



**Regional Coordination Group**  
Long Distance Fisheries

# Regional Coordination Group For Long Distance Fisheries

## RCG LDF 2022 REPORT

**13 – 15 July 2022  
Funchal, Madeira, Portugal  
(Hybrid Meeting)**

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## Acronyms

|            |                                                                   |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CECAF      | Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic                |
| CFP        | Common Fisheries Policy                                           |
| CINEA      | European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency |
| COM        | Commission                                                        |
| CP         | Contracting Parties                                               |
| DCF        | Data Collection Framework                                         |
| DGMARE     | Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries            |
| ECON       | Economical issues                                                 |
| EU MAP     | Multiannual Union Programme for data collection                   |
| ICES       | International Council for the Exploration of the Sea              |
| ISSG       | Intersessional Subgroup                                           |
| JSC        | Joint Scientific Committee (of SFPA)                              |
| LDAC       | Long Distance Advisory Council                                    |
| LDF        | Long Distance Fisheries                                           |
| LM         | Liaison Meeting                                                   |
| MS         | Member State                                                      |
| NAFO       | Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation                         |
| NANSEA     | North Atlantic, North Sea and Eastern Arctic                      |
| NC         | National Correspondent                                            |
| NPFC       | North Pacific Fisheries Commission                                |
| NWP        | National Work Plan                                                |
| OP         | Observer Programme                                                |
| RCG        | Regional Coordination Group                                       |
| RCM        | Regional Coordination Meeting                                     |
| RDB        | Regional Database                                                 |
| RDBES      | Regional Database & Estimation System                             |
| RFMO       | Regional Fisheries Management Organisation                        |
| RoP        | Rule of Procedure                                                 |
| RWP        | Regional Work Plan                                                |
| SCS        | Scientific Council Summary- NAFO                                  |
| SFPA       | Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement                       |
| SG         | Sub Group                                                         |
| SMEFF      | Sustainable Management of External Fishing Fleets (Regulation)    |
| SPRFMO     | South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation          |
| WGRDBESGOV | Working Group on RDBES Governance                                 |

## I Executive summary

The 2022 RCG LDF meeting was held in a hybrid format, with a group of participants attending the meeting physically (Funchal, Madeira, Portugal from July 13th to 15th) and others connecting to the meeting through the online ZOOM communication platform.

The group reviewed the progress in regional coordination since 2021, the outcomes of the 18th Liaison Meeting and feedback from the end-users. The group also reviewed the Long Distance Fisheries activity by MS in CECAF, SPRMFO and other areas with the use of updated 2021 data provided by MS through the Regional Database (RDB). Data were uploaded by MS to the Regional Database hosted by ICES in support of RCGs work.

In 2022, for the first time the RCG LDF dealt with NAFO issues, following a decision taken in 2021 to move NAFO area under the realm of the RCG LDF. Being the first time, this RCG focused on becoming familiar with NAFO procedures and MS activity in NAFO area.

Based on an analysis of the updated fisheries overviews, the RCG LDF concluded that there is no need for amendments to the NWP for 2023 and beyond in respect of the long distance fisheries in the areas of CECAF, SPRFMO and NAFO.

Potential new fishing areas of competence of the RCG LDF and new needs for data collection coordination is related to the EU accession to the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC). However, as the EU fleet is not authorised yet to undertake any fishing operation in the NPFC area, there are no data collection needs for 2022.

In 2021, common RoP for RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic were adopted by the NC decision meeting in September. Following this decision, the 2022 RCG LDF reviewed the option to align its RoP with the common RoP to avoid the situation where one MS as a member of two or more RCGs would need to adhere to a different set of rules. The 2022 RCG LDF concluded that the current situation is not causing any conflicts for the MS, though an in-depth analysis to ensure that the different RoP are not in conflict by design will be done intersessionally prior to the 2023 meeting. With the move of NAFO under the RCG LDF, Estonia became a new member of RCG LDF. Pending the revision of the current RoP and with the approval of Estonia, RCG LDF considers Estonia to be a full member of the group as if Estonia was included in the current RoP.

An intersessional subgroup ISSG SPRFMO-OP continued its work in 2022 with a series of online meetings to address a newly required SPRFMO observer programme accreditation procedure to prepare for data collection in the SPRFMO area beyond 2024. The ISSG prepared the plan of action for the OP accreditation process implementation, which was accepted by COM and MS concerned. NLD, DEU, LTU and POL will cooperate under the leadership of NLD to obtain SPRFMO accreditation for the EU Observer Programme. In January 2022 the EU delegation has formally announced at the SPRFMO 10th annual session the intention to start the accreditation process.

Overall the Group made two recommendations:

- WGRDBESGOV to take the proposed new and updated reference codes as provided by RCG LDF 2022 into consideration and to include these references in the RDB codes lists. Addressed at Chair RCG LDF / Data manager RCG LDF;

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- Further extension of the agreement on joint sampling programme in the SPRFMO area into 2024 is required as this will be the last year under the current SPRFMO monitoring obligations and extension of the agreement on joint sampling programme in the CECAF area into 2024 to align it with an updated agreement for SPRFMO. Addressed at POL and NLD.

The next RCG LDF meeting is planned for late June or early July 2023, and Lithuania kindly offered to host this meeting. The meeting will be chaired by Irek Wójcik (Poland) for the last year of the second term.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 General

After two years of meeting online due to the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus pandemia (COVID-19 pandemia) the 2022 meeting was held in a hybrid format, with a group of participants attending the meeting physically and others connecting to the meeting through the online ZOOM communication platform.

The physical meeting took place in Funchal, Madeira, Portugal from July 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> at the premises of Funchal's Jesuits College, Rectory Building of the University of Madeira. All participants of the physical meeting were greatly impressed not only by the charm of the historic building in which the meeting was held, but above all by the great hospitality of the meeting hosts and the excellent technical working conditions, for which a huge thank you is due to **the Regional Directorate of the Sea of Madeira of the Regional Secretariat for Sea and Fisheries**.

The Group addressed all Terms of Reference set for the 2022 meeting and made an overview of the EU long distance fisheries over the previous year(s) in order to evaluate the scope for required regional coordination in the area of data collection. Based on the decision taken in 2021, the RCG LDF extended its geographical scope by including the NAFO area, and for the first time in 2022 the Group overviewed the EU fishery in NAFO in the context of historical background and current status of sampling in this area.

The continued availability of a SharePoint hosted by **ICES** proved to be very efficient again in support of organising the work before, during and after the meeting. ICES Datacentre is thanked for all RDB work carried out in preparation of this meeting and to facilitate the upload of RCG LDF data.

Thanks are also due to **the RCG's Secretariat** for very valuable organizational assistance before, during and after the meeting.

### 2.2 Legal requirements

#### 2.2.1 Background of RCG LDF

The EU Data Collection Framework (DCF) establishes a framework for collecting economic, biological and transversal data by Member States (MS). This programme provides the basic data needed to evaluate the state of fishery resources and the fisheries sector.

Before the current Regulation, the RCG LDF (at that time RCM) stemmed from the Data Collection Framework (EC Regulation no. 199/2008), establishing a community framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). According to this regulation and without prejudice to their current data collection obligations under Community law, Member States (MS) were obliged to collect primary biological, technical, environmental and socio-economic data within the framework of a multi-annual national programme drawn up in accordance with the Community programme.

According to EC Regulation 665/2008, laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) 199/2008, and its technical Decision 2010/93/EU specifying practical aspects for data

collection, actions planned by MS in their national programme should be presented according to the predefined regions.

The coordination of the data collection was recommended at regional level and specific meetings were in charge of facilitating this and these meetings aimed to identify areas for standardisation, collaboration and task sharing between MS. RCMs were held annually with participants from each MS involved in fishing activity in the respective region. Being an end-user, RCM LDF might launch data calls to gather the information needed to complete its tasks.

From mid-2017 onwards, regulation 199/2008 was repealed and replaced by a new regulation. As a basic principle, the new Regulation (REGULATION (EU) 2017/1004) stipulates that “...Member States shall coordinate their data collection activities with other Member States in the same marine region and shall make every effort to coordinate their actions with third countries having sovereignty or jurisdiction over waters in the same marine region.” Apart from the requirement to establish Regional Coordination Groups (see the following section), the Regulation also foresees the participation and contribution by the relevant MS as well as their respective National Correspondents. The EU data collection requirements were further detailed in Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2016/1251 (EU-MAP).

In 2019, this Decision was administratively transformed into two different decisions without any modifications to the actual obligations:

- Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/909 establishing the list of mandatory research surveys and thresholds for the purposes of the multiannual Union programme for the collection and management of data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Such decisions can be decided by the Commission directly; they do not need scrutiny by the European Parliament and the Council.
- Commission Delegated Decision (EU) 2019/910 establishing the multiannual Union programme for the collection and management of biological, environmental, technical and socioeconomic data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. A delegated decision has to follow the normal procedure, i.e. it needs the scrutiny by the European Parliament and the Council.

The difference between the Delegated and Implementing decisions is of a legal nature. Delegated acts are legally binding acts that enable the Commission to supplement or amend non-essential parts of EU legislative acts, for example, in order to define detailed measures. The Commission adopts the delegated act and if Parliament and Council have no objections, it enters into force. Implementing acts are legally binding acts that enable the Commission – under the supervision of committees consisting of EU countries’ representatives – to set conditions that ensure that EU laws are applied uniformly.

