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**REPORT OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE
CRFM / CARICOM FISHERIES AND
AQUACULTURE PRIORITY COMMODITY
WORKING GROUP (FISHCOM WG)**

15 July 2022

CRFM Secretariat
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Report of the Ninth Meeting of the CRFM/CARICOM Fisheries and Aquaculture Priority Commodity Working Group (FISHCOM WG)

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CRFM Secretariat
Belize, 2022

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Report of the Ninth Meeting of the CRFM/CARICOM Fisheries and Aquaculture Priority Commodity Working Group (FISHCOM WG)

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AHFS	Agricultural Health and Food Safety
CABA	Caribbean Agri-Business Association
CAHFS	Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARISEC	CARICOM Secretariat
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CFTDI	Caribbean Fisheries Training Institute
CNFO	Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations
CPSO	CARICOM Private Sector Organization
CRFM	Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism
EU	European Union
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FISHCOM WG	CRFM/CARICOM Fisheries and Aquaculture Priority Commodity Working Group
HACCP	Hazard Assessment and Critical Control Point
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
IYAFA	International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
UWI	University of the West Indies

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Ninth Meeting of the CRFM/CARICOM Fisheries and Aquaculture Priority Commodity Working Group (FISHCOM WG) was convened electronically on 15 July 2022. The objective of the Meeting was to review the Composition of the FISHCOM Working Group as set out in its Terms of Reference (approved May 2018) and agree on the WG's membership, including Chairmanship. The meeting was also expected to review the Draft Agenda for the proposed Fish Processing Establishment Forum.

AGENDA ITEM 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

2. The meeting was called to order at approximately 2:10 p.m. by Mr. Zojindra Arjune, Deputy Director, Fisheries Department, Suriname, who served as Chairperson for the Meeting. The Chairperson welcomed all to the Meeting and offered a Prayer.
3. Fifteen participants (8 males and 7 females) representing three CRFM Member States, the CARICOM Secretariat, Caribbean Agri-Business Association (CABA), Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations (CNFO), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and the CRFM Secretariat attended the Meeting. The list of the Meeting's participants follows. Participants' full contact information are provided in Appendix 1.
 1. Zojindra Arjune (Fisheries Department, Suriname);
 2. Jennifer Cruickshank-Howard (Fisheries Division, St. Vincent & the Grenadines);
 3. Nigel Durrant (CARICOM Secretariat);
 4. Vassel Stewart (CABA);
 5. Adrian LaRoda (CNFO);
 6. Allister Glean (IICA);
 7. Daniel Medar (Department of Fisheries, Saint Lucia);
 8. Vaughn Serieux (Department of Fisheries, Saint Lucia);
 9. Sandra Grant (CRFM Secretariat);
 10. Maren Headley (CRFM Secretariat);
 11. June Masters (CRFM Secretariat);
 12. Peter A. Murray (CRFM Secretariat);
 13. Abigail Masters (CRFM Secretariat)
 14. Rochelle Staine (CRFM Secretariat); and
 15. Pamela Gibson (CRFM Secretariat).

AGENDA ITEM 2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

4. The Chairperson drew the Meeting's attention to the draft agenda and enquired if there were any modifications. No changes were proposed. The agenda was adopted as presented on a motion moved by N. Durrant (CARISEC) and seconded by A. LaRoda (CNFO). The agenda is given in Appendix 2.

AGENDA ITEM 3. REPORT OF THE EIGHTH MEETING

5. S. Grant gave a brief overview of the Report of the Eighth Meeting of the FISHCOM WG, which was held on 09 March 2022. The meeting received and accepted the report of the seventh meeting; and reviewed (i) the revised mandate of the Ministerial Task Force on Agriculture; (ii) the inventory of

initiatives addressing marine fish and aquaculture commodities; (iii) the FISHCOM WG Work Plan 2022; and (iv) the FISHCOM WG Terms of Reference. The seventh meeting report was accepted as presented. Emanating from the Eighth Meeting’s deliberations were the following four recommendations:

- Consideration should be given to developing closer working relationships between the national fisheries sector and the Veterinary Departments/Environmental Health Departments and this need for collaboration should be articulated in country policy, so as to lift the profile of fisheries given its importance as a food source.
- Consideration be given to developing a fisheries and aquaculture specific AHFS policy for the region, mindful of the regional policy direction already being enunciated. The CRFM Secretariat, under the direction of the Deputy Executive Director, will begin to examine how the recommendation could be implemented.
- FISHCOM WG/CRFM Secretariat to organize an engagement between primary producers, processors, retailers, etc. to discuss the issues related to fish and fishery products as a priority commodity within CARICOM. This mindful of the variety of “levels” of stakeholders in the region.
- CRFM Secretariat to prepare draft recommendations, taking on board all the comments and suggestions regarding chairmanship of the WG, number of meetings per year, and FISHCOM WG membership, etc., for circulation to this Meeting’s participants for feedback.

