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

10th Meeting of the SIOFA Compliance Committee (CC10) and 13th Meeting of the Parties to SIOFA (MoP13)

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Proposal New CMM for Scientific Research by Fishing Vessel

Delegation of the European Union

Meeting	Compliance Committee ✓ Meeting of the Parties ✓
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Abstract	
Scientific research is considered in the SIOFA Agreement in Articles 1 (Definitions), Article 6 (Functions of the meeting of the parties), 7 (Subsidiary bodies), and 13 (Special requirements of developing States). However, the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement has not developed a framework providing how scientific research should be considered. To address that loophole, the European Union submits this working paper on scientific research by fishing vessels that builds on our working papers presented to MoP12 in 2025 (MoP-12-48-Rev1) and to SC11 in 2026 (SC-11-56-Rev1). The main objective of this Working Paper is to continue the discussion on such a framework for scientific research in the SIOFA Area at MoP13. The EU welcomes comments from CCPs towards the adoption of a new CMM at MoP13.	

¹ Restricted documents may contain confidential information. Please do not distribute restricted documents in any form without the explicit permission of the SIOFA Secretariat and the data owner(s)/provider(s).

² Documents available only to members invited to closed sessions.

Rev1 includes the following changes:

- Paragraph 5 has been added to specify the scope of the CMM.
- Paragraph 6a has been modified to exclude scientific research done by observers from the scope of this CMM.
- Paragraph 8 has been added to define the concept of 'routine research exercises' from paragraph 5.
- Paragraph 9 has been modified to remove an element that made the provision unclear.
- Paragraph 10a has been modified to cover the scenario of a scientific research done by a fishing vessel of a CCP who has no quota for a species with an allocation.
- Paragraphs 16 and 17 have been modified to align with paragraph 3 of this CMM, since the application is broader than Contracting Parties only.

Rev2 includes the following changes:

- The abstract has been modified to add a reference to fishing vessels.
- Paragraph 1 has been modified to specify the activities of a fishing vessel in the scope of this CMM.
- Paragraph 2 has been modified to add the number of the CMM on research cruises, if adopted.
- Paragraph 5 has been modified to exclude guest scientists from the scope of this CMM.
- Paragraphs 4, 16 and 17 have been modified to remove CNCPs and PFEs, since CCPs cover them already.
- Paragraphs 9 and 12 have been modified to refer to CCP instead of listing CP, CNCP and PFE.
- Paragraph 9b has been modified to refer to key elements, to align with the research cruise CMM.
- Paragraph 14 has been modified to clarify that the data from scientific research should be submitted to the SC.
- Paragraph 30 has been moved (previously paragraph 9c) to align with the structure of research cruise CMM.

Rev3 includes the following change:

- Paragraph 10 has been modified to replace 'catch limit' by 'maximum catch' and to add consideration by the MoP.
- Paragraphs 10, 11, 12 have been modified to remove the 'a' before 'scientific research'.
- Paragraph 14 has been modified to clarify that the data from scientific research should be submitted to the SIOFA Secretariat.

Recommendations

- Consider the working paper and submit comments and language suggestions

New CMM 20(2026)
Scientific Research by Fishing Vessel in the SIOFA Area

RECALLING that Article 6(1) (b) of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (the Agreement) calls on the Meeting of the Parties to promote and, as appropriate, coordinate research activities as required on the fishery resources and on straddling stocks occurring in waters under national jurisdiction adjacent to the Area, including discarded catch and the impact of fishing on the marine environment;

FURTHER RECALLING that Article 10(1)(c) set out the duties relevant to the collection and exchange of scientific, technical and statistical data for Contracting Parties;

RECOGNISING the importance of developing comprehensive arrangements for relevant scientific research to assist the Scientific Committee in performing its functions as outlined in Article 7 of the Agreement;

NOTING Part XIII, Section 1, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which recognises the right of States and competent international organisations to conduct marine scientific research, subject to the rights and duties of other States under the Convention, calling for the promotion and facilitation of marine scientific research and providing that such research shall be conducted for peaceful purposes, using appropriate scientific methods and means, without unjustifiable interference with other legitimate uses of the sea, and in compliance with relevant regulations for the protection and preservation of the marine environment;

NOTING the importance of collecting independent fishery data and cost-effective fishery-dependent data for the purposes of ensuring scientific stock assessment and implementing an ecosystem approach to fisheries management;

NOTING the recommendation by the Eleventh meeting of the Scientific Committee to continue the efforts to establish a CMM for research cruises and scientific research.