The above two Commission Decisions were revised and replaced by new Decisions in 2021:

- Commission Delegated Decision (EU) 2021/1167 of 27 April 2021 establishing the multiannual Union programme for the collection and management of biological, environmental, technical and socioeconomic data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors from 2022.
- Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1168 of 27 April 2021 establishing the list of mandatory research surveys at sea and thresholds as part of the multiannual Union programme for the collection and management of data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors from 2022.

### 2.2.2 Establishment of RCG LDF

In 2017 the RCG LDF held two meetings, and during the 2nd meeting, the requirement for a formal establishment of the RCG was discussed and concluded upon by all parties present at the meeting. This conclusion led to the following statement regarding the establishment of RCG LDF:

*Having regard Article 9.2 of REGULATION (EU) 2017/1004, stipulating that regional coordination groups shall be established by the relevant Member States for each marine region, and, having considered all regions outside EU waters as a marine region and in continuation of the previous definition of the RCM marine regions and having relevant Member States present at a meeting succeeding the RCM LDF 2016, the Regional Coordination Group for Long Distance Fisheries has been established upon opening of the 2nd RCG LDF meeting on November 22, 2017 in Copenhagen, Denmark.*

## 2.3 Terms of Reference

The following terms of reference were set for RCG LDF 2022:

### Terms of Reference – RCG LDF 2022

- 1. Review progress since 2021 following up the 18th Liaison Meeting or other expert groups reports**
- 2. Review feedback from end users**
  - Consider possible updates under the SPRFMO Observer Programme and Data Standards requirements (both observer requirements as well as data collection requirements)
  - State of play of pelagic sampling in CECAF and SPRFMO area in 2021
  - State of play of sampling in NAFO area – historical background and current status
  - Other input received
- 3. Analyse data from 2022 RCG LDF data call**
  - Data compilation, providing overviews of fisheries
  - Consider inclusion of emerging fisheries
  - Identify sampling obligations facilitating future multi-annual work plan
  - Feedback from WGRDBESGOV / comments on experience RDB upload
- 4. Regional data collection, analysis and storage**
  - Overview on commercial sampling during coronavirus pandemic in 2021-2022
  - Discuss possibility of new data collection requirements related to EU joining the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC)
  - Discuss potential implication of the SMEFF Regulation (Regulation 2017/2403 on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets)
- 5. Future data collection set up in CECAF/ SPRFMO/ NAFO**
  - CECAF future data needs

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- Feedback from ISSG SPRFMO-OP (possible ways forward regarding observers' accreditation procedure adopted by the SPRFMO)
- NAFO current and future data needs

### 6. AOB

- Discuss relevant upcoming call for tenders, studies
- Review option of harmonization/unification of the RCG LDF RoP with RoPs of other RCGs
- Place and date of the next RCG LDF

## 2.4 Structure of the report

ToR addressed by the 2022 RCG LDF meeting are referred to in the following sections of the report.

ToR 1 - in section 5

ToR 2 - in section 6

ToR 3 - in section 3

ToR 4 - in section 7

ToR 5 - in section 8

ToR 6 - in section 9

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Recommendations/Decisions stemming from this group are summarised in section 10.

## 2.5 Participants and agenda

The agenda of the meeting is included in Annex 1 and list of participants is provided in Annex 2.

### 3 2022 RCG LDF data call (ToR 3)

#### 3.1 Response to 2022 data call

Prior to the 2022 annual RCG LDF meeting and in line with the continued 2015 recommendation to address future data calls to all non-landlocked MS, the 2022 data call was sent to all National Correspondents of these MS. The data call requests to upload the data into the RCG Regional Database (RDB), hosted and maintained by ICES in Copenhagen.

The call was launched at May 9th while setting the deadline for submission at June 13th. As in previous years, a request for an active response indicating the absence of long distance fisheries was also included in the data call as well as a specific request to also upload data when only a few vessels are active in the region.

The following list provides a general overview of the responses received by RCG LDF. The highlighted rows are explained in the following paragraph. This overview doesn't discriminate between the various types of responses received. Some contributions were completed beyond the deadline for various reasons, however, this was not considered a major issue as the work could be completed in time. MS are reminded that data can be updated throughout the year and MS are encouraged to do so where applicable. In particular, some MS still may update historic data.

Table 3.1.1 Overview of 2022 data call response

| EU Member State | Response (Y/N) | Activity last year (Y/N) | Data provide (Y/N/NA) |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Belgium         | Y              | N                        | NA                    |
| Bulgaria        | Y              | N                        | NA                    |
| Croatia         | Y              | N                        | NA                    |
| Cyprus          | N              |                          |                       |
| Denmark         | Y              | N                        | NA                    |
| Estonia         | Y              | Y                        | Y                     |
| Finland         | N              |                          | NA                    |
| France          | Y              | N                        | NA                    |
| Germany         | Y              | Y                        | Y                     |
| Greece          | Y              | N                        | NA                    |
| Ireland         | Y              | N                        | NA                    |
| Italy           | Y              | Y                        | Y                     |
| Latvia          | Y              | Y                        | Y                     |
| Lithuania       | Y              | Y                        | Y                     |
| Malta           | Y              | N                        | NA                    |
| Netherlands     | Y              | Y                        | Y                     |
| Poland          | Y              | Y                        | Y                     |
| Portugal        | Y              | Y                        | Y                     |
| Romania         | N              |                          | NA                    |
| Slovenia        | Y              | N                        | NA                    |
| Spain           | Y              | Y                        | Y                     |
| Sweden          | Y              | NA                       | NA                    |

Cyprus, Finland and Romania didn't respond to the data call issued by RCG LDF. RCG LDF noted the non-response while realizing these MS have never had long-distance fisheries of relevance for this group.

### 3.2 Sampling obligations facilitating future multi-annual work plan, including emerging fisheries

Analysis of data uploaded to the RDB allows to detect if there are any substantial changes in fishing pattern or volume of landings for those stock which are not currently subject to data collection and cross checking this data with the DCF obligations enables to conclude if any emerging fisheries should be included in the future data collection programme.

In 2021 the RCG LDF has identified the need to extend the sampling program to new stocks as a result of the EU acceding the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC) (see also comments in section 7.3). Those MS whose vessels are planned to enter this new fishery should analyze the scope of the fishery data that NPFC requires to collect prior to commencing fishing. Once UE formally becomes a member of the NPFC and it is known which MS' vessels will be active in this new region, the issue of coordination of activities will be analyzed by the RCG LDF.

With the inclusion of the NAFO area in RCG LDF, the data collection from fishery in NAFO region may also be coordinated in the near future by the RCG LDF if the need arises.

Already in 2021 the COM informed the group that ESP has notified the SPRFMO its intention to launch an exploratory fishery for toothfish (*Dissostichus spp*). The fishery (bottom long-lining) started in 2021 and will continue in 2022 and 2023. Although the SPRFMO area falls under the competence of the RCG LDF, this exploratory fishery is carried out exclusively by ESP, therefore the obligation to report detailed data, resulting from the specific provisions of the SPRFMO, rests with ESP, and at this stage there is no need to coordinate the fisheries data collection for this fishery.

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### 3.3 Data compilation, providing overviews of fisheries

Based on the RDB data and based on the work done by intersessional RCG subgroup on fisheries and sampling overviews the RCG LDF produced standardized annual fisheries overview with graphs and maps, to get more information out of the data available. The future structure of the overviews will be discussed intersessionally.

All the tables from section 4 of this report are prepared with the use of a dedicated script. The tables are being produced on a yearly basis, so by using an automatic way of fulfilling the tables, a huge amount of time is saved. Preparing these tables in advance of the meeting lower the workload of the participants significantly, allowing them to focus mainly on the data analysis.

Regarding the future work on the overviews, the main point of focus is to get insight in trends over the last three years, splitting the overviews by designated regions and e.g. focus on some main species of direct relevance for DCF work, while grouping other species of lesser relevance.

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To make the overviews as useful as possible, it is extremely important that the MS upload their data to the Regional Database. All the countries should include the information on the Subpolygon in the data provided as this will allow to carry out more detailed spatial analysis.

The current RDB catch and effort overview for the RCG LDF can be found on the sharepoint site – “RCG LDF\_Annual\_Catch\_Effort\_overview\_2021”.

Referring to the outcomes of the 2022 meeting of the RCG Baltic and the RCG NANSEA (June 7-10) The RCG LDF fully supports their join Recommendation “NANSEA BALTIC\_2022\_R01 - ICES give download rights of RDB/RDBES data to ISSG chairs for the ISSG work”.

It is in the interest also of the RCG LDF for ISSGs chair having access to RDB/RDBES and essential for work carried on by various ISSGs, including for the ISSG for catch, effort and sampling overviews.

### 3.4 Comments on experience with RDB upload

In the past, RCG LDF commented on issues concerning the overwriting rules for data uploads to the RDB. RCG LDF requested WGRDBESGOV to seek a solution allowing to upload landings data for the same country /species/area combination for different regions. WGRDBES addressed the issue and from 2022 onwards, the overwriting rules have been adjusted in line with the RCG LDF request. Also, species lists have been updated to facilitate the upload of data by MS.

However, the above issues were not effectively solved for all MS concerned yet.

