



La Réunion, Monday 2nd October 2023

SIOFA SC CIRCULAR n° 2023-17

SUBJECT: The 2023/24 SIOFA Scientific Committee work plan

Dear Heads of Delegation of the Scientific Committee,
Dear Colleagues

The 2023 SIOFA Scientific Committee report ([SC8 report](#)) was considered by the SIOFA Meeting of the Parties at its annual meeting in 2023 (MoP10), including endorsement of the 2023 Scientific Committee workplan ([MoP-10-13-Rev1](#), [MoP10 report](#)). In addition, the Scientific Committee was tasked with a number of items to review and to develop advice for the MoP.

The Scientific Committee Workplan, including requests from the MoP, is summarised below. I thank the vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat for their work in putting together this summary. I also would like to extend my thanks to the Members of the Scientific Committee for their work at the 2023 Scientific Committee and its First Extraordinary Meeting.

The 2024 annual SIOFA Scientific Committee meeting (SC9) will be hosted by Thailand and will be held as a combined meeting from 18 to 27 March 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand. The joint MoP-SC virtual workshop on harvest strategy management options (WS2023-HSMO) will take place on the 7th and 8th of November (<https://siofa.org/meetings/WS2023-HSMO>), and a virtual workshop to review progress of work towards establishing a framework for scientific observation of SIOFA fisheries is currently planned for late January or early February 2024.

The proposed timetable of workshops and meetings in advance of SC9 is given in Table 1. The list of projects on the Scientific Committee workplan is given in Tables 2-5. The paragraphs from the MoP10 report requesting advice from the Scientific Committee are summarised in Annex 1.

I would also like to bring to your attention the date for items to be included in the agenda for SC9, and submission dates for papers to the that meeting:

- 18 January 2024 Circulation of SC9 provisional agenda
- 28 January 2024 Deadline for comments on SC9 provisional agenda to the Secretariat
- 12 February 2024 Deadline for submission of SC9 working papers to the Secretariat
- 4 March 2024 Deadline for submission of SC9 information papers to the Secretariat

I hope that this circular will assist in your planning and preparation for the upcoming scientific meetings.

Sincerely yours,

Alistair Dunn - SIOFA Scientific Committee Chair

Table 1: 2023/24 SIOFA Scientific Committee workshop schedule in advance of SC9

Workshop	Summary Title	WS Chair(s)	Format	No. sessions	Date
WS2023-HSMO	Joint MoP-SC intersessional workshop to define Harvest Strategy Management Objectives	MoP Chair SC Chair ¹	Virtual	2	7 th and 8 th November
WS2024-OBS	Progress of work towards establishing a framework for scientific observation of SIOFA fisheries	SC Chair ¹	Virtual	2	TBA (late January-early February 2024)

Notes: 1. The potential Workshop Chair is indicated; however, SC HoDs may nominate delegates for this role.

Table 2: Recurring (annual) activities ([MOP-10-13-Rev1](#) Prioritized SIOFA SC medium-term workplan)

Summary Title	Lead	Provider	Notes
Development of 3-5 yr. Scientific Committee budget	SC Chair	SC Chairs committee	See paper SC-08-INFO-03
Review of VME indicator taxa list	SC	SC Delegations	
Annual report of VME encounters	Data Officer	Secretariat	Secretariat will report if any VME encounters have been submitted by CCPs
Annual review of VME encounters	SC	SC	
Summary of SIOFA data	Data Officer	Secretariat	Secretariat will summarize the available data at SIOFA
Update fisheries overview	Science Officer	Secretariat	
Update ecosystem summary	Science Officer	Secretariat	
Create/update fisheries summaries	Science Officer	Secretariat	Note different timelines for each species as indicated in respective reports: ORY, ALF, TOT, HAU, OIL/LEC, CYO, RIB, TAK

Table 3: 2023-2024 Workplan (MoP-10-13-Rev1 Prioritized SIOFA SC medium-term workplan)

Project code	Lead	Summary Title	Budget	Funding source	Project Status
SER2022-TOP1		Toothfish stock structure (molecular analysis)	8,333 €	EU grant GO1	Completed
SER2022-ORY1		Orange roughy stock structure	8,333 €	EU grant GO1	Completed
SER2022-BYS1		Alfonsino stock structure	10,000 €	EU grant GO1	Completed
SER2022-BYS2		Alfonsino otolith ageing + age validation using bomb radiometry	10,000 €	Mop9 + EU grant GO1	Draft report submitted
PAE2022-MPA1		Protocols to designate and evaluate MPAs	18,000 €	EU SIOFA-SEAs	In progress
SER2022-TOP2		Toothfish population spatial structure	34,000 €	EU SIOFA-SEAs	In progress
SEC2022-OBS1		Harmonisation of Scientific Observer programmes	48,000 €	EU SIOFA-SEAs	In progress
DWS-2023-01	EU (Roberto Sarralde)	Improving the scientific advice for data-limited deep-water sharks caught longline fisheries in the SIOFA Area	None required	EU internal funding	
TOT-2023-01	EU (Roberto Sarralde)	Toothfish catch limits	None required	EU internal funding	
ORY-2023-01	COK (Steve Brouwer)	Age and growth of orange roughy	40,000	MoP	Contracted
ORY-2023-02	COK (Steve Brouwer)	Orange roughy acoustics	25,000	MoP	Contracted
DWS-2023-02	SIODFA (Paul Clerkin)	Identification and trends in Deepwater Sharks c	12,000	MoP	Contracted