6. No actions were taken with regard to the first two recommendations noted above; the other two were tabled for discussion at this Meeting.
7. The report was adopted as presented on a motion moved by A. LaRoda (CNFO) and seconded by J. Cruickshank-Howard (St. Vincent and the Grenadines).

AGENDA ITEM 4. FISHCOM WG TERMS OF REFERENCE: CHANGES TO THE WG’S COMPOSITION

8. This item was presented by S. Grant. She reminded the Meeting of the composition of the Working Group as outlined in the Terms of Reference and of the recommended composition, which was approved by the Sixteenth Regular Meeting of the CRFM Ministerial Council, held on 22 April 2022.

Composition of FISHCOM WG as per TORs
 Chairperson of the CRFM Ministerial Council
 Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Caribbean Fisheries Forum
 Chairperson of CRFM’s Resource Mobilization Committee
 2 representatives of CRFM Secretariat Senior Management Committee
 3 representatives to be selected from suitable CARICOM Regional Institutions having responsibility for fisheries and agriculture industry research and innovation matters
 2-4 industry representatives with experience and expertise in industry innovation

Recommended Composition of FISHCOM WG
 1 representative from CARICOM Secretariat
 2 representatives of CRFM Secretariat SMC
 3 representatives to be selected from suitable CARICOM Regional Institutions having responsibility for fisheries and agriculture industry research and innovation matters
 2-4 industry representatives with experience and expertise in industry innovation
 2-4 representatives from CRFM Member States

9. Under the new composition, the representative from the CARICOM Secretariat (N. Durrant); the two representatives of the CRFM Secretariat (S. Grant and P. A. Murray); and two of the three representatives from suitable CARICOM Regional Institutions (CABA and UWI) had already been identified. This Meeting was therefore asked to propose suitable institutions, fish processing companies, fish processors' associations and CRFM Member States, including the Fisheries Divisions/Departments and other national level agencies and institutes to populate the WG membership matrix.
10. It was also noted that the CRFM Secretariat's Programme Manager, Fisheries Management and Development, M. Headley and the Statistics and Information Analyst, J. Masters, will also attend the meetings. The Administrative Secretary at CRFM Secretariat will serve as Secretary to the Working Group.

Discussion

Regional CARICOM Institutions

11. Regarding the third CARICOM regional institution, the CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) and the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA) were proposed, however, given its composition and mandate, it was opined that CPSO would probably be better suited for consideration under *industry representatives*. There was general consensus that CAHFSA could be the third CARICOM Regional organization represented on the FISHCOM WG.

Industry representatives

12. In relation to the industry representatives, Rainforest Seafood was proposed given the scope of their operations in the region; the quality of their products; and their involvement in downstream activities. Ocean Delight (Suriname) and Tibu Impex (Guyana) were also proposed as it was felt that these two entities allowed for a balance of representation in terms of size of operations (medium/small). Also, the Secretariat had been working with them recently on the SPS Project and had established contacts. In the case of Tibu Impex, given its size (family owned and operated) it may be easier to engage with them, particularly in the area of piloting commodity development. The Owner/Manager is also an IYafa Champion.
13. The Meeting learnt that there is an established association in Suriname, which is involved in all aspects of fisheries, including policy. The association, Seafood Association Suriname, has member companies that are engaged in fishing operations, processing, exporting, etc., and it was suggested that such national-type associations could be considered as this will provide better representation of the industry and allow for dissemination of information to a wider group of stakeholders. In this vein, Central Fish Processors Association in Barbados, an all-women's group, was also proposed.
14. Following some further discussion, which noted the need to have representation from an aquaculture company and/or association and to also consider for FISHCOM WG membership those entities that will best help the Working Group to execute its work plan, it was agreed that the entities proposed for *industry representatives* be contacted to determine their interest in participating in the Working Group, as this will assist in determining membership selection.