#### Overwriting rules

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The overwriting rules, for the Commercial Landing data, did not take into account different fishing areas (or RCG) for each MS, this being a problem for species that are commonly fished in one area and another, that are overwritten. This issue was relevant for Spain in previous years. Although the RCG members were informed during 2022 meeting that this issue was solved around March 2022, it was not notified to the MS at that moment. Thus, in the case of ESP, it was proceeded as in previous year by deleting these data manually, which on one hand involved a lot of work and on the other hand created a risk for the existing datasets. Finally, all data from the MS had to be unified and uploaded together. ESP will take in account that the overwriting matter has been solved for the next year, as new data from the Canaries will be uploaded for the period 2016-2018.

#### Metier assignment

Criteria of metier assignment in artisanal fishery from the Canaries have been recently updated. The main problem to the allocation of fishing trips to métiers is the existence of a highly polyvalent fleet where three metiers (for fishing small pelagics, demersal fish and tuna) can be used in the same fishing trip. This cannot be easily uploaded to the RDB, because according to the RDB exchange format, only one of the metiers can be assigned by trip. The process of metier assignment has been completed for the most recent years (2019-2021) but it is still in the process of analysis for the previous years (2014-2018).

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### Species

A total number of 106 bycatch species of the Spanish demersal fisheries was not uploaded with the species name for the period 2014-2021, as they were not included in the previous RDB species reference tables and Spain was not aware of the update of these reference tables in 2022, after being reported in the Annex 2 of the RCG LDF-2021 report. For this reason, they were uploaded with the name of the closest taxa (genus, family, order), when possible. A new list of species, complementary to the one of 2021 is provided in order to solve this issue (Annex 3).

### 3.5 Updates to RDB references

As in previous years, during the RCG LDF and the preparatory process, it became apparent that some references to areas, species and ports were missing from the RDB, thus hampering complete uploads. ICES WGRDBESGOV is requested to discuss these omissions and to update the references. While some codes were missing, ICES responded swiftly to any requests made directly by MS when uploading the data. These quick actions are much appreciated.

Apart from the codes currently missing, additional codes and references need to be included to prepare for the imminent expansion of the area of governance for this RCG, e.g. to include the North Pacific region.

Annex 3 provides the overview of references to be added to the RDB to facilitate both current as well as upcoming data uploads. Future updates may be required once the fisheries expand into new areas, e.g. North Pacific.

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#### Recommendation 2022-1 : Inclusion of new and updated reference codes in the RDB

|                                           |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RCG LDF 2022 Recommendation               | WGRDBESGOV to take the proposed new and updated reference codes as provided by RCG LDF 2022 into consideration and to include these references in the RDB codes lists. |
| Follow-up actions needed                  | Contact WGRDBESGOV, ICES and put request on agenda for December meeting. Inclusion requested prior to the 2023 RCG LDF data call.                                      |
| Responsible persons for follow-up actions | Chair RCG LDF / Data manager RCG LDF                                                                                                                                   |
| Time frame (Deadline)                     | After LM 2022                                                                                                                                                          |

### 3.6 Feedback WGRDBESGOV

WGRDBESGOV addressed the issue concerning the overwriting rules as raised by RCG LDF in the past. The issue has been solved and no further action is required.

WGRDBESGOV planned to move from RDB to RDBES in 2024. However, a full transition seems to be too ambitious at this stage. The planning will be reviewed again by the end of 2022 and communicated to the relevant groups.

### 3.7 Preparation of 2023 data call

Despite the deadline in 2022, some data was delivered beyond the deadline. Unlike other years, the late delivery didn't pose problems when processing the data. However, RCG LDF, again, wishes to prepare the yearly data at an earlier stage prior to the meeting, to facilitate both a timely upload as well as to conduct preparatory work before the meeting (e.g. producing complete fisheries overviews). The deadlines should be set in line with the dates of the RCG LDF in 2023 and the provisions in the current DCF (1 month response time). Ideally, the deadline for data submission is 1 month before the meeting, as this will also allow ICES to contribute to the data extraction if needed while leaving sufficient time to prepare data and tables prior to the meeting.

The 2023 data call will request data from 2016 onwards (unless updates are provided earlier) but will invite MS to deliver/update older data to the RDB when possible. As in previous years, MS are continuously encouraged to upload data (and update when needed) prior to the RCG Data call. This will allow for a less stressful upload and once done, only last year's data needs to be uploaded, which should be a routine job by then. Prior to the data call, a quick scan of the Eurostat database will be done by the RCG LDF data coordinator to explore potential new areas to be highlighted in the call.

Since 2015, RCG LDF addresses the data call to all non-landlocked countries. Having reviewed the responses received over the last years, RCG LDF concluded that responses are similar between the years. No 'new' MS relevant for this RCG have emerged over the last years, apart from the inclusion of MS as a result from expanding the remit of the RCG to the NAFO area.

For MS not having a fishery relevant for this group, the response to the data call is straightforward, however, this formal call obliges MS to react, thus putting an additional burden on the NCs involved. RCG LDF realizes that MS receive numerous data calls and wishes to reduce the workload where possible. RCG LDF reconsidered the 2015 recommendation to address the data call to all non-landlocked MS. As a baseline, from 2023 onwards, only the MS contributing to the relevant areas under the remit of the RCG LDF (based on the 2022 response) will be asked yearly, while the data call is expanded to all non-landlocked MS once every three years. The next data call addressing all non-landlocked MS will be in 2025.

The current RDB will be replaced by the RDBES in the future, however, RDBES doesn't automatically accept historic data. Pending the final decision by WGRDBESGOV on the inclusion of historic data, RCG LDF may request MS to upload them. RCG LDF may decide to request this historic upload from active MS only while historic data from MS not currently active may remain in the RDB and previous RCG LDF reports only. RCG LDF strives to get the data transferred from RDB to RDBES in an attempt to limit the effort required by the MS.

## 4 Review of EU Long Distance Fisheries activities

### 4.1 CECAF area

After the RCM-LDF 2015 decision of including "Canary Islands" as a new fishing ground, the three fishing grounds considered for CECAF are:

| FISHING GROUND | Area          | FAO divisions                               |
|----------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Madeira        | EU waters     | 34.1.2                                      |
| Canary Islands |               |                                             |
| West Africa    | Non EU waters | 34.1.1; 34.1.3; 34.3.1, 34.3.3, 34.3.6, 47* |

\* Note that the fishing ground where the EU is operating in Angola (FAO 47.1.1, 47.1.2 and part of 47.1.3) is considered in CECAF area of competence, as de facto situation.

In Madeira and the Canaries, only Portuguese and Spanish vessels, respectively, operate and the fisheries/metiers are already included in respective National Work Plans and therefore, coordination between MS is not needed.

Fishery data are presented separately for the three Fishing grounds: "West Africa", "Madeira" and "Canary Islands".

### FISHING GROUND "WEST AFRICA"

The information below describes the general types of fisheries in the relevant West African CECAF areas by MS (2021) as an overview of the CECAF fisheries carried out by EU-fleets. Some fisheries cover very large areas along the West African shelf. As non-EU countries also conduct fisheries in this area, the catches taken by vessels of EU MS constitute only a part of the total catches.

Demersal fisheries are mainly carried out by the Spanish fleet, with a limited activity of other countries as Italy, Portugal and Greece. The other EU MS (The Netherlands, Poland, Germany, Latvia and Lithuania) are operating pelagic trawlers in a small pelagic fishery, currently developed in waters off Morocco and Mauritania and with fishing possibilities in Guinea-Bissau. In addition, there is a fleet of Spanish purse seiners targeting small pelagics in North-Morocco and two Spanish demersal vessels that very occasionally operate as pelagic trawlers in Mauritania and/ or Guinea-Bissau, using fishing licences for small pelagics. An overview of species fished by EU MS in the CECAF area in 2021 is presented in "RCG LDF\_Annual\_Catch\_Effort\_overview\_2021" available on the RCG's sharepoint.

In most cases, EU fisheries have been carried out in this area under bilateral Sustainable Fishing Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) between the EU and the coastal States. However, there are other fisheries developed in the CECAF area, under direct authorizations (SMEFF regulation), independent from these SFPAs. This is the case of the demersal fisheries carried out by Spanish vessels in Guinea,

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Congo, Angola, Sierra Leone and The Gambia<sup>1</sup>, reported for the first time in RCG 2018. Likewise, the participation of Italy in the RCG LDF 2020 for the first time allowed to clarify that reported Italian demersal fisheries in CECAF waters during the period 2015-2019 were mostly carried out in Guinea and Sierra Leone, under direct authorization regime. In 2021, fisheries in Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau were developed within SFPAs while fisheries in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Congo and Angola were carried out under direct authorizations.

Table 4.1.1 General types of fisheries in relevant CECAF areas by MS (2021 data)

| FISHING GROUNDS | FISHERY                            | AREA                                    | COUNTRIES                                              |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| West Africa     | Small pelagic                      | Morocco and/or Mauritania               | Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Spain |
|                 | Small pelagic                      | Guinea-Bissau                           | Spain                                                  |
|                 | Demersal fish                      | Angola*, **                             | Spain                                                  |
|                 | Demersal fish                      | Morocco                                 | Spain, Portugal                                        |
|                 | Demersal fish                      | Mauritania                              | Spain                                                  |
|                 | Demersal fish                      | Senegal                                 | Spain                                                  |
|                 | Demersal fish                      | The Gambia                              | Spain                                                  |
|                 | Crustaceans                        | Guinea*                                 | Spain                                                  |
|                 | Crustaceans                        | Congo*                                  | Spain                                                  |
|                 | Crustaceans                        | Angola*, **                             | Spain                                                  |
|                 | Crustaceans                        | Guinea-Bissau                           | Spain                                                  |
|                 | Crustaceans                        | Mauritania                              | Spain                                                  |
|                 | Cephalopods-finfish                | Guinea-Bissau                           | Spain                                                  |
|                 | Demersal fish                      | Guinea*, Sierra Leone*, Guinea-Bissau * | Italy                                                  |
| Madeira         | Deep-water species                 | Madeira                                 | Portugal                                               |
|                 | Small pelagic                      |                                         |                                                        |
|                 | Demersal fish                      |                                         |                                                        |
|                 | Molluscs (cephalopods & limpets)   |                                         |                                                        |
| Canary          | Small pelagics<br>Demersal species | Canary Islands                          | Spain                                                  |

\* Fisheries developed with direct authorizations.

