

La Réunion, Wednesday 23rd July 2025

SC- CIRCULAR n° 2025-05-Rev2

SUBJECT: The 2025/26 SIOFA Scientific Committee work plan

Dear Heads of Delegation of the SIOFA Scientific Committee,

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to welcome and congratulate Ms. Charlotte Chazeau (FR(OT)) on her appointment. She joins Dr. Zhou Fang (China) as the Vice Chairs of the Scientific Committee (SC).

The 2025 SIOFA Scientific Committee report (SC10 report) was considered by the SIOFA Meeting of the Parties at its annual meeting in 2025 (MoP12), including endorsement of the 2026 SC work plan (MoP12-08-Rev1). I also would like to extend my thanks to the members of the SC for their work at the 2025 SC annual meeting in developing the work plan.

I have summarized below the upcoming work for the SC, including recurring activities (Table 1), intersessional workshops (Table 2), intersessional activities (Table 3), SC information requests (Table 3), and SC projects for the 2025–26 year (Table 4). Additionally, the SC was tasked with reviewing and developing advice for the MoP. These are summarized in Annex 1.

We will soon circulate the draft Terms of Reference for the upcoming SC projects and workshops for the coming year.

There are five virtual SC workshops planned for the intersessional period, as well as one in-person workshop. Following the adoption of the SC work plan at MoP12, these workshops have now been confirmed. The list of workshops is provided in Table 2 along with the dates for these meetings. SC Circulars with the proposed arrangements for these workshops will be circulated shortly.

I also note that the 2026 annual SIOFA SC meeting (SC11) will likely be hosted by Australia and will be held from 23 to 31 March 2026 in Perth, Australia (MoP12 report, paragraphs 438–439).

The dates for submission of documents for the 2026 SC meeting (<https://siofa.org/aboutsiofa/basic-documents/tor/sc-tor>) are:

- 22 January 2026: Circulation of SC11 draft provisional agenda
- 01 February 2026: Deadline for comments on SC11 provisional agenda to the Secretariat
- 11 February 2026: Circulation of SC11 final provisional agenda
- 21 February 2026: Deadline for submission of SC11 working papers to the Secretariat
- 26 February 2026: The Secretariat to make SC11 working papers available to delegations

- 8 March 2026: Deadline for submission of SC11 information papers to the Secretariat
- 13 March 2026: The Secretariat to make SC11 information papers available to delegations

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

Sincerely yours,

Sincerely yours, 

Alistair Dunn - SIOFA Scientific Committee Chair

1. SIOFA SC Workplan (2025–2029)

Table 1: Recurring (annual) activities

Summary Title	Lead	Provider	Notes
Proposed 3-5 yr. Scientific Committee budget	SC Chair	SC Chairs committee	
Review of VME indicator taxa list	SC	SC Delegations	When requested by CCPs
Annual report of VME encounters	Data Officer	Secretariat	Secretariat summary on any VME encounters have been submitted by CCPs
Annual review of VME encounters	SC	SC	
Summary of SIOFA data	Data Officer	Secretariat	Secretariat summary of the available data at SIOFA, including a scheme of the linkages in the database
Update fisheries overview	Science Officer	Secretariat	Secretariat fisheries overview report
Update ecosystem summary	Science Officer	Secretariat	Secretariat ecosystem summary report
Update fisheries summaries	Science Officer	Secretariat	Secretariat fisheries summaries reports (ORY, ALF, TOT, HAU, OIL/LEC, CYO, RIB, TAK). Note that there are different timelines for each species
Toothfish trend analysis for the purpose of setting catch limits	Science Officer	Secretariat	Secretariat summary of catch estimates of CCPs based on the previous years' data
Review of BFIA updates	SC	SC Delegations	The SC to review any BFIA submission
Review of New and Exploratory Fisheries Fishing Operation Plans	SC	SC Delegations	The SC to review any New and Exploratory Fisheries Fishing Operation Plans submissions

Table 2: SC Workshops for the 2025-2026 period.

Workshop code	Lead	Summary Title	Type	Date
WS2025-PAM2	SC Chair	Precautionary Approach and Management 2	Virtual	6 August 2025
ALF2024-01	COK/ JPN	Development of protocols for alfonso ageing	In-person	13-17 October 2025
WS2025-HSS	SC Chair/MoP Chair	Third Joint MoP-SC Workshop on the Development of Harvest Strategies	Virtual	4 November 2025
WS2025-ORS	SC Vice Chair/EU	Window of Opportunity - Research Vessels In SIOFA	Virtual	4 November 2025 17 December 2025
WS2025-DWS	EU	Virtual SC Workshop on the impact of using alternative trace types on the bycatch rate of sharks and target species	Virtual	6 November 2025
WS2025-HSS	SC Chair/MoP Chair	Third Joint MoP-SC Workshop on the Development of Harvest Strategies	Virtual	4 November 2025 17 December 2025
WS2026-EMS	EU	Workshop on the Development of E-Monitoring Standards	Virtual	21 January 2026

Table 3: 2025 projects in the SC10 workplan.