Table 4: 2024-2025 Workplan (MoP-10-13-Rev1 Prioritized SIOFA SC medium-term workplan)

Project code	Lead	Summary Title	Budget	Funding source	Project Status
ALF-2024-01	JPN (Takehiro Okuda)	Age and growth of alfonsino	25,000	MoP (TBC)	Planned
ALF-2024-02	JPN (Takehiro Okuda)	Alfonsino acoustics	10,000	MoP (TBC)	Planned
ORY-2024-01	COK (Steve Brouwer)	Orange roughy stock assessment	50,000	MoP (TBC)	Planned

Table 5: 2025-2026 Workplan (MoP-10-13-Rev1 Prioritized SIOFA SC medium-term workplan)

Project code	Lead	Summary Title	Budget	Funding source	Project Status
ALF-2025-01	JPN (Takehiro Okuda)	Alfonsino stock assessment	50,000	MoP (TBC)	Planned

ANNEX 1: Requests and requirements for the SIOFA Scientific Committee from MoP10

1. Requests to the SIOFA Scientific Committee from the SIOFA Meeting of the Parties ([MoP10 report](#)).

Agenda item 6 – Scientific Committee (SC) and Report of the SC8

6.2.1. Harvest Strategies

75. The MoP ENDORSED the recommendation in paragraph 171 of the SC8 report and REQUESTED the advice of the SC on additional SIOFA species that would be amenable to the development of monitoring programmes and harvest strategies.

76. The MoP NOTED the recommendations in paragraph 173 of the SC8 report and AGREED to develop harvest strategies for orange roughy and toothfish as a first step, and then subsequently consider developing harvest strategies for alfonso and other primary SIOFA species. The MoP REQUESTED the SC to continue to work to develop harvest strategies in conjunction with workshops held with the MoP.

80. The MoP NOTED paragraph 179 of the SC8 report and REQUESTED that SC9 hold discussions on the development of generalised approaches for stock maintenance and rebuilding approaches (if needed) and present the outcomes of its discussions to MoP11.

81. The MoP ENDORSED the recommendations in paragraph 180 of the SC8 report that the MoP consider additional objectives such as bycatch, fisheries impacts, benthic impacts, etc., as part of its harvest strategies. The MoP REQUESTED that the SC provide advice based on the objectives set by the MoP.

83. The MoP ENDORSED the recommendation in paragraph 183 of the SC8 report that the SC consider a wide range of options for stock monitoring programmes; prepare a table (e.g., as shown in Table 2 of the SC8 Report), with the scientific uncertainty, relative costs, and applicability by stock/fishery of the various options; and present this to the MoP for the MoP to decide on the appropriate monitoring programme for each stock.

85. The MoP NOTED the recommendation in paragraph 185 of the SC8 report and REQUESTED the SC evaluate the different stock assessment options, based on the level of data available, for all species that are potential candidates for harvest strategies.

86. The MoP NOTED the recommendations in paragraph 186 of the SC8 report and REQUESTED the SC determine potential performance indicators for each of the management objectives once the MoP has decided on the management objectives.

87. The MoP ENDORSED the recommendations in paragraph 187 of the SC8 report regarding the approach for the development of harvest strategies and the timeline for the implementation of preassessments, assessments, management objectives and implementation of harvest strategies proposed by the Workshop (SC8 Report, Annex G)

88. The MoP ENDORSED the recommendations in paragraph 188 of the SC8 report regarding the timeline for the proposal, adoption and use of final Harvest Strategies

90. The MoP ENDORSED the recommendation in paragraph 193 of the SC8 report to hold a joint MoP-SC workshop on harvest strategy pre-assessment in 2024 and discussed the duration and timing of the meeting under agenda item 15.

91. The MoP AGREED to hold a joint MoP-SC intersessional workshop to define management objectives, based on which the SC would develop its scientific advice. The MoP REQUESTED the Chair and the SC to draft the agenda and Terms of Reference for the intersessional workshop. The MoP discussed the timing of the meeting under agenda item 15.

94. The MoP NOTED paragraph 197 of the SC8 report and REQUESTED the SC to develop interim ad-hoc harvest control rules that could be used for managing stocks, including for example, harvest control rules that adjust any future catch limits based on trends in CPUE or other stock status indicators.