\*\* Angola (FAO 47) is considered in CECAF area of competence, as de facto situation.

<sup>1</sup> Spanish vessels operated under direct authorisations regime until the signature of the new Agreement and the relevant Protocol between the EU and The Gambia in July 2019, within which a new fishing category for deep water trawlers targeting black hake is allowed.

The responsibility for coordination of research activities in the area, stocks assessments and providing scientific advice for stock management lies with the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF). In addition, the Joint Scientific Committees (JSCs) of the SFPAs between the EU and the partner countries (Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau) play an important role in setting an independent scientific cooperation framework between the EU and the coastal States. For the SFPA EU-The Gambia, the idea is to set up a JSC that will be joint with the EU-Senegal JSC.

The situation of the SFPAs, by country, is described in the following sections:

### **Morocco<sup>2</sup>**

The current SFPA was signed in March 2019, together with the relevant protocol for a duration of 4 years. Although the new protocol establishes the same fishing categories as the previous one (Categories 1 to 6), catch limits for category 6 (pelagic trawlers fishing for small pelagic species) are now established with monthly and annual ceilings.

### **Mauritania<sup>3</sup>**

The new SFPA between the EU and Mauritania and its implementing Protocol was signed in December 2021, allowing some métiers included in the EU Data Collection Framework to be used for a six year period.

### **Senegal<sup>4</sup>**

Last Protocol in the framework of the relevant SFPA between the EU and Senegal was signed in November 2019 for a duration of 5 years, including fishing possibilities for trawlers targeting black hake.

### **The Gambia<sup>5</sup>**

A new SFPA between the EU and The Gambia was signed in July 2019 and the relevant Protocol will last for a period of 6 years. Fishing opportunities also include fishing possibilities black hake trawlers.

### **Guinea-Bissau<sup>6</sup>**

The current Protocol on the implementation of the SFPA between the EU and Guinea-Bissau was signed in June 2019 for the period 2019-2024. In addition to the previously existing categories (finfish/cephalopods, shrimps, tuna), it includes a new category of vessels targeting small pelagics with pelagic trawls, which has not been used so far.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas/morocco\\_en](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas/morocco_en)

<sup>3</sup> [https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas/mauritania\\_en](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas/mauritania_en)

<sup>4</sup> [https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas/senegal\\_en](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas/senegal_en)

<sup>5</sup> [https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas/gambia\\_en](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas/gambia_en)

<sup>6</sup> [https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas/guinea-bissau\\_en](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas/guinea-bissau_en)

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The following tables, based on the data provided to the RCG LDF by MS, show the main fishing activities aggregated over the entire CECAF North and South fishing areas, i.e. including both SFPFA and SMEFF activities. Table 4.2 shows total fishing effort (from 2019 to 2021). Tables under 4.3 show total landings for each year from 2014 to 2021.

Table 4.1.2 Effort (fishing days) by country and metiers from 2018 to 2021 (Fishing ground: “West Africa”).

| Metier_lvl6      | Country | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|------------------|---------|------|------|------|
| LLS_DEF_0_0_0    | ESP     | 1428 | 1066 | 831  |
| LLS_DEF_0_0_0    | PRT     | 100  | 54   |      |
| LLS_DEF_6_0_0    | ESP     | 121  | 69   | 34   |
| MIS_DEF_0_0_0    | ESP     | 88   | 190  | 282  |
| OTB_CRU_>=40_0_0 | ESP     | 7052 | 6643 | 6868 |
| OTB_DEF_>=70_0_0 | ESP     | 2106 | 1528 | 1895 |
| OTB_DEF_>=80_0_0 | ESP     | 232  | 287  | 139  |
| OTB_MCF_>=70_0_0 | ESP     | 1268 | 1168 | 990  |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0 | DEU     | 94   | 108  | 119  |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0 | ESP     | 102  | 246  |      |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0 | LTU     | 862  | 612  | 510  |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0 | LVA     | 638  | 643  | 525  |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0 | NLD     | 466  | 231  | 441  |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0 | POL     |      | 62   |      |
| PS_SPF_0_0_0     | ESP     | 70   | 526  | 199  |

Table 4.1.3 Landings (tons) by country and metiers from 2014 to 2020 (Fishing ground: “West Africa”).

| Metier 2014      | DEU  | ESP  | LTU    | LVA   | NLD   | POL   |
|------------------|------|------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| LLS_DEF_0_0_0    |      | 2593 |        |       |       |       |
| LLS_DEF_6_0_0    |      | 317  |        |       |       |       |
| MIS_DEF_0_0_0    |      | 48   |        |       |       |       |
| OTB_CRU_>=40_0_0 |      | 4583 |        |       |       |       |
| OTB_DEF_>=70_0_0 |      | 5067 |        |       |       |       |
| OTB_MCF_>=70_0_0 |      | 5650 |        |       |       |       |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0 | 8282 | 6918 | 103084 | 57560 | 72819 | 36314 |

| Metier 2015       | DEU   | ESP   | ITA | LTU   | LVA   | NLD   | POL   |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| LLS_DEF_0_0_0     |       | 1306  |     |       |       |       |       |
| LLS_DEF_6_0_0     |       | 456   |     |       |       |       |       |
| MIS_DEF_0_0_0     |       | 244   |     |       |       |       |       |
| OTB_CRU_>=40_0_0  |       | 4069  |     |       |       |       |       |
| OTB_DEF_>=70_0_0  |       | 6730  | 569 |       |       |       |       |
| OTB_MCF_>=70_0_0  |       | 15690 |     |       |       |       |       |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0  | 18096 |       |     | 47294 | 14303 | 18373 | 16493 |
| OTM_SPF_32-69_0_0 |       |       |     | 22    |       |       |       |
| PS_SPF_0_0_0      |       | 1395  |     |       |       |       |       |

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| Metier 2016      | DEU   | ESP   | ITA | LTU   | LVA   | NLD   | POL   |
|------------------|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| LLS_DEF_0_0_0    |       | 2798  |     |       |       |       |       |
| LLS_DEF_6_0_0    |       | 285   |     |       |       |       |       |
| MIS_DEF_0_0_0    |       | 100   |     |       |       |       |       |
| OTB_CRU_>=40_0_0 |       | 3760  |     |       |       |       |       |
| OTB_DEF_>=70_0_0 |       | 10395 | 505 |       |       |       |       |
| OTB_MCF_>=70_0_0 |       | 20802 |     |       |       |       |       |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0 | 20607 |       |     | 67615 | 47742 | 39226 | 30464 |
| PS_SPF_0_0_0     |       | 692   |     |       |       |       |       |

| Metier 2017      | DEU   | ESP   | ITA  | LTU   | LVA   | NLD   | POL   |
|------------------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| LLS_DEF_0_0_0    |       | 2628  |      |       |       |       |       |
| LLS_DEF_6_0_0    |       | 196   |      |       |       |       |       |
| MIS_DEF_0_0_0    |       | 89    |      |       |       |       |       |
| OTB_CRU_>=40_0_0 |       | 5977  |      |       |       |       |       |
| OTB_DEF_>=70_0_0 |       | 12674 | 2111 |       |       |       |       |
| OTB_MCF_>=70_0_0 |       | 17453 |      |       |       |       |       |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0 | 24978 |       |      | 41119 | 48730 | 32997 | 12531 |

| Metier 2018       | DEU   | ESP   | IRL | ITA  | LTU   | LVA   | NLD   | PRT |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| LLS_DEF_0_0_0     |       | 2130  |     |      |       |       |       | 119 |
| LLS_DEF_6_0_0     |       | 52    |     |      |       |       |       |     |
| MIS_DEF_0_0_0     |       | 56    |     |      |       |       |       |     |
| OTB_CRU_>=40_0_0  |       | 4964  |     |      |       |       |       |     |
| OTB_DEF_>=70_0_0  |       | 19320 |     | 2033 |       |       |       |     |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0  | 23509 | 739   |     |      | 32107 | 62320 | 18562 |     |
| OTM_SPF_32-69_0_0 |       |       | 746 |      |       |       |       |     |
| PS_SPF_0_0_0      |       | 728   |     |      |       |       |       |     |

| Metier 2019      | DEU   | ESP   | ITA  | LTU | LVA   | NLD   | PRT   |
|------------------|-------|-------|------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| LLS_DEF_0_0_0    |       | 3049  |      |     |       |       | 92    |
| LLS_DEF_6_0_0    |       | 15    |      |     |       |       |       |
| MIS_DEF_0_0_0    |       | 56    |      |     |       |       |       |
| OTB_CRU_>=40_0_0 |       | 5469  |      |     |       |       |       |
| OTB_DEF_>=70_0_0 |       | 15634 | 1514 |     |       |       |       |
| OTB_DEF_>=80_0_0 |       | 4501  |      |     |       |       |       |
| OTB_MCF_>=70_0_0 |       | 6615  |      |     |       |       |       |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0 | 16360 | 782   |      |     | 67306 | 39514 | 19481 |
| PS_SPF_0_0_0     |       | 122   |      |     |       |       |       |

| Metier 2020      | DEU   | ESP   | ITA | LTU   | LVA   | NLD   | POL  | PRT |
|------------------|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|------|-----|
| LLS_DEF_0_0_0    |       | 2308  |     |       |       |       |      | 42  |
| LLS_DEF_6_0_0    |       | 8     |     |       |       |       |      |     |
| MIS_DEF_0_0_0    |       | 114   |     |       |       |       |      |     |
| OTB_CRU_>=40_0_0 |       | 4891  |     |       |       |       |      |     |
| OTB_DEF_>=70_0_0 |       | 10769 | 649 |       |       |       |      |     |
| OTB_DEF_>=80_0_0 |       | 5508  |     |       |       |       |      |     |
| OTB_MCF_>=70_0_0 |       | 7099  |     |       |       |       |      |     |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0 | 17631 | 2175  |     | 45308 | 38497 | 30399 | 2994 |     |
| PS_SPF_0_0_0     |       | 1101  |     |       |       |       |      |     |

