

La Réunion, 27 July 2026

SC- CIRCULAR n° 2026-03

SUBJECT: The 2026/27 SIOFA Scientific Committee work plan

Dear Heads of Delegation of the SIOFA Scientific Committee,

Dear Colleagues,

The 2026 annual SIOFA Scientific Committee meeting report (SC11 report) was considered by the SIOFA Compliance Committee and Meeting of the Parties at their annual meeting in 2026 (CC11 and MoP13), including endorsement of the 2026/27 SC workplan (MoP-13-05-Rev1 & SC-11-20-Rev1). A summary of relevant recommendations from these meetings is included as Annex 3 and 4.

I would like to take this chance to extend my thanks to the Members of the SC for their work at SC11 to develop the workplan. I have summarised below the upcoming work for the SC, including recurring activities (Table 1), intersessional workshops for the 2026/27 period (Table 2, see also SC-Circular 2026-04), and the SC projects for 2026 (Table 3). A summary of the tasks arising from SC11 for the Secretariat and Science/Data Officers is provided as Annex 1.

There are five workshops currently planned for the 2026/27 intersessional period (Table 2), covering the SIOFA observer manual, implementation of the precautionary approach, the joint MoP-SC harvest strategies workshop, the climate change assessment tool test, and the scientific data management framework. The proposed dates for these workshops are detailed in SC-Circular 2026-04.

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

I also note that the 2027 annual SIOFA Scientific Committee meeting (SC12) will be hosted by Mauritius and will be held from 15 to 24 March 2027 (MoP13 report, paragraph 433). Note that the SC12 Agenda will include sessions for the two focus topics (Annex 2):

- (i) Focus session on Precautionary Approach and Management (Harvest Strategies), and
- (ii) Development of ETP species — methodology and data sources.

Please note that the dates for submission of documents to SC12 are given in the SC Terms of Reference (<https://siofa.org/about-siofa/basic-documents/tor/sc-tor>). For 2027, these dates are:

- 14 January 2027 Circulation of SC12 draft provisional agenda
- 24 January 2027 Deadline for comments on SC12 provisional agenda to the Secretariat
- 13 February 2027 Deadline for submission of SC12 working papers to the Secretariat
- 18 February 2027 The Secretariat to make SC12 working papers available to delegations
- 28 February 2027 Deadline for submission of SC12 information papers to the Secretariat
- 05 March 2027 The Secretariat to make SC12 information papers available to delegations
- 15–24 March 2027 SC12 meeting in Mauritius (8 working days)

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: Recurring (annual) activities

Summary Title	Lead	Provider	Notes
Proposed 3–5 yr Scientific Committee workplan	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 of any VME encounters 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; note different timelines apply for each species
FAO FIRMS data update	Science Officer	Secretariat	Update of the SIOFA fisheries factsheets

Table 2: SC Workshops planned for the 2026–2027 period

Code	Lead	Summary Title	Type
WS2026-OBS	FR-OT (Nicolas Gasco/Charlotte Chazeau)	SIOFA observer manual workshop	Online
WS2026-IPA	SC Chair (Alistair Dunn)	Implementation of the SIOFA precautionary approach workshop	Online
WS2026-HSS	SC Chair (Alistair Dunn)	Joint SIOFA MoP-SC harvest strategies workshop	Online
WS2026-CLI	AUS (Trent Timmiss)	SIOFA Climate Change Assessment Tool Test workshop	Online
WS2026-DAT	FR-OT (Alexis Martin)/SC Chair (Alistair Dunn)	SIOFA scientific data management framework workshop	Online

Table 3: New SC projects for 2026

Project code	Lead	Summary Title	Budget	Funding source
DWS-2026-01	AUS (Trent Timmiss)	Investigation of distribution of deepwater sharks for use in ecological risk assessments	In kind	National funding
ALF-2026-01	JPN (Takehiro Okuda)/COK (Stephen Brouwer)	Alfonsino stock assessment	50,000 €	MoP
DAT-2026-01	COK (Stephen Brouwer)	Retrieving Old SIOFA Secrets (ROSS) — SIODFA Historical Data Archive project	10,000 €	MoP
VME-2026-01	FR-OT (Alexis Martin)	Post-Processing of VME Imagery collected during the EAF-Nansen Programme	25,000 €	MoP

Annex 1: Tasks arising from SC11 for the Secretariat

The following table reproduces the tasks agreed at SC11 for the Secretariat, Science Officer and Data Officer (SC-11-20-Rev1, Section 3.2).