6.2.2. Deepwater sharks

104. The MoP ENDORSED the recommendation in paragraph 237 of the SC8 report that analyses should be conducted to evaluate these interim measures' effectiveness, such as Monte-Carlo simulations and a catch-by-distance CPUE depletion analysis, and that once these analyses are completed, the interim measures could be adjusted accordingly.

105. The MoP ENDORSED the recommendation in paragraph 238 of the SC8 report that collection of biological data, particularly aging data, for Portuguese dogfish be enhanced with the aim of conducting a preliminary quantitative assessment at SC9 and a formal quantitative assessment at SC10 for determining trends in biomass and the sustainable level of Portuguese dogfish catch.

107. The MoP ENDORSED the recommendation in paragraph 246 of the SC8 report and REQUESTED the SC to develop a tagging programme for the consideration of the MoP for skates caught alive and with a high probability of survival on longline vessels and NOTED, as advised by the SC, that in the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), skates are cut off at the roller but practices among vessels operating in SIOFA may differ and need to be considered accordingly.

122. The MoP NOTED the recommendation in paragraph 85 of the SC8 report and REQUESTED the SC to develop a fisheries summary for common mora (*Mora moro*).

6.2.6. Other SC recommendations for the attention of the MoP10

135. Regarding paragraph 271 of the SC8 report, the MoP NOTED the significant catch in cells that are both in exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and in SIOFA, the need to consider this catch information for any future assessment of oilfish in the SIOFA Area, and the SC request that the Secretariat add this information to the oilfish fishery summaries.

137. The MoP NOTED the recommendation in paragraph 276 and 288 of the SC8 report regarding potential management options for providing protection for vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs), and discussed the table of different VME management options available, as summarized in Annex L of the SC8 report. The MoP REQUESTED the SC to discuss management options for preventing SAIs on VMEs with a focus on the precautionary approach, spatial management measures, move-on rules, and identifying risks for determining appropriate measures.

142. The MoP NOTED the request in paragraph 289 of the SC8 report that the MoP consider revisions to either CMM 2020/01 (Interim Management of Bottom Fishing) or CMM 2022/02 (Data Standards) that would ensure that vessel reported VME indicator taxa captures and Observer data reports are consistent with the provisions for longline VME encounters in CMM 2020/01 that require VME encounters to be recorded by longline segment rather than by entire haul. The MoP REQUESTED the SC to provide further advice on potential management options for resolving the issue, specifically what potential amendments would be required to CMM 2020/01 or to CMM 2022/02, and what the implications of such amendments would be for scientific work and data collection onboard vessels.

144. The MoP ENDORSED the recommendations in paragraphs 337 of the SC8 report to continue with the new combined SC format going forward and to establish two Vice-Chair positions.

6.4. Prioritized medium-term Scientific Committee workplan and budget

154. The MoP ENDORSED the SC Workplan as outlined in MoP-10-13 rev1.

Agenda item 9 – Review and amendment of Conservation Management Measures (CMMs) currently in force

165. The MoP tasked SC9 to provide further advice on fishing gear options to mitigate the ongoing impact of SIOFA fisheries on vulnerable deepwater sharks.

166. The MoP further tasked SC9 to provide definitions of leader and wire and other leader types for longline gear, and advice on the application of move-on rules for demersal longline and trawl fisheries to protect vulnerable deepwater sharks.

171. The MoP AGREED to defer agreement of the South Indian Ridge management area until the SC has provided advice on an appropriate catch limit for this area, and on the possibility of harmonising the management regimes applicable in the existing and future management areas.

172. The MoP REQUESTED the SC to develop a CPUE by analogy assessment of Del Cano Rise and the South Indian Ridge and to consider how CCAMLR trend analysis rules (https://fishdocs.ccamlr.org/TrendAnalysis_2020.pdf) might be applied in the SIOFA Area, including the South Indian Ridge

Agenda item 15 – 2024 meeting arrangements

265. The MoP AGREED that a focused topic on harvest strategies, performance indicators and other aspects related to harvest strategies would be included as part of the agenda for SC9.

267. The MoP AGREED that the joint MoP-SC workshop on development of harvest strategies will take place over two days, with the first taking place virtually in the period between SC9 and CC8, and the second taking place in a hybrid format on 29 June 2024 between CC8 and MoP11, with the costs of the hybrid arrangements being covered by the Reserve Fund.

2. Requests to CCPs for information to be presented to the Scientific Committee

6.2.1. Harvest Strategies

95. The MoP noted paragraph 199 of the SC8 report and AGREED that, for the primary SIOFA target species, CCPs should include in their national reports nominal CPUE data for these species, to enable the identification of potential trends in years when no assessment is being undertaken.

6.2.6. Other SC recommendations for the attention of the MoP10

140. The MoP NOTED the recommendation in paragraph 284 of the SC8 report and encouraged CCPs to conduct trial collections of photographs of all sessile invertebrate occurrences (one picture per occurrence in each haul) by their Scientific Observers for a 3-year trial period, for consideration by the SC after the trial period.