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| Metier 2021      | DEU   | ESP   | ITA  | LTU   | LVA   | NLD   |
|------------------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| LLS_DEF_0_0_0    |       | 1479  |      |       |       |       |
| LLS_DEF_6_0_0    |       | 5     |      |       |       |       |
| MIS_DEF_0_0_0    |       | 188   |      |       |       |       |
| OTB_CRU_>=40_0_0 |       | 5306  |      |       |       |       |
| OTB_DEF_>=70_0_0 |       | 11238 | 1126 |       |       |       |
| OTB_DEF_>=80_0_0 |       | 2932  |      |       |       |       |
| OTB_MCF_>=70_0_0 |       | 4686  |      |       |       |       |
| OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0 | 12056 |       |      | 36929 | 36529 | 31988 |
| PS_SPF_0_0_0     |       | 430   |      |       |       |       |

The métier OTB\_DEF\_>=70\_0\_0 had shown an increasing trend of landings from 2014 to 2018 (when they peak to more than 20,000 t) due to the inclusion of a new fishing category in the protocol EU-Mauritania, as well as an increase in black hake catches in Senegalese waters. This trend reversed during the three last years, with landings reduced to values around 12,200 t in 2021. Landings for the shrimp trawlers (OTB\_CRU\_>=40\_0\_0) remained relatively stable between 2020 and 2021 (values around 5,000 t each year), while the ones of cephalopod-fish trawlers (OTB\_MCF\_>=70\_0\_0) decreased from values around 7,000 t in 2020 to 4,700 t in 2021. Landings highly decreased for artisanal purse seiners (PS\_SPF\_0\_0\_0) in Morocco, linked to an effort drop from 2020 to 2021. Effort and consequently, landings from artisanal longliners (LLS\_DEF\_6\_0\_0 for Spain and LLS\_DEF\_0\_0\_0 for Portugal) in Morocco very much decreased from 2020 to 2021, with no Portuguese and very low Spanish activity in 2021. Landings from pelagic trawlers (métier OTM\_SPF\_>=40\_0\_0) remained at similar levels since 2017, although values in 2021 (around 117,500 t) are the lowest in the last five years.

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The summary of landing statistics in West African waters of the CECAF area, covering data from 2014 to 2020 is given in Table 5.4 below. After the important drop observed in 2015, followed by an increase in 2016, a decreasing trend is observed from 2016 to 2021. These changes are mostly related to changes in the catches of small pelagics for some countries as well as the different situations related to the SFPAs, which led to several months with no activity of EU vessels in these areas in certain years.

Table 4.1.4 Total EU landings (tons) in the West African waters of the CECAF area from 2014 to 2020. Data provided through the RDB.

| Year | Total_EU_landings_t |
|------|---------------------|
| 2014 | 300791              |
| 2015 | 145040              |
| 2016 | 244991              |
| 2017 | 179338              |
| 2018 | 203405              |
| 2019 | 195778              |
| 2020 | 169493              |
| 2021 | 144766              |

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Tables 4.1.5 – 4.1.6 show the results of métier ranking for effort and landings criteria respectively for EU fishing activity in the CECAF area. Although under the new DCF, effort is no longer a criterion for sampling obligations, effort distributions over the different métiers provide however insights in possible shifts in fishing activities.

*Table 4.1.5 Percentage of average effort of the different métiers of EU fleets operating in the CECAF area (West Africa) (period 2019-2021). Calculation based on fishing days. Métiers are comparable to previous reports. Métiers included in the 90% threshold are marked in bold.*

| Metier                     | FishingDays   | EffortPerc   |
|----------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| LLS_DEF_6_0_0              | 74.7          | 0.55         |
| MIS_DEF_0_0_0              | 186.7         | 1.37         |
| OTB_DEF_>=80_0_0           | 219.3         | 1.61         |
| PS_SPF_0_0_0               | 265.0         | 1.94         |
| <b>OTB_MCF_&gt;=70_0_0</b> | <b>1142.0</b> | <b>8.38</b>  |
| <b>LLS_DEF_0_0_0</b>       | <b>1159.7</b> | <b>8.51</b>  |
| <b>OTB_DEF_&gt;=70_0_0</b> | <b>1843.0</b> | <b>13.52</b> |
| <b>OTM_SPF_&gt;=40_0_0</b> | <b>1886.3</b> | <b>13.84</b> |
| <b>OTB_CRU_&gt;=40_0_0</b> | <b>6854.3</b> | <b>50.28</b> |

*Table 4.1.6 Percentage of average landings (period 2019-2021) of different métiers operating in the CECAF area (West Africa). Métiers are comparable to previous reports. Métiers included in the 90% threshold are marked in bold.*

| Metier                     | LandingWeight_ton | LandingsPerc |
|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| LLS_DEF_6_0_0              | 9.7               | 0.01         |
| MIS_DEF_0_0_0              | 119.3             | 0.07         |
| PS_SPF_0_0_0               | 551.0             | 0.32         |
| LLS_DEF_0_0_0              | 2323.7            | 1.37         |
| OTB_DEF_>=80_0_0           | 4313.7            | 2.54         |
| OTB_CRU_>=40_0_0           | 5222.3            | 3.07         |
| <b>OTB_MCF_&gt;=70_0_0</b> | <b>6133.3</b>     | <b>3.61</b>  |
| <b>OTB_DEF_&gt;=70_0_0</b> | <b>13601.3</b>    | <b>8.00</b>  |
| <b>OTM_SPF_&gt;=40_0_0</b> | <b>137738.7</b>   | <b>81.02</b> |

According to the métier ranking, some changes were observed for 2021 as compared to previous years within the same métiers (Tab. 5.5 & 5.6). With regard to métier ranking for landings (Tab. 5.6), the métier OTM\_SPF\_>=40\_0\_0, targeting small pelagics, has slightly decreased by 0.4%. The métier OTB\_DEF\_>=70\_0\_0, targeting demersal fish, decreased also by about 1.6%. Both métiers together constitute 89% of the landings. Together with the métier OTB\_MCF\_>=70\_0\_0, targeting cephalopods, the threshold of 90% is exceeded and these three métiers are selected for sampling. In case of métier ranking for effort (Tab. 5.5), five métiers were selected for sampling, including four demersal métiers targeting crustaceans, cephalopods and demersal fish and one métier targeting small pelagics. The order of the three most important métiers has been the same over the last years. Only the percentage composition has changed slightly. Other métiers targeting both small pelagics and demersal species were also included in previous years due to their relevance in CECAF fisheries and

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their inclusion in respective SFPAs fishing opportunities. Therefore, no major changes occurred in the métiers sampled during the period analyzed.

In order to know the sampling obligation of demersal stocks by the different Member States (MS) according to their shared proportion in total EU catches, the last three years of average landings of those stocks that are jointly fished by different MS and selected for sampling, were estimated and their proportions in the total EU landings calculated. The demersal stocks jointly fished by different MS are the Southern rose shrimp *Penaeus notialis*, the common octopus *Octopus vulgaris* and the cuttlefish *Sepia* spp (*Sepia officinalis* and/or *Sepia hierredda*), fished by Spain and Italy. Following the 10% criteria (EU Impl. Dec. 2016/1251, Chapter V), Spain should continue sampling the three shared stocks considered. In addition, the proportion of *Penaeus* spp, *Sepia* spp and *O. vulgaris* fished by Italy in the last three years was higher than 10% and Italy should therefore consider these for sampling if the fisheries are developed within SFPAs. Italian demersal fisheries in the period 2018-2021 were based on direct authorizations provided by Guinea, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau, and therefore, it is understood that this is out of the DCF sampling obligations.

### FISHING GROUND “CANARY”

The data of the Canary artisanal fleet is made available for 2019-2021 for the first time through the RDB. After having faced some problems related to the allocation of fishing effort to the three different métiers established in the Canary Islands (small pelagics, demersal and tuna), criteria for métier allocation of effort from artisanal fleets has been standardized in 2022. The difficulty of this issued relies on the high polyvalence of the fleet involved, which uses a large set of traditional fishing gears (multi-gear) and targets a high variety of species (multispecies). The Canary fleet mostly operates under the minor-gear license, which allows fishermen to use several gears in the same fishing trip, in a way that even the three métiers (small pelagics, demersal and tuna) can be developed in one single fishing trip.