CRFM Member States

15. Regarding the 2 to 4 CRFM Member States to be included, whether this is limited to the National Fisheries Authorities was queried. It was confirmed that this is the intention. The Meeting was, however, reminded of Trinidad and Tobago's request at the 20th Caribbean Fisheries Forum for CFTDI to be a member of the FISHCOM WG and it was suggested that CFTDI, being a national-level institution, could perhaps be considered under this category. It was further opined that CFTDI's training

and research and development activities could contribute to capacity building and product development and would be useful in advancing the work of the FISHCOM WG.

16. Involvement in fish commodity production; involvement in value adding and quality assurance; and experience in aquaculture production and processing were some of the rationales for proposing Belize, Jamaica, Grenada, Guyana, Suriname and St. Vincent and the Grenadines as potential members of the FISHCOM WG. Regarding selection of the 2 to 4 Member States, the following criteria was generally agreed to: geographical representativeness, nature of the fisheries, interest, productivity, and involvement in value adding activities.
17. As with the industry representatives, it was agreed that the proposed Member States/national institutions would be contacted to ascertain their interest and willingness to participate in the FISHCOM WG to guide selection in this category.

Recommendation 1: *National-level institutions, other than the national Fisheries Authority could be considered under the Member States category.*

Recommendation 2: *Selection of 2 to 4 Member States will be guided by the following agreed criteria; geographical representativeness, nature of the fisheries, interest, productivity, and involvement in value adding activities.*

Recommendation 3: *The CRFM Secretariat will contact the CARICOM Regional institutions, the fish processing entities and umbrella organizations/associations, and the CRFM Member States/national institutions proposed as potential members of the FISHCOM WG (see populated membership matrix below) to ascertain their interest and willingness to participate in the Working Group.*

Recommendation 4: *Based on responses received, the appropriate number of members in each category will be determined, bearing in mind the caveat that ‘additional experts will be invited to participate in activities of the Working Group, as needed’*

CRFM/ CARICOM FISHCOM WG Membership Matrix showing identified & potential members.

2 CRFM Secretariat	1 CARICOM Secretariat	3 regional CARICOM Institutions	2-4 industry representatives	2-4 CRFM Member States
Sandra Grant	Ngel Durrant	CABA	QFO	CFTI
Peter A Murray		UW	CPSO	SVG
		CAHSA	Rainforest Seafood	Jamaica
Maren Hadley			Seafood Ass'n Suriname	Belize
June Masters			Central Processors	Suriname
Pam Gibson (WG Secretary)			Aquaculture (Company/Ass'n)	Grenada
			Tibu Impex	Guyana

AGENDA ITEM 5. FISH PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENT FORUM

5.1 Inventory of Fish Processors in the region and Digital Directory

18. S. Grant presented this item. She reminded the Meeting that an initial list of processors in the region had been presented at the last FISHCOM WG meeting. Since then, the Secretariat had engaged the services of an intern to research and collate information and update the list of fish processing establishments. A review of processing plants was done using social media searches and information provided by the Fisheries Divisions/Departments and a CRFM Content Management System developed,

which had information on 209 processing establishments. A survey to gather more detailed information on the processing establishments was also conducted and 31 entities participated in the survey. Analysis of the data was still ongoing; however, the following preliminary results were shared with the Meeting.

19. Of the 209 processing establishments identified, 172 process marine fish and 37 process aquaculture products. Two CRFM Member States, Anguilla and Montserrat, have no processing operations. Marine fish processed include: lobster, finfish (reef, pelagic & groundfish), conch, sea urchin, sea cucumber, shrimp, crab, oysters, Seabob and shark. The aquaculture species processed are Tilapia, prawn, crawfish and shrimp. In terms of food safety standards, the status of 72 processing entities is known. Of this number, 35 are HACCP certified, 30 are EU approved, 9 are FDA approved and 10 have no certification or are working on getting certification. Among the reasons given for no certification are: high cost of implementing protocols for certification; lack of knowledge of relevant certification standards; lack of trained personnel; and certification is not required by CARICOM. Of the processing plants identified, 29 percent are classified as large; 18 percent are medium; 41 percent are small; and 12 percent do not know. Some plants are involved in processing marine and aquaculture products and retailing of their own products. Methods of processing include: chilled, frozen whole/fillet, cooked and chilled, salted, dried, smoked and pickled. Trade in fish and fish products is occurring, both intra-regionally and extra-regionally. Refrigerated trucks and containers, reefers and freezer vessels, as well as air freight are part of the distribution network.
20. S. Grant concluded her presentation with a demonstration of the Content Management System (Digital Directory).