FURTHER NOTING that the Meeting of Parties has adopted policies and procedures for the maintenance of data standards CMM 02(2025) and data confidentiality (CMM 03(2025));

ADOPTS the following conservation and management measure (CMM) in accordance with Article 6 of the Agreement:

Objective

1. The objective of the “Scientific Research by Fishing Vessel CMM” is to establish an operational framework for the undertaking of fisheries-related scientific research by fishing vessels in parallel of their commercial fishing activities in the SIOFA Area and consistent procedures for scientific research.
2. The specific “Scientific Research by Fishing Vessel CMM” is separated from the “Research Cruise by Research Vessel CMM CMM19(2026)” and from the process

adopted for exploratory fisheries (CMM 17(2025)) ensuring that all three activities are appropriately sanctioned prior to the activity being undertaken and subsequently reported.

Application

3. This CMM shall apply to all Contracting Parties, cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CNCs) and participating fishing entities (PFEs) that propose to conduct fishing operations using fishing vessels for scientific research purposes in the SIOFA Area for any fishery or fisheries resources falling under SIOFA's competence.

4. Only CCPs, ~~CNCs and PFEs~~ can conduct scientific research in the SIOFA area for fisheries falling under SIOFA's competence. Scientific institutions, universities, technical experts or other third parties may participate in such research only under the responsibility of the relevant Contracting Party, CNC or PFE and in accordance with the authorised Scientific Research Plan.

~~4.5.~~ This CMM does not apply to routine research exercises or to national scientific observer programs referred in CMM02 (Data Standards) on board a fishing vessel or guest scientists on a fishing vessel undertaking its normal fishing activities.

Terminology

~~5.6.~~ For the purposes of this CMM "scientific research by fishing vessel" is defined as:

- a) Fishing vessel (FV) based scientific activities, other than by national scientific observers, collecting environmental data under the scope of a Scientific Research Plan (SRP) that includes information gathering without extraction of marine living resources;
- b) Fishing vessel conducting fishing³ and collecting data from marine living resources for scientific purposes in established fisheries under the scope of an SRP.

7. For the purposes of this CMM "Scientific Research Plan" means a plan submitted by a Contracting Party, CNC or PFE describing the objectives, methods, area, duration, fishing vessel(s), expected catches, data to be collected, reporting arrangements, and mitigation measures for fisheries-related scientific research in the SIOFA Area.

~~6.8.~~ For the purposes of this CMM, "routine research exercises" are recurring scientific research activities that do not make the fishing vessel deviate from its normal fishing activities.

³ SIOFA Agreement Article 1g.

Specific provisions for scientific research and associated catches

~~7.9.~~ Any Contracting Party, CNCP, PFE (CCPs) planning to use a fishing vessel ~~or vessels~~ for scientific research purposes as defined in paragraph 5, shall:

- a. Provide the draft Scientific Research Plan no less than thirty days in advance of the opening of the Scientific Committee meeting.
- b. The Scientific Research Plan shall contain at a minimum the following informationkey elements:
 - i. Lead Contracting Party, CNCP or PFECCP
 - ii. Fishing vessel identification,
 - iii. Purpose,
 - iv. Objectives,
 - v. Summary of scientific methods or procedures,
 - vi. Location and dates of the scientific research,
 - vii. Data submission of all data collected and analysed,
 - viii. Name and position of the lead investigator,
 - ix. Whether any catches retained on board will be marketed,
 - x. Total estimated scientific research catch of the targeted species,
 - xi. Presence of a CCP observer or other relevant and qualified expert who has completed training in accordance with national scientific observer programs,
 - xii. Information on when the research results will be presented to the Scientific Committee, and a plan for dissemination of scientific outputs,
 - xiii. Where relevant, indication that the scientific research constitutes non-recurrent new scientific research,
 - xiv. Capacity building aspects of the Scientific Research Plan,
 - xv. Estimated budget,
 - xvi. Funding source,
 - xvii. Identification of relevant CMMs being applied during planned scientific research.

~~c. Notify the SIOFA Secretariat at least 30 days prior to the commencement of the scientific research.~~

~~d.c.~~ Ensure that its fishing vessel keep on board a copy of the Scientific Research Plan.