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Data already provided for 2014-2018 (Tables 4.7 and 4.8) might need further correction according to the new métier allocation criteria. This work is still ongoing and these data is expected to be provided next year.

While the effort and landings of the demersal métier MIS\_DES\_0\_0\_0 has been quite stable since 2018, the landings of purse seiners (PS\_SPF\_10\_0\_0) have shown a decreasing trend since 2017 to 1,650 t in 2021 corresponding to an effort decrease in the same period.

Table 4.1.7 Effort (fishing days) by métiers for the Canary Islands. 2014-2019.

| Country | Métier (level 6) | 2014  | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  | 2021  |
|---------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ESP     | PS_SPF_10_0_0    | 2716  | 3462  | 3403  | 4068  | 2693  | 3597  | 3084  | 2819  |
|         | MIS_DES_0_0_0    | 29206 | 28775 | 28833 | 29102 | 32328 | 32259 | 31635 | 32959 |

Table 4.1.8 Landings (tons) by métiers for the Canary Islands. 2014 to 2019.

| Country | MÉTIER (level 6) | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---------|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| ESP     | PS_SPF_10_0_0    | 1965 | 2165 | 2406 | 2780 | 1897 | 1484 | 1525 | 1650 |
|         | MIS_DES_0_0_0    | 1079 | 1063 | 1030 | 1599 | 2380 | 1819 | 1479 | 1260 |

## FISHING GROUND “MADEIRA”

The archipelago of Madeira is characterised by a narrow insular shelf, oligotrophic waters and steep slope. These bio-geographical features have always imposed limitations on fishing, since target species population biomass is reduced, particularly in the neritic zone (until ca. 200m). Consequently, the Madeiran fishing fleet operates mainly offshore, though still inside its Economic Exclusive Zone (FAO 34.1.2), targeting mainly deepwater species and/or migratory fishing resources.

Monthly sampling was conducted for the métiers LLD\_DWF\_0\_0\_0 (Drifting longlines targeting deep water fish, mainly *Aphanopus* spp.), LLS\_FIF\_0\_0\_0 (Set longlines targeting finfish species, mainly Sparidae and Serranidae), PS\_SPF\_16\_0\_0 (purse seine for small pelagic fishes) and MIS\_MOL\_0\_0\_0 (several gears targeting limpets *Patella aspera* and *Patella ordinaria*) by the artisanal fleet in Madeira archipelago in 2021.

In 2021, approximately 31% of the total fishing effort of Madeira was accomplished with the metier LLD\_DWF\_0\_0\_0 (Table 4.11). The landings of finfish operated with the metier LLS\_FIF\_0\_0\_0 represented 18% of the total, and the catches performed by the metier MIS\_MOL\_0\_0\_0 represented 7%.

Table 4.1.9 Effort (fishing days) by metiers for Madeira. 2014-2021.

| Country | Métier         | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---------|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| PT      | LLD_DWF_0_0_0  | 4266 | 4473 | 3992 | 4217 | 3640 | 4078 | 3391 | 2113 |
|         | FPO_FIF_30_0_0 | 130  | 146  | 157  | 362  | 304  | 255  | 207  | 278  |
|         | LHP_FIF_0_0_0  | 340  | 560  | 801  | 841  | 934  | 1071 | 790  | 492  |
|         | LLS_FIF_0_0_0  | 921  | 954  | 866  | 1241 | 1626 | 1326 | 997  | 1210 |
|         | MIS_FIF_0_0_0  | 19   | 13   | 7    |      |      |      |      |      |
|         | LHP_MOL_0_0_0  |      |      | 9    | 43   | 25   | 11   | 58   | 27   |
|         | LLS_MOL_0_0_0  | 21   |      | 13   | 1    |      | 12   | 16   | 7    |
|         | MIS_MOL_0_0_0  | 537  | 893  | 655  | 661  | 581  | 536  | 586  | 517  |
|         | LHP_SPF_0_0_0  | 15   | 23   | 54   | 7    | 37   |      | 64   | 6    |
|         | LLS_SPF_0_0_0  | 19   |      |      |      |      |      | 39   | 28   |
|         | MIS_SPF_0_0_0  | 29   | 57   | 96   |      |      |      |      |      |
|         | PS_SPF_16_0_0  | 531  | 600  | 614  | 561  | 543  | 622  | 278  | 247  |
|         | FPO_CRU_30_0_0 |      |      | 2    | 10   |      |      |      |      |

The metier LLD\_DWF\_0\_0\_0 targeting black and intermediate scabbard fishes represented approximately 36% of the total landings in 2021 (Table 4.12). Small pelagic fishes (*Trachurus picturatus* and *Scomber colias*) represented 5%, apart from tuna which represented 55% of the total catches. Despite representing only 2% of total landings, the demersal fish fishery (LLS\_FIF\_0\_0\_0, LHP\_FIF\_0\_0\_0 and MIS\_FIF\_0\_0\_0), takes on an important economic value in local markets.

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Concerning the métier MIS\_MOL\_0\_0\_0 targeting limpets, which also represented 2% of total landings, monthly sampling was only conducted from April to November in order to comply with the regional legislation in force (e.g. closed season from December to March).

Table 4.1.10 Landings (tons) by métiers for Madeira. 2014-2021.

| Country | Métier         | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---------|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| PT      | LLD_DWF_0_0_0  | 1983 | 1918 | 1965 | 2252 | 2232 | 2292 | 2155 | 1882 |
|         | FPO_FIF_30_0_0 | 1    | 2    | 2    | 5    | 5    | 2    | 4    | 8    |
|         | LHP_FIF_0_0_0  | 4    | 6    | 9    | 15   | 27   | 34   | 24   | 25   |
|         | LLS_FIF_0_0_0  | 27   | 31   | 24   | 42   | 65   | 53   | 41   | 92   |
|         | MIS_FIF_0_0_0  | <1   | <1   | <1   |      |      |      |      |      |
|         | LHP_MOL_0_0_0  |      |      | <1   | 2    | 1    | <1   | 1    | 1    |
|         | LLS_MOL_0_0_0  | <1   |      | <1   | <1   |      | <1   | <1   | <1   |
|         | MIS_MOL_0_0_0  | 73   | 150  | 119  | 108  | 79   | 74   | 96   | 82   |
|         | LHP_SPF_0_0_0  | <1   | <1   | 1    | <1   | <1   |      | 1    | <1   |
|         | LLS_SPF_0_0_0  | <1   |      |      |      |      |      | 2    | 1    |
|         | MIS_SPF_0_0_0  | 1    | 1    | 1    |      |      |      |      |      |
|         | PS_SPF_16_0_0  | 516  | 772  | 953  | 472  | 432  | 452  | 226  | 283  |
|         | FPO_CRU_30_0_0 |      |      | <1   | <1   |      |      |      |      |

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The landings of demersal fishes increased more than 50% in relation to 2020. Overall, there was a slight increase in landings per métier of Madeira archipelago local fisheries, with the exception of the métier LLD\_DWF\_0\_0\_0 targeting black and intermediate scabbardfishes, which marked a 13% reduction and the métier MIS\_MOL\_0\_0\_0 targeting limpets with a reduction of 15% in landings in relation to 2020.

## 4.2 SPRFMO area

EU fleet activities in the SPRFMO area are reported since 2012. In 2013 only one vessel under the Lithuanian flag was active with a negligible landings volume. In 2014 only two EU vessels (one under DEU and one under NLD flag) were fishing in the SPRFMO area. In 2015, Dutch and Lithuanian fisheries were reported (and sampled under the sampling agreement between Poland, Lithuania, Germany and The Netherlands) in the SPRFMO area. Two fishing vessels were engaged in this area in 2016 (under DEU and POL flags) and in 2017 (under NLD and LTU flags). Only one fishing vessel was actively fishing in this area both in 2018 (LTU flag) and in 2019 (POL flag). In 2020, the entire EU quota was transferred to Chile. For this reason, no activities of EU vessels took place in the SPRFMO area.

Until 2018 the effort (in fishing days) and landing data from the SPRFMO area were provided by MS to the RCG LDF in Excel files. For 2019 RCG LDF meeting, data were provided in a mixed form, some in Excel files and some were uploaded to the RDB. In reply to the 2022 data call regarding fishing activity up to 2021, data related to the fishery in the SPRFMO area were uploaded to the RDB.

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Table 4.2.1 SPRFMO small pelagic fishery effort (fishing days) by country from 2014 to 2021.

| Country | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| DEU     | 218  |      | 180  |      |      |      |      | 177  |
| NLD     | 151  | 108  | 33   | 133  |      |      |      |      |
| LTU     |      | 87   |      | 186  | 131  |      |      | 40   |
| POL     |      |      | 39   |      |      | 87   |      | 98   |

Table 4.2.2 SPRFMO small pelagic fishery total landings (tons) by country from 2014 to 2021

| Country | 2014  | 2015  | 2016 | 2017  | 2018  | 2019  | 2020 | 2021  |
|---------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| DEU     | 10669 |       | 9935 |       |       |       |      | 16700 |
| NLD     | 10223 | 11045 |      | 13414 |       |       |      |       |
| LTU     |       | 13756 |      | 16020 | 10235 |       |      | 9034  |
| POL     |       |       | 2751 |       |       | 12293 |      | 29663 |

No fishing activity by the EU vessels in 2020, as the whole EU quota for *Trachurus murphyi* was transferred to Chile.

