



La Réunion, Thursday 25 July 2024

## SC-CIRCULAR n° 2024-08

**SUBJECT: The 2024/25 SIOFA Scientific Committee work plan**

**Dear Heads of Delegation of the Scientific Committee,**

**Dear Colleagues,**

First, I would like to welcome and congratulate Zhou Fang (China) on being appointed as the second Vice Chair of the Scientific Committee (SC).

Second, the 2024 SIOFA Scientific Committee report (SC9 report) was considered by the SIOFA Meeting of the Parties at its annual meeting in 2024 (MoP11), including endorsement of the 2025 SC workplan (MoP-11-06-Rev1). I also would like to extend my thanks to the Members of the SC for their work at the 2024 SC annual meeting to develop the workplan.

I have summarised below the SC focus topics to be held at SC10 (Table 1), intersessional workshops (Table 2), intersessional activities (Table 3), SC information requests (Table 4), and SC projects for the 2024–25 year (Table 5). In addition, the SC was tasked with a number of items to review and to develop advice for the MoP. These are summarised in the Annex 1.

We will soon be circulating the draft Terms of Reference for the upcoming SC projects for this year.

There are five SC Workshops planned for the intersessional period, with four being virtual ones. These are given in Table 2 along with preliminary dates for these meetings. Note that the Scientific Observer Form Workshop (WS2024-OFO) is proposed for 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2024 and the Workshop on protected area designation (WS2024-PAD) is proposed for the 13<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Nov 2024. SC-Circulars with the proposed workshop arrangements will be circulated shortly.

I also note that the 2025 annual SIOFA SC meeting (SC10) will be hosted by France and will be held from 17 to 26 March 2025 in Concarneau, France (MoP11 report, paragraphs 311–312).

Please note that the MoP confirmed the SC proposal for clarifying the dates for submission of documents for SC meetings, and these are given in the revised SC Terms of Reference (<https://siofa.org/about-siofa/basic-documents/tor/sc-tor>). For 2025, these dates will be:

- 16 January 2025 Circulation of SC10 draft provisional agenda
- 26 January 2025 Deadline for comments on SC10 provisional agenda to the Secretariat
- 15 February 2025 Deadline for submission of SC10 working papers to the Secretariat
- 20 February 2025 The Secretariat to make SC10 working papers available to delegations
- 2 March 2025 Deadline for submission of SC10 information papers to the Secretariat
- 7 March 2025 The Secretariat to make SC10 information papers available to delegations

Over the upcoming intersessional period we are also likely to be requested to hold a second Extraordinary Meeting of the SC to evaluate the BFIA for lobster trap fishing by Comoros (MoP11 report, paragraph 288).

I will advise you when I have more information, but I expect to be requested to hold a short virtual meeting to be held sometime later in this calendar year.

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

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Dunn' followed by a horizontal flourish.

Alistair Dunn - SIOFA Scientific Committee Chair

**Table 1: SC focus topics that will be held during SC10**

Lead	Focus sessions to be held at SC10
SC Chair	Focus session on Scientific Observers
TBA	Focus session on sharks
TBA	Focus session on VMEs
TBA	Focus session on Precautionary Approach and Management (Harvest Strategies)

**Table 2: SIOFA SC workshops, workshop lead, and proposed dates for workshops to be held in advance of SC10**

Workshop code	Lead	Summary Title	Date	Status
WS2024-HSS	SC Chair	MoP-SC Workshop on Harvest Strategies (hybrid)	29 Jun 2024	Completed
WS2024-PAD	AUS	Workshop on protected area designation (virtual)	13 & 20 Nov 2024	Proposed
WS2024-OBS2	SC Chair	Scientific Observer Form Workshop (virtual)	28 Nov 2024	Proposed
WS2024-OBS3	FAO	Joint FAO/SIOFA observer training workshop (in person)	2-6 Dec 2024 (tentative)	Proposed
WS2025-PAM1	TBD	Precautionary Approach and Management 1 (virtual)	Jan/Feb 2025	Proposed
WS2025-PAM2	TBD	Precautionary Approach and Management 2 (virtual)	Jan/Feb 2025	Proposed
WS2025-PAM3	TBD	Precautionary Approach and Management 3 (virtual)	Jan/Feb 2025	Proposed