Associated catches

~~8.10.~~ Catches taken by any vessel during the implementation of a scientific research shall be:

- a. Counted against the quota/catch limit allocated to the flag CCP for each species taken for species with quota/allocation. If the CCP does not have a quota for the species with allocation, the SC shall assess the SRP to ensure the maximum catch limit is adequate for the research to be accomplished and the MoP shall consider and authorise the maximum catch limit.
- b. Counted against the relevant SIOFA limit for species with a MoP catch limit but no allocation.
- c. Counted against the MoP authorised research catch limit based on SC advice.

9.11. Catches taken during the implementation of ~~a~~-scientific research shall not exceed the amount recommended by the Scientific Committee and adopted by the MoP per season.

- 10.12. Should ~~a~~-scientific research catch exceed the catch limit adopted by the MoP:
- a. The vessel/flag CCP shall notify the Secretariat immediately, cease scientific research fishing operations unless otherwise authorised, and the matter shall be reviewed by the Compliance Committee.
 - b. The excess shall be counted against the allocation to the vessel's flag Contracting Party, CNCP and PFECCP.

11.13. Catches of SIOFA fisheries resources taken during the implementation of a notified scientific research activity will be recorded and reported as per CMM 02(2025).

Specific provisions for data collected in the context of scientific research

12.14. Data collected under an authorised SRP shall be submitted to the SCSIOFA Secretariat and used only for the purpose of research within the scope of the Scientific Committee mandate subject to confidentiality rules.

13.15. Any publication of scientific results should be in an aggregated format without any confidential information regarding individual vessels or flag States as per CMM 03(2025). Any other use shall require prior authorisation from the data owner.

Minimising the harmful impacts of scientific research

- 14.16. ~~Contracting Parties~~CCPs, CNCPs or PFEs who intend to conduct scientific research in Benthic Fishery Closures (BFCs) in the Agreement Area, shall:
- a. Align their Scientific Research Plan with the research and monitoring plan for the BFCs listed in Table 1 of CMM 18 (2025).
 - b. Elaborate in their SRP on the potential harmful impact that such activities may have on the BFCs and how to minimise them.

~~15.17.~~ ~~Contracting Parties~~ ~~CCPs, CNCPs or PFEs~~ who intend to conduct Scientific Research in areas where VMEs are known to occur, or likely to occur in the Agreement Area shall:

- a. Elaborate in their SRP on the potential harmful impact that such activities may have on the VMEs and how to minimise them including the expected spatial footprint, VME indicator encounter protocols, and cumulative impact considerations.

Scientific Committee

~~16.18.~~ The Scientific Committee shall develop a template for the SIOFA Scientific Research Plan (SRP) in accordance with the guidelines at Annex 1.

~~17.19.~~ At its annual meeting, the SC shall consider any new SRP submitted, and any other relevant information.

~~18.20.~~ The SC at each annual meeting shall review available data and reports from ongoing or ended SRPs, in view to enabling an assessment of the stocks covered by these plans, the feasibility and appropriateness of establishing a fishery and the impact of fishing activities on non-target, associated or dependent species and the marine ecosystem in which these plans apply.

~~19.21.~~ The SC would need to consider the objectives of any proposed research and evaluate whether the importance of scientific research activities justifies their impact on resources and ecosystems in the SIOFA Area.

~~20.22.~~ The SC may request updated reports on the outcomes of SRPs and recommend amendments to the SRPs as necessary.

~~21.23.~~ The SC shall provide recommendations on the scientific merit of the SRP, considering that scientific research activities as well as fisheries management can be implemented differently and meaningfully under this framework.

~~22.24.~~ The SC shall provide recommendations and advice on SRPs to the Meeting of the Parties.

Compliance Committee

~~23.25.~~ The Compliance Committee shall review the compliance elements of the SRPs against the provisions of all SIOFA CMMs and provide advice to the Meeting of the Parties.

~~24-26.~~ Following completion of an authorised SRP, the Compliance Committee shall review whether the authorised activity was consistently implemented as per the applicable SIOFA CMMs.

Meeting of the Parties

~~25-27.~~ The Meeting of the Parties, taking into account the recommendations and advice of the Scientific Committee and, where relevant, the Compliance Committee, shall decide whether to authorise SRPs.

~~26-28.~~ Once the Meeting of the Parties authorise the SRP, a public summary may be shared, as appropriate with relevant international fisheries agreements, organisations and arrangements scientific/technical committees.

~~27-29.~~ The Meeting of the Parties may consider cost-effective ways to fund relevant SRPs in the SIOFA Area.