An overview of species fished by EU MS in the SPRFMO area in 2021 is presented in “RCG LDF\_Annual\_Catch\_Effort\_overview\_2021”.

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### 4.3 NAFO area

Following a recommendation from the RCG NANSEA a decision was taken in 2021 to move NAFO area under the realm of the RCG LDF.

After being subject of several coordination groups, NAFO issues are for the first time addressed in the RCG LDF, which, in the opinion of the group members, is the correct group to do it. Being the first time, this RCG focused on becoming familiar with NAFO procedures and MS activity in NAFO area. At the moment, there is no specific document on the data needs of NAFO or the Scientific Council. It was agreed to prepare a request through the EU Commission to standardize data provided by MS, taking into account possibilities to divide the responsibilities between the member states. Also, unlike ICES, in NAFO there is no database with all the biological raw data, the databases are at the National Institutions or with the Designated Experts for each stock.

A NAFO subgroup was created, during the meeting, that started by characterizing the EU fleet/fisheries in NAFO, identifying, the countries involved, métiers, species, catch and sampling levels. An overview of effort and landings by EU in NAFO area based on RDB data is presented in Tables 4.3.1 and 4.3.2

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Table 4.3.1 Effort (fishing days) from FAO Area 21 by country and by metier from 2014 to 2021

| Country | Metier_level_6      | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---------|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| DEU     | OTB_DEF_130-219_0_0 | 353  | 353  | 205  | 182  | 194  | 179  | 253  | 298  |
| ESP     | OTB_CRU_40-59_0_0   | 10   |      |      |      |      |      |      | 4    |
| ESP     | OTB_MDD_>=220_0_0   | 306  | 441  | 330  | 357  | 256  | 331  | 341  | 307  |
| ESP     | OTB_MDD_130-219_0_0 | 1091 | 792  | 748  | 713  | 866  | 962  | 913  | 936  |
| ESP     | OTB_MOL_60-89_0_0   |      |      |      |      | 33   | 19   | 21   |      |
| ESP     | OTM_DEF_>=120_0_0   | 15   | 13   |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| ESP     | OTM_DEF_130-219_0_0 |      |      | 16   | 12   | 8    | 8    |      |      |
| EST     | OTB_DEF_>=220_0_0   |      |      |      | 98   |      |      |      |      |
| EST     | OTB_DEF_130-219_0_0 | NA   | 321  | NA   | 401  | 562  | 549  | 330  | 401  |
| LTU     | OTB_CRU_40-59_0_0   |      |      |      |      |      |      | 31   | 234  |
| POL     | OTB_DEF_130-219_0_0 | 34   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| PRT     | OTB_DEF_>=120_0_0   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1286 |

Table 4.3.2 Landings (tons) from FAO Area21 by country and by metier from 2014 to 2021

| Country | Metier_level_6      | 2014  | 2015  | 2016 | 2017 | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  | 2021  |
|---------|---------------------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| DEU     | OTB_DEF_130-219_0_0 | 1876  | 1886  | 1903 | 1944 | 1949  | 1960  | 1901  | 1687  |
| ESP     | OTB_CRU_40-59_0_0   | 76    |       |      |      |       |       |       | 16    |
| ESP     | OTB_MDD_>=220_0_0   | 4206  | 4223  | 3446 | 4443 | 2825  | 3678  | 4300  | 3148  |
| ESP     | OTB_MDD_130-219_0_0 | 10104 | 11320 | 9504 | 9681 | 11968 | 12336 | 11825 | 12096 |
| ESP     | OTB_MOL_60-89_0_0   |       |       |      |      | 448   | 110   | 214   |       |
| ESP     | OTM_DEF_130-219_0_0 | 123   | 122   | 130  | 56   | 3     | 1     |       |       |
| EST     | OTB_CRU_40-59_0_0   | 7     |       |      |      |       |       |       |       |
| EST     | OTB_DEF_>=220_0_0   | 306   | 19    | 170  | 348  | 31    |       | 2     |       |
| EST     | OTB_DEF_130-219_0_0 | 1818  | 3072  | 3113 | 4396 | 5936  | 5923  | 3168  | 3480  |
| LTU     | OTB_CRU_40-59_0_0   |       |       |      |      |       |       | 79    | 1588  |
| POL     | OTB_DEF_130-219_0_0 | 413   |       |      |      |       |       |       |       |
| PRT     | OTB_DEF_>=120_0_0   |       |       |      |      |       |       |       | 17848 |

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As NAFO is the end user of the data collected, Tom Blasdale, the Scientific Council coordinator from the NAFO secretariat, attended the meeting. He explained that official catch and effort data are sent to NAFO through EUROSTAT and that NAFO Secretariat, at the beginning of the year, sends letters to Contracting Parties (CPs), asking for oceanographic and biological data. CPs or Members States (MS) send all their available information to the Secretariat/Scientific Council in the form of a document called National Report, published in the NAFO Scientific Council Summary (SCS) documents series.

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Currently NAFO did not identify major issues with EU data that need coordination nor that there is a lack of data from EU side needed for the stock assessment.

The work on finding out if there is a need for RCG coordination on NAFO issues will be continued.

### 4.4 Other areas

Based on the responses to the 2022 RCG LDF data call, the following overview of fishing activities in other areas than CECAF or SPRFMO was made.

The Area 47 listed in Tables 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 does not include fishing activity in Angola, even though it belongs to area 47. This is because Angola is considered in CECAF area of competence, as *de facto* situation and therefore, is included in the Tables for the West Africa area.

Table 4.3.1 Effort (fishing days) from other regions by country from 2014 to 2021.

| Area | Country | Metier_level_6       | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|------|---------|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 41   | LTU     |                      |      | 2    |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 47   | ESP     | OTB_DEF_>=8<br>0_0_0 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 636  |
| 47   | LTU     | OTM_SPF_>=4<br>0_0_0 |      | 223  | 26   |      |      |      |      |      |
| 47   | NLD     | OTM_SPF_>=4<br>0_0_0 | 44   |      |      | 7    | 2    |      |      |      |
| 47   | POL     | OTM_SPF_>=4<br>0_0_0 | 58   | 153  | 140  | 249  | 178  |      |      |      |

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Table 4.3.2 Landings (tons) from other regions by country from 2014 to 2021.

| Area | Country | Metier_level_6    | 2014 | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  | 2018  | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|------|---------|-------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| 41   | LTU     | OTM_SPF_32-69_0_0 |      | 70    |       |       |       |      |      |      |
| 47   | ESP     | OTB_DEF_>=80_0_0  |      |       |       |       |       |      |      | 4855 |
| 47   | NLD     | OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0  | 7706 |       |       |       |       |      |      |      |
| 47   | POL     | OTM_SPF_>=40_0_0  | 8945 | 29429 | 20429 | 37802 | 27072 |      |      |      |

Based on these overviews, RCG LDF concluded that for the time being, there is no need for regional coordination in the above mentioned "other areas". However, this does obviously not void the responsibilities for MS to execute sampling programmes when and where required under the regulations applicable for the respective area.

An overview of species fished by EU MS in other areas in 2020 is presented in "RCG LDF\_Annual\_Catch\_Effort\_overview\_2021" .

#### **4.5 Ranking of métier to find out whether any of the NWP's need to be modified for 2023**

In order to check whether or not the fisheries over the last three years have had similar pattern as in previous periods or whether there were significant changes to that pattern and to evaluate whether or not to amend future National Work Plans (NWP), the group performed the ranking of métiers using effort (days at sea or fishing days) and landings data for 2019-2021 for the CECAF area (see section 4.1 – “CECAF area” for details). Based on the above analysis of the most actual métier ranking at the regional level compared with the métiers selected for sampling in current work plans in respect of the fishing activity in the CECAF area, the RCG LDF concluded that there is no need for changes or amendments to the NWPs for 2023.

## 5 Review progress in regional co-ordination since the 2021 RCG (Tor I)

### 5.1 Follow-up of the RCG LDF 2021 recommendations and 18<sup>th</sup> Liaison Meeting

The RCG reviewed the report from the 18th Liaison Meeting. As described in the report, the role of the LM is to assist the Commission on data collection issues. This role is in line with EU Reg 2017/1004 article 9 (6) “Regional coordination groups shall coordinate with each other and with the Commission, where issues affect several marine regions”. LM mainly streamlines the recommendations from the various RCGs and provides additional support where and when needed.

The 2021 RCG LDF yielded three recommendations that were presented at the LM. No specific comments were received from the LM.

- Recommendation 2021-1: Inclusion of NAFO area under RCG LDF
- Recommendation 2021-2 : Inclusion of new and updated reference codes in the RDB
- Recommendation 2021-3: Update to EU-MAP to reflect updated governance

No specific comments were received concerning these recommendations. 2021-1 was addressed at the NCs Decision Meeting in September 2021 with positive decision taken on inclusion of NAFO area in the realm of the RCG LDF. 2021-2 was addressed by the ICES data centre in due time before the 2022 data call. 2021-3 remains open as this recommendation refers to a proposed update of EU-MAP to reflect the change in the governance of the NAFO surveys, pursuant to the move of the NAFO area to RCG LDF.

RCG LDF appreciated the presence and presentation of CECAF at the 2021 LM meeting and invited CECAF to join the next RCG LDF meeting.