Project code	Lead	Summary Title	Budget	Funding source
DWS-2024-01	EU (Roberto Sarralde)	Quantitative assessment of Portuguese dogfish catch and determination of the level of sustainable catch (a continuation of DWS-2023-01)	In kind	EU internal funding
ALF-2024-01	JPN (Takehiro Okuda)/COK (Stephen Brouwer)	Alfonsino age protocol development	Already allocated in 2024	MoP
ALF-2025-01	JPN (Takehiro Okuda) /COK (Stephen Brouwer)	Alfonsino age and growth	25,000 €	MoP
CLI-2025-01	AUS (Trent Timmiss)	Assessment of SIOFA Species and Ecosystems for vulnerability to climate change impacts	25,000 €	MoP
NAN-2025-01	FAO (Anthony Thompson)/SIOFA Secretariat (Marco Milardi)/FR-OT (Alexis Martin)/Paul Clerkin	Nansen cruise in the SIOFA area	None	FAO Nansen
OBS-2025-01	FR-OT (Nicolas Gasco/Charlotte Chazeau)	Development of a SIOFA scientific observer data collection manual	15,000 €	MoP

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

17. The MoP TASKED the Secretariat to implement the following additional improvements:

- a. More stringently distinguish between which working papers should be brought to the attention of the Scientific Committee (SC) and which to the MoP.
- b. For papers that are submitted to both the Compliance Committee (CC) and the MoP, use the same title for both papers and attribute the same numbering, e.g., if a paper is CC-09-01, the identical MoP paper should be numbered MoP-12-01.
- c. Add a column to the meeting page with the date on which a paper was published on the SIOFA website to enable users to more easily identify if and when a paper has been revised.

129. The MoP AGREED that it would be useful to conduct an updated cumulative SIOFA BFIA to better understand the state of bottom fishing in the SIOFA Area and TASKED the SC to develop a ToR for a consultancy to conduct this work and to present the ToR to MoP13.

131. The MoP NOTED the SC's recommendation, in paragraph 179 of the SC10 report, for holding additional PAM workshops, including joint workshops with the MoP along with technical ad-hoc meetings with experts from the SC and MoP, to ensure that the work would be appropriately developed and fully considered by the SC and MoP. The MoP discussed this matter further as part of the SC work plan under agenda item 5.1.12.

132. The MoP NOTED the SC's recommendations, in paragraph 180 of the SC10 report, that:

- a. a. the development of biological reference points (BRPs) and harvest control rules (HCRs) should be evaluated with consideration to their robustness to the effect of climate change on stock productivity and distribution.
- b. b. the precautionary approach framework should include consideration of the value of monitoring of, for example, age and length distributions, spatial distribution, etc., for evidence of changes in productivity or spatial distribution that would indicate if climate change effects would impact the scientific advice for managers.

133. The MoP NOTED the SC's recommendation, in paragraph 181 of the SC10 report, that exceptional circumstance rules be developed for the HCRs and that these include guidelines for management if climate change effects on spatial distribution or productivity that would affect the management advice were detected.

150. The MoP ADOPTED the recommendation in paragraph 374 of the SC10 report to adopt a skate tagging rate that is based on a level of observer coverage as high as opportunity allows.

171. The MoP NOTED paragraph 497 of the SC10 report and NOTED that the R.V. Dr Fridtjof Nansen will operate according to the conditions approved by the MoP (para 108, MoP11 Report), including that:

- a. the data are submitted to SIOFA within 9 months of the cruise (i.e., by October 2026).
- b. information placed in the public domain must be in accordance with SIOFA data rules.

175. As recommended by the SC in paragraph 542 of the SC10 report, the MoP TASKED the SC to develop e-monitoring standards for gear types other than pelagic longlines, using the IOTC e-monitoring standards as a

basis, and NOTED the SC's intention to hold a Workshop on the Development of E-Monitoring Standards in early 2026.

186. The MoP reviewed and revised the draft SC workplan [see MoP-12-08 rev 1].

188. The MoP NOTED that the necessity of Project ALF-2025-01 for alfonso age and growth, which had been included in the SC work plan, would depend on the outcomes of Project ALF-2024-01 for alfonso age protocol development, which is ongoing. The MoP AGREED to maintain the budget associated with Project ALF-2025-01 and to TASK the SC to report to the MoP on whether Project ALF-2025-01 and its associated budget would still be required once Project ALF-2024-01 is complete and the SC has reviewed the results.