Task	Assigned to
Highlight year-on-year changes to the Guidelines when first presented to the SC; add SC-driven changes using tracked changes.	Science Officer
Make the revised Guidelines (SC-11-INFO-01-Rev1) available on the SIOFA website.	Data Officer
Include all CCP-submitted data in future catch reporting, including tuna and billfish, regardless of IOTC reporting.	Science Officer
Identify tuna and billfish catches separately in reports to distinguish them from other species.	Science Officer
Add extraction metadata to all datasets from the SIOFA databases (date, person responsible, source database(s), time/spatial range, fisheries and taxa covered, filters applied).	Data Officer
Work with CCPs to obtain species-level reporting for catches currently reported at the TUN and BIL aggregate level.	Data Officer
Make a public version of the Overview of SIOFA Fisheries 2026 (SC-11-14-Rev2) available on the website (pending MoP endorsement).	Science Officer
Include relevant BFC VMS assessment results in the 2027 Overview of SIOFA Fisheries.	Science Officer
Make a public version of the Ecosystem Summary 2026 (SC-11-15-Rev2) available (pending MoP endorsement).	Science Officer
Continue updating the implementation status of data and security audit recommendations; report at each future SC meeting.	Data Officer
Develop a formal Scientific Data Management and Conservation Policy and consider a Scientific Data Information System (SDIS).	Science & Data Officers
Harmonise logbook files and data submission templates; implement cell format and validation improvements.	Data Officer
Continue collecting historical data on pelagic fisheries within the SIOFA Area.	Science & Data Officers
Make the age data submission template (Annex F) available to CCPs intending to submit age data.	Data Officer
Work with CCPs to review historical mid-water trawl records using the benthopelagic trawl classification algorithm (Annex G); complete before the next alfonso and orange roughy assessments.	Data Officer
Provide an updated version of the reclassification algorithm to SC12, with a summary of its effects.	Data Officer
Forward the benthopelagic trawl definition to FAO for consideration of a new gear code (BP or BTP).	Science Officer
Inform CCPs once the ageing workshop research papers are published.	Science Officer
Replace the restricted ALF-2024-01 project report with the published version once available.	Science Officer
Apply systematic QC to CCP-reported toothfish data (spatial location, effort consistency, tag release/recapture data, tag-overlap statistics, pre-Dec 2020 tagging data transmission).	Data Officer
Update the DC, SIR and WR trend analyses for SIOFA toothfish annually; present to SC12.	Science Officer

Task	Assigned to
Develop a method paper on toothfish trend analysis rule catch limits (based on WGFSA-2025/01) for review at SC12.	Science Officer
Make a public version of the Fisheries Summary: Toothfish 2026 (SC-11-16-Rev2) available (pending MoP endorsement).	Science Officer
Circulate the working draft Fisheries Summary: oilfish and escolar 2026 to CCPs following SC11, inviting revisions.	Science Officer
Receive skate tagging data as part of the 2026 data submission and present at SC12.	Science & Data Officers
Work intersessionally with FAO on reporting SIOFA stock status categories.	SC Chair / Science Officer
Update the SC Works and Projects page on the SIOFA website.	Science Officer

Annex 2: SC focus topics identified for SC12

- Focus session on Precautionary Approach and Management (Harvest Strategies).
- Development of ETP species — methodology (criteria for inclusion, taxonomic rules) and data sources (Nansen outcomes, other SIOFA research outcomes, comparison with the VME taxa list and other invertebrate reporting, database compatibility).

Annex 3: Compliance Committee (CC11) requests for SC12

Para 54: The CC agreed that going forward, it should focus its discussions on the SC recommendations that are of interest to the CC. The CC requested that the SC and the Secretariat facilitate this by specifically mentioning the CC when formulating recommendations if they are of relevance to the CC and by highlighting these recommendations when presenting the SC's recommendations at meetings of the CC.

Para 55: The CC recommended that for these recommendations, in future SC reports, they should begin with "The SC recommended to the MoP and the CC...".

Para 74: The CC noted the need for the SC to review Mauritius' plans for the use of EM, and requested that Mauritius share these plans, including further details about the EM pilot, including timelines and specifications, with SC12 for review by the SC.

Para 128: The CC noted that the SC last reviewed the encounter thresholds in 2023 and recommended that the MoP task the SC to prioritise such a review in its workplan."

Para 175 (Capacity Building Action Plan review timeline): The CC recommended that the MoP endorse the recruitment of a consultant to prepare a Capacity Building Action Plan, which will be assessed during SC12, CC11 and presented for adoption to MoP14.

Annex 4: Meeting of the Parties (MoP13) requests for SC12

Para 91 The MoP AGREED that going forward, the SC need not seek the endorsement of the MoP for the Overview of SIOFA Fisheries, SIOFA Ecosystem Summary, and individual fisheries summaries it develops, nor for tasking the Secretariat to make public versions of them, with any confidential information removed, available on the SIOFA website.

Para 95 The MoP recalled its previous discussions on the process for considering amendments to SIOFA CMMs proposed by the SC and NOTED that there has been a lack of clarity. The MoP AGREED that:

- a. the Secretariat should not submit proposals for amending CMMs to the MoP,
- b. the SC could recommend proposed amendments to CMM language and should submit them to the MoP as part of the SC report and recommendations, rather than as a proposal paper by the SC,
- c. the MoP may need to review any amendments proposed by the SC to a CMM in an independent document before adoption,
- d. the Secretariat may, at the request of the MoP, extract the proposed amendments from the SC report and recommendations and present them, on behalf of the SC, in a separate document for the MoP's review

Para 104 The MoP ENDORSED the SC's recommendation in paragraph 167 of the SC11 report and AGREED to endorse the indicative workplan for the adoption of management procedures (Annex J); develop a detailed workplan with clear tasks, timelines, and responsibilities; and regularly update the workplan, including with input from the SC.

