



Fisher Folk Net

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A newsletter to share information among fisher folk organisations and people in fisheries on matters relating to sustainable fisheries management and other issues of interest to fisher folk organisations throughout the region

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Welcome again to Fisher Folk Net

You are reading the second issue of *Fisher Folk Net*, a newsletter of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) Secretariat done for the benefit of fisher folk organisations.

In this issue we provide updates on efforts in some Caribbean countries to form national fisher folk organisations (NFOs), and we share other news from around the region on plans to strengthen and network fisher folk groups.

Fisher folk of Grenada in favour of forming NFO and making progress

The fisher folk of Grenada are well on their way to establishing an NFO. Reports from Grenadian Fisheries Officer, Francis Calliste, are that the initiative spearheaded by the Fisheries Division has received positive and overwhelming support from fishers on the island. Fisher folk have demonstrated a high level of interest in forming a new NFO instead of revitalizing the previous organisation, which is currently dormant.

Following up on the national consultation held on 25 July 2007 to discuss the launch of a Grenadian NFO, a series of area meetings are being held across Grenada to involve all fisher folk co-operatives and associations in this important decision.



The first area meeting was held on 28 August 2007 at Grenville, St Andrew's - the home of the Soubise Fisherman Co-operative. The second meeting took place on August 30 at the Sauters Vegetable Market in St Patrick's. A third was held at the Waltham Fish Market in St Mark's on 7 September 2007. Meetings are set for all the parishes and Calliste said it is hoped that all meetings would be concluded by the end of September.

Grenville

The 28 August meeting in the Soubise Fisherman Co-operative Building was attended by 34 fisher folk; as well as Calliste; fellow Fisheries Officer, Crafton Isaac; Chief Fisheries Officer, Justin Rennie; Eric Donald, Manager of the Soubise Fishermen Co-operative; and Dexter Chance - Interim Chairman of the Steering Committee.



Fisher folk at the meeting readily recognized the need for a formation of an NFO and the benefits that could be achieved—marketing, better fish prices and better representation. While some participants suggested it would be quicker and easier to revive the old national association, this was rejected by the majority who then voted overwhelmingly in favour of forming a new NFO.

Sauteurs

A similar sentiment was expressed two days later when the 30 fisher folk from Sauters, St Patrick's, including the President of the Sauters Fishermen Co-operative, Paul Williams, had a consultation with Calliste, Isaac and Chance. Again votes were taken among those present as to whether they should revive the old national association or create a new NFO and again the vote was in favour of forming a new NFO.



The fishers at the meeting said they needed an organisation that represented all fishers whether members of an organisation or not so that their voices and concerns could be heard.

Williams and fellow fisherman Hector David were nominated to represent the interests of the Sauters' fisher folk on the new body, when it has been established.

Waltham

Similarly, at the Waltham meeting, which Calliste and Chance attended, the vote was made for a new NFO. It came out at the meeting that in fact few fisher folk even knew of the existence of the past national association. Dexter Chance informed the fisher folk that not only would a new NFO better represent the interests of all fishers, but each sub-group could be represented on the umbrella body. With this in mind, a second vote was taken and Oterson Frederick and Francis Andall were elected to represent the fisher folk of Waltham on the body, when it has been established.

St Lucia fisher folk legalize status of new NFO and keep moving ahead

The fisher folk of St Lucia have moved ahead with the launching of their NFO. Six out of the eight registered fisher folk societies passed the necessary resolutions in support of the formation of this umbrella body, which was registered in the second week of September. The remaining two societies have indicated an interest in participating at a later stage.

The NFO would have as its main objectives the improvement of the socio-economic well-being of members, and the sustainable exploitation and management of marine resources. The membership expects to obtain such benefits as:

- Better prices through bulk purchasing of fishing equipment, materials
- Better representation locally, regionally and internationally through a collective voice
- More technical assistance and training
- Greater socio-economic benefits for members, including pension and insurance scheme

- Unified negotiations with the Saint Lucia Fish Marketing Corporation, especially for better fish pricing
- Greater input in both legislative and resource management decisions

Trinidad and Tobago NFO seeking business ventures to help improve livelihoods

The fisher folk want to take the Trinidad and Tobago United Fisherfolk (TTUF), their NFO, one step further and turn it into a revenue generating entity.