189. The MoP AGREED to add "Update to the SIOFA cumulative BFIA" to the SC's future projects.

194. The Cook Islands suggested that, for transparency, a column could be added to the table of projects in the work plan to indicate any voluntary contributions made by CCPs to a particular project.

195. The MoP ENDORSED the SC Workplan as outlined in MoP-12-08-Rev1.

196. The MoP requested the MoP and SC Chairpersons develop draft Terms of Reference for the Third Joint MoP-SC Workshop on the Development of Harvest Strategies (WS2025-HSS).

197. The MoP NOTED paragraph 597 of the SC10 report and NOTED that the SC agreed to elect Ms Charlotte Chazeau (France Territories) as an SC Vice-Chairperson. The MoP welcomed the election of Ms Chazeau as an SC Vice-Chairperson.

198. The MoP NOTED paragraph 600 of the SC10 report and NOTED that, as there were no nominations for a new SC Chairperson from among CCPs and recognising the significant progress that the SC has made under the leadership of the current SC Chairperson, Mr Alistair Dunn, the SC recommended that the MoP extend his term for two years as this would ensure stability and continuity in advancing the SC's work over this time period. The MoP held further discussions on the SC chairing arrangements under agenda item

199. The MoP NOTED paragraph 602 of the SC10 report, NOTED that the creation of the Science Officer position has greatly enhanced the SC's ability to conduct its work and provide advice, and NOTED the SC's strong recommendation that this position be renewed when the existing contract expires in 2026 and that Dr Marco Milardi be retained in that position.

200. The MoP NOTED that although the SC reviewed and assessed an FOP that was submitted to SC10, the SC did not make a clear recommendation to the CC or the MoP in the SC10 report. The MoP REQUESTED that the SC more clearly convey its advice and recommendations on any FOPs that it assesses in future SC reports.

202. Following its review, the MoP ADOPTED the report of the 10th meeting of the Scientific Committee.

216. The MoP NOTED that in order for Mauritius' alfonso midwater trawl fishery to be included in the table of established SIOFA fisheries in Annex 1 of CMM 17(2024) (New and Exploratory Fisheries), the following procedure must be followed:

- a. Mauritius shall present its catch data and/or other information about the fishery to the SC.
- b. The SC shall provide advice to the MoP on the inclusion of the fishery in Annex 1.
- c. The MoP shall consider whether or not to update Annex 1 based on the SC's advice.

2.33 The EU presented MoP-12-48, a paper to facilitate continued discussions on developing a framework for research cruises and scientific research in the SIOFA Area. The paper built on a previous EU proposal from MoP6 (2019) and considered SC discussions and recommendations from SC6 to SC10. The EU recognised that further development of the working paper is required, invited initial comments from CCPs, and welcomed further engagement from CCPs at the meetings of the MoP and its subsidiary bodies, as well as intersessionally, towards the adoption of a new CMM at MoP13.

237. Based on CCPs' feedback, the EU submitted an updated proposal (MoP-12-48-Rev1) as a basis for further intersessional work.

238. The EU thanked the MoP for its feedback and indicated its intention to continue to work with CCPs to develop the proposal further and to present it to the SC workshop "Window of Opportunity – Research Vessels In SIOFA" (WS2025-ORS) and to SC11 for their input.

239. China presented MoP-12-50, which provided its draft research cruise plan for the 2025–2026 survey year. Building on its 2023 and 2024 high seas resource cruises, China intends to continue to conduct scientific surveys in the SIOFA area from October 2025 to March 2026 in the area of 9°S–10°N and 59°E–68°E to contribute to the scientific research on SIOFA managed species and their associated ecosystem and environment. Specifically, the survey is aimed at gaining a preliminary understanding of the species composition and quantity distribution of swimming organisms, plankton, fish eggs, and juvenile fish in the surveyed waters; grasping the physical marine environmental characteristics of the surveyed waters; and analysing the components of the pelagic marine ecosystems in the surveyed waters. China will submit the results of its research surveys to the SC.

265. Seychelles withdrew its proposal (MoP-12-42) to amend CMM 07(2024) (Vessel Authorisation) in light of the comments received from CCPs at CC9, as well as the proposed plans of the SC to work towards a definition of bycatch by developing a scientifically based categorisation of the different species that are targeted by the SIOFA fisheries or fall under the category of retained or discarded bycatch. Seychelles thanked CCPs for the comments they provided at CC9.

372. Australia noted the inclusion of Project CLI-2024-01 for the assessment of SIOFA species and ecosystems for vulnerability to climate change impacts in the SC work plan. Australia welcomed this planned work as a good first step to support SIOFA's future discussions in relation to climate change.