Secretariat

30. A CCP shall notify the SIOFA Secretariat at least 30 days prior to the commencement of the scientific research.

~~28-31.~~ The Secretariat shall post in the SIOFA vessel registry website and annually update the names of those fishing vessels authorised to carry out scientific research, including in such posting a public version summary of the Scientific Research Plan.

Review

~~29-32.~~ When an SRP expires, any Contracting Party, CNCP and PFE may submit a new SRP to the Scientific Committee in accordance with the SRP submission procedure.

~~30-33.~~ The CMM shall be reviewed no later than two years after the date of its entry into force. The review shall also take into account the latest advice of the Scientific Committee on previous or ongoing scientific research activities in the SIOFA Area.

Annex 1 - Guidelines for the Preparation and Submission of Scientific Research Plan (SRP)

For each field below, the submitting Contracting Party, CNCP or PFE should provide sufficient detail to enable the Scientific Committee to assess the scientific merit of the proposed Scientific Research Plan, and to enable the Compliance Committee to review the compliance-related elements of the proposed Scientific Research Plan.

1. Lead Contracting Party, CNCP or PFE

Include the Contracting Party, CNCP or PFE responsible for submitting and implementing the SRP.

2. Fishing vessel identification

E.g. name, external registration number, International Maritime Organization (IMO) ship identification number, international radio call sign and other markings, main dimensions.

3. Purpose

Include a concise statement explaining why the research is being proposed, highlighting why the scientific research is relevant to SIOFA scientific advice and linkages with management questions if any.

4. Objectives

List the specific objectives of the scientific research in measurable terms.

5. Summary of scientific methods or procedures

Describe the scientific research design (sampling methods/design, gear configuration, fishing or non-extractive activities, biological sampling, tagging, acoustic/camera work, environmental sampling, analytical methods, quality-control procedures, etc).

6. Location and dates of the scientific research

Provide the Area/Subarea(s) and proposed area coordinates and depth ranges. Benthic Fishery Closures or VME-relevant areas where applicable, and planned start and end dates. Explain the scientific reason for the chosen area and season.

7. Data submission of all data collected and analysed

Specify which raw data, processed data, or metadata will be submitted, in what format, to whom, and by when. Specify Data ownership, access and confidential category.

8. Name and position of the lead investigator

Identify the scientific lead responsible for the design, implementation, analysis and reporting of the research including institutional affiliation, the flag CCP/CNCP/PFE, vessel operator and any participating scientific institutions.

9. Whether any catches retained on board will be marketed

Indicate whether any retained catch will be marketed, landed for scientific purposes, discarded, donated or otherwise disposed of.

10. Total estimated scientific research catch of the targeted species

Provide estimated catch by targeted species, preferably by area, gear, set/haul and trip/season. The estimate should be justified by the proposed objectives and should distinguish between expected retained catch, discarded catch, bycatch and any incidental mortality associated with the scientific research.

11. Presence of a CCP observer or other relevant and qualified expert who has completed training in accordance with national scientific observer programs

Specify whether a scientific observer, national observer, trained/qualified expert will be on board describing their role, responsibilities, reporting duties, and whether observer coverage will be full or partial.

12. Information on when the research results will be presented to the Scientific Committee, and a plan for dissemination of scientific outputs

Provide a reporting schedule, including expected dates for preliminary results, final reports, data submission and presentation to the Scientific Committee. The dissemination plan should indicate, subject to confidentiality rules, the type of expected outputs from the scientific research.

13. Where relevant, indication that the scientific research constitutes non-recurrent new scientific research

Indicate whether the activity is a one-off, non-recurrent scientific activity. If the research is new or non-recurrent, explain why it is needed, why existing data are insufficient, and whether it could lead to future recurring scientific research.

14. Capacity building aspects of the Scientific Research Plan

Describe any opportunities for training, participation, technology transfer, data access, joint analysis or involvement of scientists from developing States, CCPs, CNCPs or PFEs.

15. Estimated budget

Provide an estimated budget for the scientific research activity sufficient enough as to demonstrate feasibility.

16. Funding source

Identify the source or sources of funding, including if SIOFA funding is requested.

17. Identification of relevant CMMs being applied during planned scientific research.

List all SIOFA CMMs relevant to the proposed scientific research activity. The SRP should explain how each relevant CMM will be complied with, and identify any specific authorisation or derogation requested from the MoP.