**Table 3: Recurring (annual) activities**

Summary Title	Lead	Provider	Notes
Proposed 3-5 yr. Scientific Committee budget	SC Chair	SC Chairs committee	See paper SC-09-INFO-02
Review of VME indicator taxa list	SC	SC Delegations	
Review of SIOFA BFIs, Exploratory Fisheries FOPs, Research Cruises	SC	SC	
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	
SIOFA Performance Review Recommendations implementation status	SC	SC	
Climate change considerations	SC	SC	The SC to consider climate change as a standing agenda item
Summary of SIOFA data	Data Officer	Secretariat	The Secretariat will summarise the available data at SIOFA, including a scheme of the linkages in the database
Update fisheries overview	Science Officer	Secretariat	
Update ecosystem summary	Science Officer	Secretariat	
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
Toothfish trend analysis for the purpose of setting catch limits	Science Officer	Secretariat	Secretariat to provide catch estimates to CCPs based on the previous year data

**Table 4: SC requests to CCPs and the Secretariat for the 2024-2025 period.**

Lead	Summary Title
Secretariat - Data Officer	Review of the data request/release process
Secretariat - Data Officer	The SC requested the Secretariat to present a paper to SC10 describing the database structure associated with the IOTC data and if and how these data could be accessed by consultants and CCPs through the SIOFA system
Secretariat - Science Officer + SC Chairs	Status of progress towards establishing and operating a SIOFA observer programme
CCPs - Australia	IOTC standards for EM systems and associated processes for EM data to be considered equivalent to observer data
CCPs - Australia	Shark ERA with updated distribution maps
CCPs - Australia	Skate tagging protocol
CCPs - China	Data submission forms for squid jigging vessel logbooks and observer logbooks
CCPs – EU/France OT	Evaluation of the toothfish monitoring program based on tagging
CCPs – Chinese Taipei	CPUE standardisation for its oilfish fishery and preliminary biological parameters for oilfish

**Table 5: 2024 projects in the SC workplan.**

Project code	Lead	Summary Title	Budget	Funding source
ALF-2024-01	JPN (Takehiro Okuda) /COK (Stephen Brouwer)	Alfonsino age protocol development	15,000 €	MoP
ORY-2024-01	COK (Steve Brouwer)	Orange roughy stock assessment	50,000 €	MoP
PAM-2024-01	TBD	Development of the SIOFA Precautionary Approach Framework (PAF)	62,500 €	EU grant SIOFA-PAM
PAM-2024-02	TBD	Determination of Biological Reference Points (BRPs) for key SIOFA fish stocks	37,500 €	EU grant SIOFA-PAM
PAM-2024-03	TBD	Development of Harvest Strategies for key SIOFA fish stocks	50,000 €	EU grant SIOFA-PAM
DWS-2024-01	EU/Roberto Sarralde	Development of a formal quantitative assessment of Portuguese dogfish catch and determination of the level of sustainable catch (a continuation of DWS-2023-01)	-	CCP
DWS-2024-02	EU/Roberto Sarralde	Development of protocols and guidelines for fishing gear to mitigate the ongoing impact of SIOFA fisheries on vulnerable deepwater sharks, including the definitions of leader and wire and other leader types for longline gear, and the application of move-on rules for demersal longline and trawl fisheries to protect vulnerable deepwater sharks	-	CCP
TOT-2024-02	EU/FROT	Evaluation of the toothfish monitoring program based on tagging	-	CCP

## **ANNEX 1: REQUESTS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SIOFA SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE FROM MOP11**

### 1. Requests to the SIOFA Scientific Committee from the SIOFA Meeting of the Parties (MoP11 report).

#### 5.2.4: Observer harmonisation

92. The MoP NOTED the recommendation in paragraph 353 of the SC9 report and NOTED that specific sampling mechanisms and requirements could be defined in an observer manual that is developed by the SC and that this approach would allow greater flexibility in setting and revising specific scientific sampling priorities.

93. The MoP NOTED the recommendation in paragraph 366 of the SC9 report that the MoP consider mandatory and higher levels of observer coverage. The MoP TASKED SC10 to provide advice to MoP12 on observer coverage levels by unit of effort and data collection requirements for observers on all fisheries, as well as observer data submission requirements for SIOFA.

#### 5.2.6 Framework for research cruises in SIOFA area

109. The MoP NOTED that the R.V. Dr Fridtjof Nansen has conducted research cruises in the Agreement Area in the past, REQUESTED that the Nansen Programme share data and key reports arising from these past research cruises, and TASKED the SC to review these data and reports.