Para 105 The MoP NOTED the request in paragraph 168 of the SC11 report and AGREED that the level of resourcing that is envisioned for the development and adoption of management procedures is likely to be similar to the current level and REQUESTED the SC to take this into account when developing its procedures.

Para 106 The MoP NOTED the SC's recommendation in paragraph 169 of the SC11 report and:

- e. ENDORSED the holding of a two-day workshop on SIOFA-PAM-related work in late 2026 or early 2027, which will consider the recommendations from the SIOFA-PAM projects and consolidate advice to

SC12 on next steps, workplans, and an implementation plan for PAM, taking into account any decisions from MoP13,

- f. TASKED the SC to work in conjunction with the Secretariat at the workshop on SIOFA-PAM-related work and at SC12 to develop a template for presenting SC advice to the MoP,
- g. ENDORSED the holding of a one-day MoP-SC joint workshop between the SC and the MoP in 2027 to consider the outcomes of the SC's work and provide preliminary advice to the MoP and CCPs, thereby facilitating further discussions on ways forward at MoP14,
- h. TASKED the MoP Chairperson and the SC Chairperson to develop ToRs for the MoP-SC joint workshop well in advance of the workshop,
- i. TASKED the Secretariat to ensure that documents are submitted well in advance to the MoP-SC joint workshop and ensure that the documents are very clear in what they are recommending and what input and decisions are being sought from managers

Para 107 The MoP NOTED paragraph 170 of the SC11 report and NOTED the SC's intention to delay the implementation of management procedure-related work for 12 months and to identify key parts of any consultancy starting in 2027–2028, if required.

Para 125 To support implementation and in the interest of the precautionary approach, the MoP AGREED to prohibit the conducting of all trawl methods in the SIOFA BFCs until such time the MoP has received a recommendation from the SC based on the testing of the benthopelagic assessment algorithm.

Para 126 The MoP TASKED the Secretariat with further developing a document assessing the implications of the new definition on existing CMMs and provide it to SC12 and CC11, within consideration of their role, and MoP14 for consideration.

Para 131 The MoP ENDORSED the SC's recommendation in paragraph 226 of the SC11 report and REQUESTED all CCPs who fish for alfonsino to routinely collect length and otolith samples using the same random sampling methodology.

Para 154 The MoP NOTED the strong commitment of CCPs with vessels targeting oilfish to undertake the following for SC12's consideration:

- a. Characterise the OIL/LEC fishery in the SIOFA Area, summarising trends in catch, effort, and unstandardised CPUE by CCP, subarea, and gear, and distinguishing directed pelagic longline catch from bycatch reported in other target fisheries.
- b. Summarise available length/size composition data for OIL and LEC by subarea and fleet, and assess whether current data are adequate to support future characterisation of size structure

Para 163 The MoP NOTED paragraph 391 of the SC11 report and REQUESTED that CCPs fishing for alfonsino collect standardised length frequency data as well as otolith samples and coordinate a standardised collection protocol.

Para 169 The MoP AGREED that the SIOFA EM programme is primarily intended for the collection of data for scientific purposes, as an alternative to data collection by scientific observers. The MoP also AGREED that there should be no constraints on each CCP using data collected by EM for compliance purposes domestically

Para 171 The MoP NOTED paragraph 458 of the SC11 report and ENDORSED the holding of an online workshop by the SC to consider the outcomes of the Project CLI-2025-01 final report and utilise the climate change risk assessment framework for several indicative trial species (WS2026 CLI).

Para 172 The MoP NOTED paragraph 459 of the SC11 report and TASKED the SC with developing climate change indicators that should be regularly reported on and updated annually.

Para 226 The MoP AGREED to forward the Mauritius proposal on an alternate method for collecting data required by paragraph 12 of CMM 02(2025) on Data Standards for further review by the SC and REQUESTED Mauritius to provide additional details to facilitate the SC's review, taking into account the comments received from the MoP.

Para 226 The MoP TASKED the SC to provide the MoP with advice on whether the application of the reporting requirements under paragraph 6 of CMM 18(2025) (BFCs) to all vessels, not only bottom-fishing vessels, would be scientifically valuable.

Para 370 The MoP reviewed and ENDORSED the SC Working Plan and the associated budget.

Para 393 The MoP TASKED the Secretariat to identify specific discussion points when preparing the annotated agendas for future meetings of the CC, SC, and the MoP, to facilitate focused discussion on critical decision points or consultative requirements.

Para 528 The MoP NOTED the value of the data generated from the Nansen survey, particularly for future reviews of the SIOFA BFCs, and TASKED the SC to develop a timetable for analysing these data.

Para 533 The MoP AGREED that the 12th meeting of the SC will take place from 15 to 24 March 2027 in Mauritius.