Discussion

21. The efforts to gather and collate the information on fish and aquaculture processors in the region was acknowledged. It was suggested that it would be useful to identify any issues/challenges, e.g., accessing raw materials, level of technology, packaging, etc., at the processing end, which may have been revealed by the survey. The preparation (convenience, safety, etc.) of the actual product also required some examination and consumers' acceptance must be considered. The attractiveness of the packaging and the quality and method of preparation, which took account of convenience and safety (removal of bones, etc.), of imported fish and fish products are standards and practices that the region should seek to adopt.
22. The FISHCOM WG should seek to present the work done on developing the Content Management System to the Special Ministerial Task Force on Food Security so that the Task Force is made aware of these efforts and could perhaps help to identify any further support that may be needed.
23. Reference was made to the survey response rate (15%) and it was suggested that perhaps the national Fisheries Divisions/Departments may be able to assist in liaising with the processors to encourage participation in the survey. Although more responses would be welcome, it was noted that a 15 percent response rate is fairly good, particularly if the responses are a representative sample.
24. The Secretariat and the Intern, Miss. Abigail Masters, were commended highly for the work done in undertaking the census, conducting the survey and developing the contact management system.

Recommendation 5: *The Special Ministerial Task Force on Food Security should be made aware of the FISHCOM WG efforts to develop the Content Management System, as the Task Force could perhaps help to identify source of further support that may be needed.*

Recommendation 6: *The national Fisheries Divisions/Departments could be approached to assist in liaising with processors to encourage participation in the survey.*

5.2 Agenda for Fish Processing Establishment Forum

25. This item was presented by S. Grant. She advised that initially it was envisioned that the Processors' Forum could be convened on 29 July 2022, however this was not possible due to scheduling conflicts. The Meeting was therefore asked to propose an alternate date.
26. A draft agenda for the Processors' Forum was also presented and the Meeting's inputs sought.

Discussion

27. In terms of an alternate date, it was suggested that the Forum could be held on 1st or 2nd September 2022, with the exact date to be determined.
28. The draft agenda items were considered to cover the pertinent issues and was generally accepted by the Meeting. The suggested duration of three hours was considered a reasonable time, but could be shortened, if possible.
29. It was suggested that the title of the Forum could be: *Trade of fish and fish products and investment opportunities in the Caribbean region.*
30. Reference was made to items 2 and 3 and a query raised as to which agenda item would include presentation of trade statistics. It was confirmed that agenda item 2, *Fish commodities in the region* would include trade statistics. It was also suggested that the title of item 3 should be amended to read as *CARICOM: Facilitating intra-regional trade.*
31. With regards to participation, it was indicated that in addition to processors, representatives of fisherfolk organizations and other regional organizations could be invited to participate.
32. Representatives of investments agencies (CDB, IDB, etc.) should also be invited, so that they could be made aware of opportunities.

Recommendation 7: *The Processors' Forum will be convened in the first half of September 2022, with the exact date to be determined. The draft agenda was generally accepted with a few minor amendments.*

Recommendation 8: *In addition to the processors, representatives of fisherfolk organizations, regional organizations, as well as investment agencies, such as CDB and IDB will be invited to participate.*

AGENDA ITEM 6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

33. Reference was made to the issue of disease in the Belize Aquaculture sector, the fall in production and exports and the resulting loss of markets, and a query raised as to whether any update regarding recovery efforts is available. No update is available; however, it was agreed that the Secretariat would invite someone from the aquaculture sector in Belize to participate in the next FISHCOM WG meeting and to provide an update on the sector.
34. In terms of investments, it was suggested that smoked fish could be highlighted as a value-added product as there is interest in this, particularly in terms of reducing imports.

AGENDA ITEM 7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT

35. The next meeting of the FISHCOM WG will be convened on a date to be determined, possibly 2 weeks before the Processors' Forum.
36. S. Grant took the opportunity to thank the Chairperson for ably guiding the Meeting's discussions. She also expressed thanks to all participants for their time and attention.
37. The Chairperson also thanked participants for taking the time to attend and for their useful contributions to the discussions.
38. There being no further interventions, the Chairperson wished all a good evening and adjourned the meeting at 4:04 p.m.