114. The MoP NOTED that SIOFA currently does not have a measure addressing discards at sea and NOTED that consideration could be given to the establishment of such a measure in future if needed. The MoP NOTED that there would be value in the SC providing advice on the extent of discarding in SIOFA and the impacts of restrictions on this practice.

#### 5.2.7.5 Other species

127. The MoP NOTED the recommendation in paragraph 328 of the SC9 report and NOTED that the SC would consider the data submission forms for squid jigging vessel logbooks and observer logbooks at its next meeting.

#### 5.2.9 Bycatch and Incidental captures

137. The MoP NOTED the recommendation in paragraph 280 of the SC9 report and NOTED that significant catches of species that are managed by SIOFA but taken as bycatch by fisheries managed by other RFMOs, such as the IOTC, are not reported to SIOFA, as they are only reported to those RFMOs. The MoP TASKED the SC to discuss potential data-sharing and data-reporting mechanisms that would address this issue, while also avoiding the potential issue of double-counting the same information.

#### 5.2.10 Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems

140. The MoP NOTED the recommendation in paragraph 306 of the SC9 report and NOTED that the SC intends to hold discussions on options for recording of VME taxa by line or line segment at a focused session at SC10.

### 5.3.2 2nd Workshop on Harvest Strategy Development (WS2024-HSS)

145. The MoP NOTED paragraph 13 of the WS2024-HSS Conveners report regarding the usefulness of paper WSHSPA-2023-01 for tracking SIOFA's progress in developing harvest strategies and TASKED the Secretariat to regularly update this information and present it to future meetings and workshops where harvest strategies are to be discussed.

77. The MoP recalled that during the CC, concerns were raised about the Secretariat submitting proposals arising from SC recommendations, noting that this was not the role of the Secretariat. The MoP AGREED that the SC can provide advice to the CC and MoP on new CMMs or CMM amendments and TASKED the SC to incorporate any recommendations relating to new CMMs or suggested changes to existing CMMs in an Annex to the SC report titled "SC recommendations on CMMs for consideration by the CC and MoP" to more clearly communicate these recommendations to the CC and MoP and enable the CC and MoP to act upon those recommendations at their respective meetings.

### 10. New Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs)

228. The MoP TASKED the SC to review the information in Annex 1 of the new CMM [Conservation and Management Measure for New and Exploratory Fisheries in the Agreement Area (CMM 17(2024) (New and Exploratory Fisheries))] at SC10.

232. The MoP AGREED to forward MOP11-29 rev2 to SC10 to evaluate the voluntary and interim BPAs, outlined in the proposal, that are implemented within the Agreement Area for the SC's advice on their application as effective spatial management tools and for providing advice to the MoP on their adoption as part of SIOFAs benthic management framework.

### 12.1.2 Implementation of SIOFA Performance Review recommendations

246. The MoP TASKED the Secretariat with developing a paper on options for facilitating and addressing the capacity building needs of CCP developing states to be considered by the next SC, CC, and MoP meetings. The scope of the paper should encompass a broad range of areas as commented by the SC in relation to recommendation 6 of the SIOFA Performance Review.

247. The MoP RECOMMENDED the establishment of a standing agenda item on the implementation of Article 13 of the Agreement. The MoP TASKED the Secretariat, in preparation for the next SC, CC, and MoP meetings, to develop a paper that outlines the existing mechanisms to provide support to developing States and other relevant information relating to Article 13.

### 14.1 Renewal of CNCP status

288. Provided the BFIA for lobster trap fishing is received, the MoP AGREED on the following process regarding Comoros BFIA:

- a. The Secretariat will provide support to Comoros in the development of the BFIA .
- b. The SC may assess the BFIA in an extraordinary meeting as per the RoP, to be held virtually, and provide recommendations and advice to the MoP.
- c. The MoP may use an intersessional decision, as per the RoP, to evaluate the BFIA and consider any future participation of that vessel in that fishery.
- d. The MoP and SC Chairpersons will closely consult with CCPs on the timelines for this process to minimise the additional burden placed on them.

#### 17. 2025 meeting arrangements

311. The MoP AGREED that the tenth meeting of the SC will take place from 17 to 26 March 2025.

312. France Territories confirmed its intention to host the tenth meeting of the SC in Concarneau [France].