

FAO INPUT TO THE 2022 REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL, “TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN SEA FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS” FOR THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AS CALLED FOR BY THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN RESOLUTION 75/214.

**Efforts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in the wider Caribbean region**

**REPORTING PERIOD: June 2020 – June 2022**

FAO’s work in the Caribbean region seeks to meet the principles of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries by transforming aquatic food systems to be more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. Aquatic food systems encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, and consumption of aquatic food products that originate from fisheries and aquaculture and parts of the broader economic, societal, and natural environments in which they are embedded (e.g., open oceans, coastal waters, wetlands, lakes, rivers, ponds, raceways, fields and tanks).

This transformation is guided by FAO’s ‘Blue Transformation’ strategy, which recognizes the importance of aquatic food systems as drivers of employment, economic growth, social development, and environmental recovery, which all underpin the SDGs. Blue Transformation further acknowledges that aquatic food systems significantly influence human, animal, and ecosystem health, including biodiversity, land and water use, climate, as well as other aquatic and land-based economic sectors. As such, their transformation requires a holistic and adaptive ecosystem approach, aimed at securing socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable value chains that help secure livelihoods, foster an equitable distribution of benefits and support adequate use and conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems.

Key activities carried out by FAO in the region between June 2020 and June 2022 are enumerated below, and organized according to their contribution to relevant objectives and targets of Blue Transformation :

1. Effective management of all fisheries to deliver healthy stocks and secure equitable livelihoods
  - FAO continues to support the region to develop effective policies, governance structures and institutions to facilitate adoption and effective implementation of international instruments, regional coordination mechanisms, plans of action and guidelines to combat IUU fishing.

In July 2021, the “National and regional good practices in seafood traceability in the Caribbean to combat IUU fishing” was organized online. The purpose of the workshop was to raise awareness and train on traceability and related tools to combat IUU fishing and guide delegates to reflect on supply chain entry points for illegal fish and fishery products and means to strengthen measures to address these weaknesses. The workshop was attended by 28 participants from different departments of national governments from 8 Caribbean countries including Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, in addition to the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC).

- FAO work in the region focuses on effective fisheries management systems to address ecological, social and economic objectives, and consider tradeoffs, including by promoting the implementation of fisheries management measures that support biodiversity, facilitate ecosystem restoration, strengthen climate change adaptation and build resilience to stressors.

For the purpose of building resilience in face of climate change and external shocks, FAO took several initiatives including implementation of several Green Climate Fund (GEF) Readiness projects, namely, “Climate change adaptation in the Eastern Caribbean fisheries sector” (CC4Fish) for the period 2017–2022, which aims at increasing resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change impacts in the fishery and aquaculture sector of seven Eastern Caribbean countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago); “Enhancing adaptation planning and increasing climate resilience in the coastal zone and fisheries sector of Belize”; “Improving the capacity of the Fisheries Sector in Saint Lucia to enhance resilience to Climate Change”; and “Developing Organizational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-Scale Fisheries (StewardFish) project”, which was implemented in seven countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). The latter especially developed a Shock Responsive Social Protection Strategy and Action Plan for the Small-Scale Fishery Sector of St. Vincent and the Grenadines within the post 2021 Volcanic Eruption Livelihood Recovery Assistance for Fisherfolk.

FAO supported also over the period February 2020–December 2021 from its Technical Cooperation Programme, the implementation of “Rebuilding fisheries livelihoods in Abaco and Grand Bahama islands following Hurricane Dorian” project to help fishers to build back better by regaining control of their livelihoods and the lobster sector post-Hurricane Dorian in Bahamas. Other subregional or national projects within FAO efforts of mobilizing the climate finance community (Green Climate Fund and GEF) are in the pipeline, the formulation of which started during the reporting period but expected to be implemented in 2023.

FAO will implement two recently approved GEF ‘sister projects’ in support of the the CLME+SAP priorities by countries sharing the shrimp and groundfish fisheries in the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem. The project “Strategies, technologies and social solutions to manage bycatch in tropical Large Marine Ecosystem Fisheries (REBYC-III CLME+)” seeks to manage bycatch and reduce discards in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems thereby promoting sustainable and responsible fisheries that provide economic opportunities while ensuring the conservation of marine living resources. Barbados, Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago participate in the project. The project “Enhancing capacity for the adoption and implementation of EAF in the shrimp and groundfish fisheries of the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (EAF4SG)” seeks to advance adoption and implementation of the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) in the shrimp and groundfish fisheries in the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem. Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago participate in the project. The projects will be designed during 2022 with the full participation of stakeholders from the region and will be implemented in a timeframe of 48 months.