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Name & Designation	Address	Email Contact
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Ms. Pamela Gibson Administrative Secretary (Meeting Rapporteur)		crfmsvg@crfm.int

APPENDIX 2: DRAFT ANNOTATED AGENDA

ITEM 1	<p>Welcome and Introductions <i>The Meeting Convener will call the meeting to order and welcome participants.</i></p>	1400 – 1410
ITEM 2	<p>Adoption of Agenda <i>The meeting will adopt the agenda.</i></p>	
ITEM 3	<p>Report of Eighth Meeting <i>The Meeting Convener will facilitate the review and adoption of the Report of the Eighth Meeting of the CRFM/CARICOM Fisheries and Aquaculture Priority Commodity Working Group (FISHCOM WG), as well as discussion of any matters arising.</i></p>	1410 – 1430
ITEM 4	<p>FISHCOM WG Terms of Reference: changes to the composition of the WG <i>The Sixteen Meeting of the CRFM Ministerial Council, Resolution No. MC 16(18) of 2022, approved the proposed amendments to the FISHCOM Terms of Reference (Section 2.2 Composition) recommended by the membership. The meeting will be asked to revise the composition of the WG.</i></p>	1430 - 1450
ITEM 5	<p>Fish Processing Establishment Forum <i>At the 8th Meeting of the FISHCOM WG it was suggested that the WG/CRFM Secretariat should arrange a virtual meeting with fish processors to discuss issues related to fish and fishery products as a primary commodity within CARICOM. Mindful that many processors began businesses without understanding all the requirements, regulations, resource management issues, port state requirements, etc. The meeting will be made aware of the completed inventory of processing establishments and survey on processing activities in the region. The FISHCOM WG will now be requested to finalize the agenda for the Fish Processing Establishment Forum.</i></p>	1450 – 1520
ITEM 6	<p>Any other Business <i>The WGA will consider any other business brought to its attention</i></p>	1520 - 1525
ITEM 7	<p>Date of next meeting and adjournment <i>The FISHCOM WG will be invited to agree on the date of its next meeting. This will be followed by adjournment</i></p>	1525 - 1530

APPENDIX 3: DRAFT AGENDA FOR FISH PROCESSORS' FORUM

FISH PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENT FORUM Trade and Investment of Fish and Fish Products in the Caribbean Region

Friday, July 29 (1000 – 1300h, Eastern Caribbean Time)

DRAFT AGENDA

ITEM 1	Welcome and Introductions <i>The Chairperson will call the meeting to order and welcome participants.</i>	1000 – 1010
ITEM 2	Fish commodities in the region (CRFM Secretariat)	1010 - 1020
TRADE		
ITEM 3	CARICOM: Facilitate intra-regional trade (Nigel Durrant, CARICOM Secretariat)	1020 – 1040
ITEM 4	Fish safety standards for the trade of fish and fishery products (Peter Murray, CRFM Secretariat)	1040 - 1100
	Testimonial from Tibu Impex/Ocean Delight on the impacts of training support from the CRFM Secretariat/IICA <i>Brief presentation and video output</i>	
INVESTMENT		
ITEM 5	Food Production and Food Security: Achieving the 25% by 2025 targets (Sandiford Edwards, CARICOM Private Sector Organization)	1100 - 1120
ITEM 6	Investment opportunities for fish and fishery products (Vassel Stewart, Caribbean Agribusiness Development Company)	1120 – 1140
ITEM 7	We want to hear from you <i>Discussion on challenges and opportunities. Invite a private sector to become a member of the FISHCOM WG</i>	1140 - 1200
RESOURCES		
ITEM 8	Digital Directory of Fish Processing Establishments in the Region (Sandra Grant, CRFM Secretariat)	1200 - 1220
ITEM 9	Training Resources on SPS: IICA SPS Hub (IICA) <i>Demonstration on how to retrieve documents from the IICA and CRFM websites.</i>	1220 - 1240
ITEM 10	Meeting adjournment	1240 - 1300

The CRFM 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”. The CRFM consists of three bodies – the Ministerial Council, the Caribbean Fisheries Forum and the CRFM Secretariat.

CRFM members are Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

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