

# PRESS RELEASE

## Caribbean Fisheries Ministers set new policy directions at 19<sup>th</sup> CRFM Council Meeting



The newly elected chair of the CRFM Ministerial Council - Honourable Kyle Hodge of Anguilla  
(Photo: Government of Anguilla)

Hon. Hodge said: "we will forge resolutely ahead with... actions aimed at ensuring safe, healthy and fair working and living conditions for over half-million fishers, fish workers, and others employed across our fisheries and aquaculture value chains."

Belize City, Belize, 8 July 2025 (CRFM)—Fish trade, fisheries-related crimes, and a new environmental and social safeguard policy were among key matters on the agenda of the Ministerial Council of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), which convened its 19<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting virtually on Friday, 4 July 2025.

The Council—which is comprised of Ministers responsible for fisheries, aquaculture, and the blue economy from 17 CRFM Member States—elected Honourable Kyle Hodge, Anguilla’s Minister of Economic Development, Industry, Commerce, Lands, Planning, Water, and Natural Resources, as the new Chair.

“It is a distinct honor for Anguilla to take up this mantle of Chair from The Turks and Caicos Islands. We have very important work to do over the next year, as we continue to chart the way forward for this regional authority for fisheries and aquaculture across the Caribbean Community,” Minister Hodge said.

“As Ministers responsible for fisheries, we will forge resolutely ahead with promoting the efficient management, conservation and development of the region’s living marine resources; developing and maintaining relations with national, sub-regional, regional, and international partners that share our vision and mission for sustainable Caribbean fisheries; as well as supporting actions aimed at ensuring safe, healthy and fair working and living conditions for over half-million fishers, fish workers, and others employed across our fisheries and aquaculture value chains,” he added.

The fisheries sector lies at the heart of a vibrant Caribbean blue economy, which operates within a dynamic international legislative and policy landscape that impacts fish trade in the Caribbean—and by extension both national and regional economies. The Council deliberated upon the implications of the listing of the queen conch under the United States Endangered Species Act (ESA). It also deliberated upon strategies for securing Caribbean

trade amid measures arising under the US Marine Mammal Protection Act, the US Import Provisions & High Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act, the US NOAA Fisheries Seafood Import Monitoring Program, and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Strategy on Reduction of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions from Ships.

The CRFM has played an active role in regional and international initiatives to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and other fisheries-related crimes. The Council received updates on the efforts made by the CRFM Secretariat and Member States to address fisheries-related crimes, including efforts through the global Blue Justice Initiative and the Blue Justice Caribbean Hub, based in Jamaica. They also received updates on interventions led by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as well as a new partnership with the Caribbean Community Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS) and Auxilium Worldwide.

The Ministers approved the CRFM’s new Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy, which will serve as a guiding framework to manage environmental and social risks and ensure compliance with relevant national, regional, and international safeguard principles and standards.

They also approved the CRFM Strategy for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Regional Fisheries Management. This document signals the commitment of CRFM Member States to ensure that marine biodiversity and environmental protection are integrated into fisheries management.

The CRFM expresses its sincerest gratitude to Hon. Josephine Olivia Connolly, former Minister of Tourism, Environment, Fisheries and Marine Affairs, Culture and Heritage, Agriculture and Religious Affairs, of The Turks and Caicos Islands, for her stellar service as Chair of the Council for the 2024 Programme Year. We also welcome her successor, Hon. Zhavargo Jolly, who became the new Minister of Tourism, Agriculture, Fisheries & Environment in the Turks and Caicos Islands in February 2025.

The Council is scheduled to hold an in-person meeting in October 2025 at Caribbean Week of Agriculture, to be convened by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat in Saint Kitts and Nevis.

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## ABOUT THE CRFM:

The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) was officially inaugurated on 27 March 2003 in Belize City, Belize, where it is headquartered, following the signing of the Agreement Establishing the CRFM on 4 February 2002. It is an inter-governmental organization whose mission is to promote and facilitate the responsible utilization of the region's fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future population of the region.

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