To further increase awareness and understanding of climate change impacts and vulnerability, a regional vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) framework was developed. VCA carried out in Eastern Caribbean countries has informed project activities and is being used to support

further project developments and activities by governments as it identifies scope of work of importance to stakeholders. FAO also supported the inclusion of climate change adaptation and disaster risk management considerations in the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy. As a result, several countries have since undertaken a review of their fisheries policies, plans and legislation to incorporate climate change adaptation and disaster risk management considerations. With the global pandemic disruption of the whole agri-food system, fisheries policy review exercise in some Caribbean countries considered recommendations to strengthen its application during and after COVID-19.

- The work of FAO facilitates regular monitoring and reporting, development of innovative data and information systems, and implementation of fisheries management plans, strategies and measures:

Through the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, collaborative activities were undertaken with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and the Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization to generate scientific advice for sound policy and management plans for the sustainable development of marine resources. Among the issues attracting particular attention are the management of spawning aggregations; the effective conservation, responsible management and trade of queen conch, flying fish, shrimps and groundfish; the sustainable use of moored fish aggregating devices; and decent working conditions in small scale fisheries.

With support of the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC) through NOAA-Fisheries, four regional workshops were organized to address conservation and sustainable management of queen conch and spawning aggregations fisheries. A Regional Fish Spawning Aggregation Fishery Management Plan: Focus on Nassau Grouper and Mutton Snapper (FSAMP) developed will be reviewed for endorsement by members at the 18<sup>th</sup> Session of WECAFC in July 2022; a review of the available information on parrotfish with management recommendations conducted was published by FAO which can be found at <https://www.fao.org/wecafc/publications/detail/en/c/1469227/>

New projects are implemented in support of the sustainability of these species/fisheries:

“Support to the Secretariat of WECAFC in implementing targeted actions of the 2019-2020 Workplan on improved regional fisheries governance” with a specific component on Increased knowledge of and experience with offshore fisheries using aggregating devices in the WECAFC region and another which delivered meaningful information source, the “ Review of the biological data, the stocks spatial distribution, and the ecological connectivity between the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction and the Exclusive Economic Zones in the WECAFC region” to inform strategic reorientation decision-making by the Commission.

“Strengthening the Scientific basis (FAO)- Support to the secretariat of WECAFC for an effective implementation of priority actions of the Programme of Work agreed at the 17th Session of the Commission” to support the celebration of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) 2022 and the WECAFC Working Group on Queen Conch to advance data collection efforts for sustainable queen conch fisheries and conservation management.

Other relevant projects during the reporting period: *Catalysing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems*, which ended in March 2021; *Sustainable Management of Bycatch in Latin American and Caribbean Shrimp Fisheries, (REBYC-II LAC)*, which also ended in June 2021.

FAO contributed to knowledge management in the region. Emphasis has been placed on awareness-raising regarding the current science behind sargassum blooms, building knowledge networks to drive further research on sargassum and working with countries and local and regional partners to develop related mitigation plans. The CC4Fish project worked extensively on modelling of sargassum influxes, Best practices for Caribbean Fishers coping with Sargassum, Sargassum User guide and supporting the distribution of Bi-monthly Sargassum Outlook Bulletins and other important information sources. Sargassum adaptive management plans development was other related intervention of interest carried out by FAO.

The strengthening of fisheries data collection, analysis and reporting which underly evidence-base decision making is supported under the umbrella of the WECAFC Fisheries data and statistics working group (FDS-WG). The second session of the FDS-WG hereafter referenced as FDS-WG2 was conducted through 10 online meetings led during the period July 2020 through March 2022. The operations of the FDS\_WG are supported by the EU funded project “Support to the activities of the transversal WECAFC, CRFM, OSPESCA, IFREMER and CFMC Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group (FDS-WG)”, and by in-kind contributions from NOAA, CRFM, and OSPESCA. Main achievements are:

- 1) an enhanced version of the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) which was approved as an interim document by WECAFC 17 (July 2019). This DCRF serves as i) a capacity building tool which can be used by countries as a reference standard framework to set-up national data collection and information systems for all aquatic marine species, in support of national policies and reporting needs including for the provision of data to WECAFC; and ii) an instrument to support science based conservation and management of marine biological resources under the mandate of WECAFC, the mandate and priorities of WECAFC-CRFM-OSPESCA Interim Coordination Mechanism (ICM), by implementing a modular task oriented. Importantly, the DCRF includes a proposal for WECAFC statistical subareas and divisions, and a priority list of reference species. It is now expected that WECAFC 18 (July 2022) will endorse this new version of the DCRF.