An article by Nerissa Nagassar in the Seafood Industry Development Company newsletter reports that the interim executive of TTUF has indicated that they would like to be engaged in business activities. They have suggested they can provide goods and services - for example engines, fishing gear, ice, fuel - to fisher folk at reduced prices and the income generated from these activities could be used to sustain the organization while providing additional income for shareholders. They also suggested that access to loans and other sources of financing could be improved once the unified organization was fully functional.

TTUF was registered in September 2006 under the twin island republic's Company's Act as a non-profit organisation. Its interim board of directors is comprised of Emile Louis of Tobago; Peter Glodon of Moruga; Salim Gool of San Fernando; Gloria Cameron of Guayaguayare; Terrence Beddoe of the North Coast; Martin

Jones of Erin; and Stephen McClatchie of Toco. The argument behind the formation of the TTUF is a familiar one - a unified sector has more bargaining power and hence greater clout in the decision-making process.

According to the article, the sector continues to struggle with many issues, including disorganized markets with limited price control systems to ensure fisher folk fair price for their labour; the lack of life or property insurance for fisher-folk; increasing fuel prices; oil and gas company activities that negatively impact on fish stocks, including denying fisher folk access to traditionally used coastal space without adequate compensation for their loss of earnings. However, the issues of fisher folk in Trinidad and Tobago are being given credence by the national government.



Attempts to strengthen the NFO and the primary fisher folk organisations have been recognized and are being supported by the Trinidad and Tobago government. Through the Seafood Industry Development Company and the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, this unification exercise is being supported by way of the provision of technical assistance and training programs geared towards developing and enhancing the knowledge base and skills within these primary fisher folk organisations.

Coming out of the December 2006 workshop organized by the CRFM in St Vincent and the Grenadines, greater focus is being placed on the networking of fisher folk organisations at the regional level.

Activities of the advocacy group to establish a NFO in St. Kitts & Nevis

Following the national consultation held in St. Kitts and Nevis on 12 July 2007, an advocacy group was identified to further sensitize fishers and fisher folk organisations (FFOs) in order to establish a NFO. Meetings were held with the five organisations starting from 29 August. The final meeting with the FFOs is scheduled for Monday 24 September.



Turnout at the first four meetings was not as good as expected. Participants supported the idea of an NFO but expressed concern that a perceived lack of policy support and commitment could stifle its growth. FFOs were asked to identify at least two representatives to join the steering committee of the NFO. On completion of the sensitization, closer attention will be paid to operationalising the steering committee, developing by-laws and having the NFO registered by mid-October.

Workshop on Caribbean Network of National Fisher Folk Organisations, Grenada, 26 - 28 September 2007

A significant component of the CRFM/CTA fisher folk project is aimed at promoting the establishment of a regional network of NFOs.

To this end a **Regional Fisheries Stakeholder Workshop to Promote the Launching of a Caribbean Network of National Fisher Folk Organisations** is being held in Grenada from 26 to 28 September 2007. Over 25 participants

may participate, including fisher folk leaders, fisheries officers, cooperatives officers, staff of the CRFM Secretariat and resource persons from within and beyond the region.

Expected outputs from the workshop are:

- Shared understanding of major current and emerging challenges and concerns regarding fisheries-related governance, conservation, management, trade and development at national and regional levels.
- Expressions of interest from, and commitment of, main stakeholder groups to a regional network of NFOs.
- Consensus built on the rationale, purposes, intervention areas and decision-making mechanisms for the regional NFO network.
- Membership categories and criteria defined.
- Sustainable financing of the network.
- A network coordination unit identified or created, with defined functions and tasks.
- Short to medium-term action plan outlined.
- Input into Stakeholders Directory obtained.

Meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI), 5-9 November in the Dominican Republic

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI). Topics at the meeting concern commercial and recreational fisheries, marine science research, aquaculture, marine protected areas and more.

This year CRFM and CERMES will be organising a special session on **Fisher folk and fisheries scientists linking and learning together**. The aim is to encourage fisher folk, through NFOs, to play much more informed and effective roles in national and regional fisheries governance through understanding fisheries science and being able to contribute to it. See www.gcfi.org.

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