particular the least developed among them and small-island developing States.

The project is running on schedule. A SIOFA Performance Review Panel has been contracted in 2022 and has produced a draft report that was submitted as a restricted document to SC8 ([SC-08-28](#)).

The Performance Review Panel is also scheduled to meet in Reunion Island in early April 2023, for furthering the development of their report prior to its submission to MoP10. The project should be completed once the final report of the panel is adopted by MoP10, and the final project report is submitted to the EU in September 2023.

### [SIOFA-2020-2022 Support to SIOFA Scientific Work on key stocks, ecosystems, and data \(SI2.837681\) - Ongoing](#)

This project started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020 and is scheduled to be completed at the end of August 2023, after a specific contract variation was requested at the beginning of 2023 to extend the project duration. The total budget is of 250,000 EUR, with a EU Contribution of 200,000 EUR.

The SIOFA relies on a strong scientific basis for decision-making, and therefore the grant requested focuses on 5 General Objectives of scientific basis:

General Objective 1 (GO1): Support the assessment of the key target stocks (alfonsino, toothfish and orange roughy);

Specific Objective 1: Working towards improving the stock assessment of alfonsino. According to the SIOFA Scientific Committee (SC) future stock assessments for alfonsino should consider: potentially using tow-by-tow data, developing data catalogues to understand variables for effective standardisation work, improving future abundance estimation by applying acoustic data, conducting research towards better estimating M, clarifying time-area coverage, the complex behaviour of alfonsino, etc. A feasibility study of the cost-benefit of collecting acoustic data could be conducted. Data Poor Stock management approaches should be also explored.

Specific Objective 2: Supporting toothfish related research.

Specific Objective 3: Addressing the main tasks related to orange roughy in the work plan concerning the stock structure, age frequency, target strength and data collection protocol.

Specific Objective 4: Saya de Malha bank fisheries.

General Objective 2 (GO2): Management of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs);

Specific Objective 5: the definition and implementation of robust methodologies for the mapping and protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, and

Specific Objective 6: the mitigation of possible impacts on associated and dependent species.

Specific Objective 7: Investigate possible habitat suitability modelling.

General Objective 3 (GO3): Management of others ecosystem components.

Specific Objective 8: Defining interactions with seabirds, mammals, bycatch species, etc.

General Objective 4 (GO4): Reinforcing the data collection, SIOFA data/base systems, and coding and data processes.

General Objective 5 (GO5): Making operational the Scientific Working Groups and Scientific Committee (SC) supporting and facilitating the external expertise needed for advancing on the SC multiannual WorkPlan.

This grant supported the Development of fisheries and ecosystem summaries (SEC2022-SUM1, awarded to Corvus consulting), which started in 2022 and was completed in 2023 (and assisted in developing a number of papers submitted to SC8).

This grant was used to support projects like PAE2021-01 Bioregionalisation (awarded to the Museum National D'Histoire Naturelle (MNHN)), which submitted a final draft report to SC8 ([SC-08-30](#), restricted) and will be completed shortly after SC8. Another project supported by this grant was the SEC2022-DBS1 Develop Data Base system and analyses, which was completed in 2022.

Funds from this grant are currently supporting a number of science projects:

SER2022-TOP1 - Tothfish stock structure (molecular analysis) – contracted to COOOL

SER2022-BYS2 - Alfonsino otolith ageing + age validation using bomb radiometry – contracted to Allen Andrews

SER2022-ORY1 - Orange roughy stock structure – contract signature in progress

SER2022-BYS1 - Alfonsino stock structure - contract signature in progress

The project SEC2022-EXP1 is a fund meant to recruit external experts to support PAEwg and SERAwg and is also covered by this grant. Currently there is some budget allocated to this project, but no active process ongoing.

Some projects scheduled under this grant were cancelled/suspended: Toothfish growth curve (+ otolith collection, SER2022-TOP3) and Update to the ERA work - update the teleosts ERAs with better and more recent input data (SER2022-ERA1).

### Support for Ecosystem Approaches to fisheries conservation and management in SIOFA (SIOFA-SEAs) - Ongoing

This project started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2022 and is scheduled to be completed at the end of January 2024. The total budget is of 124,976 EUR, with a EU Contribution of 99,980.80 EUR.

SIOFA SEAs will provide a significant contribution to science-based management of the marine ecosystems in the South Indian Ocean under the purview of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA). The SIOFA SEAs project will develop the scientific knowledge and understanding of the relevant marine ecosystems to ensure that SIOFA management decisions are based on robust

scientific advice and enhance the sustainable management of the SIOFA Area marine ecosystem and fish stocks. SIOFA SEAs includes three strategic work components, focusing on the SIOFA Area:

1. the assessment of Protected Areas in SIOFA;
2. the improvement of scientific understanding of Patagonian toothfish population spatial structure;
3. the establishment of a framework for scientific observation of fisheries.

This grant supports a total of three projects, one of which has been already contracted and two are currently being contracted.

The PAE2022-MPA1 project on Protocols to designate and evaluate MPAs was contracted to a team of scientists led by Roa-Ureta in February 2023 and is scheduled to be completed at the end of 2023.

The SER2022-TOP2 project on Toothfish population spatial structure has been awarded to COOOL consulting and the contract is currently being finalised. The project is scheduled to be completed at the end of 2023.

Finally, the ToR for the project SEC2022-OBS1 on the Harmonization of observer framework are currently [published on the SIOFA Website](#), and the application period has been set to end on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2023. This project is currently scheduled to last until early 2024, but there might be further delays to this process.

It is likely that the SIOFA SC Chairs will request the Secretariat to seek an extension of the project duration period, until after SC9.

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