- 2) the regional coordination of efforts and investments in national capacity building for statistics data collection, resulted in i) a criteria-based scoring system for identifying WECAFC Members for support for capacity building, and ii) 6 WECAFC Members receiving capacity building support through various projects during the period 2019-2022 (Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Grenada, Dominica, Saint Lucia, Panama). Donors which supported these capacity building initiatives include GEF, IADB, and Japan.

- 3) Progress (achieved thanks to few regional training workshops) in the development of the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Information System (WECAFIS, the WECAFC regional database), with statistics submitted for the first time by 8 countries for some

Tasks of the DCRF, and 43 fisheries inventoried by 10 countries and published through FIRMS.

- FAO continues to support countries in the wider Caribbean region to ensure fishing fleets are efficient, safe, innovate and profitable and to ensure fishers and fish workers have equitable access to resources and services designed to enhance their livelihoods:

FAO has supported the development of mobile apps for improving early warning and safety at sea. Along with training and strengthening ICT for Safety at sea, a study on third party vessel insurance was completed, and Policy Brief developed.

FAO is developing a database of Early Warning Systems (EWS) and Social Protection Programs in Small-Island Developing States in the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions to better support countries in articulating social protection systems with EWS to deploy anticipatory actions when responding to shocks. Furthermore, FAO produced a report on the status of social protection in the Mesoamerican region, to be presented in the Mesoamerican forum on social protection for artisanal fisheries and aquaculture on May 20, 2022.

FAO developed a background paper on Safety at sea, Social protection and Decent work in Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC) and a draft action plan with the WECAFC secretariat for increasing the attention of the membership to safety, social protection and decent working conditions in fisheries . Both documents will be presented at the WECAFC 18th Plenary Meeting in Managua, Nicaragua, from 26-29 July 2022

FAO in collaboration with the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) and the Global Institute for Climate-Smart and Resilient Development (GICSRD) at the University of the West Indies (UWI) developed an E-Learning initiative for leaders and change makers working in fields related to climate change, social development and poverty reduction, and small-scale fisheries in the Caribbean. Around 70 participants from the region registered and attended the course which took place from 2 May 2022 to 30 June 2022. The course focused on building capacity to support national and local initiatives reducing exposure and vulnerability and enhancing the resilience of the poor and vulnerable in coastal communities and the fisheries sector. The course combined online content, webinars and live seminar sessions on broad conceptual frameworks and approaches for understanding and addressing climate-poverty interactions with more detailed training on specific tools such as climate-poverty vulnerability assessment and policy gap-analysis, and support for the development of action plans. The main content of the course is organized to be broadly applicable across different regions, with data and examples included in course activities that are specific to the Caribbean.

2. Upgraded value chains ensure the social, economic, and environmental viability of aquatic food systems
  - The work of FAO contributed to developing efficient value chains that increase profitability and reduce food loss; transparent, inclusive and gender-equitable value chains support

sustainable livelihoods; and facilitating access of fisheries and aquaculture products to international markets.

FAO has been implementing a EUR 48 million, five-year programme titled “FISH4ACP: Sustainable Development of Fisheries and Aquaculture Value Chains in ACP Countries” since early 2020, in collaboration with the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), the European Union, and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to boost the development of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture value chains in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. In Dominican Republic, FISH4ACP sets out to advance the mahi mahi (pez dorado) value chain. A thorough analysis of the value chain was carried out by FAO in collaboration with the national partner and CODOPESCA (Ministry of Fisheries). The validation workshop was organized in 2021 and the results of the analysis were reviewed and discussed by stakeholders and a strategic vision of the value chain has been developed. FAO is now working with all stakeholders and partners to implement the upgrading workplan to make the mahi mahi value chain more efficient and inclusive.

FAO implemented the project of “The Sustainable Fish Value Chains for Small Island Developing States” in Barbados from July 2020 to December 2021. The overall objective of the project is to contribute to poverty reduction, job creation, and food and nutrition security by improving the economic, social and environmental sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture value chains in SIDS. In the specific case of Barbados, a thorough tuna value chain had been conducted with gaps, improvement strategies and investment plan being identified.