## 6 Feedback from end users and 2022 state-of-play (Tor2)

### 6.1 CECAF AND JSCs of SFPAs

#### 6.1.1 CECAF

The CECAF scientific Subcommittee (SSC) met last time in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 23 - 26 October 2018. The recommendations of the last four assessments Working Groups (WGs) adopted by the SSC were presented in the RCG LDF report of 2019. The stocks exploited by the EU are assessed in three CECAF WGs: Small Pelagics-North, Demersal Resources-North and Demersal resources-South. Taking into account the new possibilities of fishing small pelagics within the SFPA between the EU and Guinea-Bissau, the potential participation of some MS to the WG Small Pelagic-South could be envisaged.

Only the FAO/CECAF WG on the Stocks Assessment of the Demersal Resources- Subgroup North was held during the inter-sessional period of the RCG LDF. This WG was split into two meetings: A first preparatory meeting was held virtually on the 24 January 2022 to collate data from different sub-groups and information on recent developments in the fisheries (by country and species); sharing information on new studies in fisheries management; preparing and reviewing the data tables required. Having noticed that information from 2021 was not available for most countries in that period of the year, a second meeting was held in Dakar (Senegal) last 6–10 June 2022 with the purpose of updating the information, conducting the stock assessments, and providing management recommendations. The report of this meeting is not available so far and thus, new sampling recommendations cannot be provided to the RCG.

Regarding the Working group on the assessment of Small pelagic fish off Northwest Africa, six online meetings have taken place in June-July 2022 for each stock assessment (Chub mackerel, sardinelles, horse mackerels, sardine, anchovy and bonga). A face to face meeting is planned to be held in Dakar next 13-16 September for the formulation of the management recommendations and the report write-up. Thus, no new recommendations for small pelagic sampling are available for this RCG meeting. The EU MS that are CECAF member states and participate in these WGs (Spain for demersal and small pelagics, and The Netherlands and more recently, the EU (DGMARE) for small pelagics) should provide fishery and biological information from their fisheries in the areas. The data calls are directly sent by the WG chair persons to the participants. Spain provided fishery and biological information (length frequency distributions, maturity, length-weight relationship, sex-ratio, etc.) for most small pelagics and demersal stocks required. Due to the limited possibilities of sampling small pelagic fleets in 2018-2021, only limited biological information on the stocks required was provided to the small pelagics WGs.

As the reports of the 2022 Small Pelagics-North and Demersal-North WGs are not available yet, research recommendations from the last published report affecting fishing information and biological samplings from the EU fleets are summarized below with an update response from the RCG LDF.

## FAO Working Group on the assessment of small pelagic fish off northwest Africa, 2019 (FAO, 2020a<sup>7</sup>)

Main recommendations affecting stocks exploited by the EU in Morocco (artisanal purse seiners and pelagic trawlers) and Mauritania (pelagic trawlers) were:

### Sardine (*Sardina pilchardus*)

- Strengthen sardine sampling for year-round coverage in Area C, especially in Mauritania.
- Strengthen sardine age reading for different fisheries and resume otolith exchange between countries in the region in order to standardize methods of reading and validating age readings.

### Sardinella (*Sardinella aurita* and *Sardinella maderensis*)

- Undertake at least one sampling per month and per landing site in the whole sub-region. The minimum sampling rate is one sample (minimum 100 individuals) per 1,000 tonnes of catches.
- Re-start studies on the growth and age reading of round sardinella.

### Horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus* and *Trachurus trecae*)

- Continue analyses to implement structural models and encourage biological studies to improve the biological parameters used as input into assessment models.
- Strengthen the revision of the identification of different species of horse mackerel to better separate these species in catches, including for the Canary Islands.
- Ensure boarding of observers on fishing vessels in the North West Africa area to ensure biological sampling of catches.
- Improve sampling on the fishing segments not covered so far.

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### Mackerel (*Scomber colias*)

- Strengthen and extend the biological sampling of mackerel in all operational fleets at the sub-regional level and during all seasons,
- Strengthen collection and reading of otoliths to determine size-age keys by fishery and / or area and promote exchanges between countries to improve age reading.

### Anchovy (*Engraulis encrasicolus*)

- Intensify sampling at the different segments of the anchovy fishery, particularly in Mauritania.
- Proceed and expand the age reading of anchovy by fishery in all areas.
- Construct a time series for length frequencies in Zone C (from 26°N to the southern limit of the species in the area, this is to the border Senegal-Guinea Bissau).

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<sup>7</sup> FAO. 2020a. Report of the Working Group on the Assessment of Small Pelagic Fish of Northwest Africa. Casablanca, Morocco, 8–13 July 2019. Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF). FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No. 1309/FAO, Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9562b>

**RCG 2022 response:** main recommendations have been followed since the end of 2018, when the new program of observers onboard pelagic trawlers, coordinated by Poland, was implemented. (See Section 6.3 for comments on the execution of the joint sampling programme in CECAF).

### **FAO/CECAF WG on the assessment of demersal resources – subgroup north, 2017 (FAO, 2020b<sup>8</sup>)**

Some recommendations affecting the data collection of stocks exploited by the EU were:

#### **Black hake (*Merluccius polli* and *Merluccius senegalensis*)**

These recommendations affect the EU black hake fishery developed in Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal.

- Providing more detailed information on the lengths discarded and the estimated discards in order to incorporate them in the assessments.
- Improve the monitoring of catch, effort and length for black hake as a target and bycatch species for all Spanish fleets operating in Mauritania and Senegal.
- Coordination between IEO (Spain) and IMROP (Mauritania), CRODT (Senegal) and FD (The Gambia) to develop the observers methodology to be used would improve efficiency.

**RCG 2022 response:** Spain continues to meet the requirements in relation to discards, length and biological samplings of black hakes, under the DCF, with some gaps in 2021 and 2022 due to the COVID pandemic and IEO administrative issues. Coordination of IEO and coastal States institutions in relation to scientific observer Protocols was expected as an output of the Specific Contract No12 “Study on improvement for the analysis and exploitation of observer reports in EU fisheries from NW African waters”, but this has not been managed so far. It is important however to note, that the study did succeed in developing harmonized observer manuals and that all experts involved in the final observer workshop did approve these manuals. Thus, a standardized method is available, but still it has to be implemented through further coordination and collaboration with the coastal States.

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### **Demersal fish**

*Pagellus bellottii*, *P. acarne*, *Pagellus* spp, *Dentex macrophthalmus*, *Pagrus caeruleostictus*, *Sparus* spp, *Arius* spp., *Pseudolithus* spp., *Plectorhynchus mediterraneus* and *Epinephelus aeneus* – Some of these species are fished as bycatch by the EU demersal fleets.

- Strengthen the collection and provision of bio-ecological data of main stocks (length frequencies, sex-ratio, age, zone and period of reproduction).

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<sup>8</sup> FAO. 2020b. Report of the FAO/CECAF Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Resources – Subgroup North. Nouakchott, Mauritania, 2–10 December 2019. CECAF/ECAF 20/83. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb1539b>

**RCG 2022 response:** Spain continues to meet the requirements in relation to length sampling of these bycatch species of demersal fisheries in Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal, either as retained bycatch species (concurrent sampling) or discarded species, with some gaps through 2021 and 2022 due to the COVID pandemic and IEO administrative issues.

### **Shrimps (*Parapenaeus longirostris* and *Penaeus notialis*)**

These recommendations affect the EU shrimper fisheries carried out in Mauritania.

#### **Deep water rose shrimp (*Parapenaeus longirostris*)**

- Continue and extend the biological sampling programme of catches to the main landing ports and onboard shrimp trawlers;
- Regularly update the biological parameters of this species.

#### **Southern pink shrimp (*Penaeus notialis*)**

- Improve knowledge of the biology of this species.
- Continue the biological sampling programme for Mauritanian catches.

**RCG 2022 response:** Spain continues to meet the requirements in relation to length and biological samplings of *P. longirostris* and *P. notialis*, as target species of the Spanish shrimper fleet in Mauritania. Last information from observers onboard the shrimper fleet was collected in 2019. There was no data collection during 2020 due to the COVID pandemic and IEO administrative issues. The IEO Program of observers onboard shrimpers in West Africa was resumed in 2021 in Guinea-Bissau and it in 2022 in Mauritania, as both fishing grounds are sampled in alternate years.

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### **FAO/CECAF WG on the assessment of demersal resources – subgroup south, 2017 (FAO, 2019<sup>9</sup>)**

General recommendations:

- To improve data collection and analysis for priority species or species groups.
- To improve species identification and the system of data collection by species, carry out sampling so that the species can be better separated in catches and catch statistics in order to improve knowledge on the species composition of species groups (Sparidae, Dentex spp, Pseudolithus spp, coastal shrimps etc).

The specific recommendations affecting the data collection of stocks exploited by the EU were:

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<sup>9</sup> FAO. 2019. Report of the FAO/CECAF Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Resources – Subgroup South. Libreville, Gabon, 6–15 September 2017. CECAF/ECAF series no.18/79. Rome. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

**Demersal fish south, Subgroup 1: *Pseudotolithus elongatus*, *Pseudotolithus* spp., *Galeoides decadactylus*, *Pomadasys* spp., *Arius* spp., *Cynoglossus* spp. and Sparidae- Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Cape Verde, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.**

Some of these species are fished as bycatch of the EU demersal fleet in Guinea-Bissau and other fleets from EU MS that might fish in other countries with private authorizations.

The work carried out revealed important gaps in current knowledge about the stocks in these areas. In order to address these, CECAF recommended to:

- Resume the collection of biological data by sampling on board the demersal industrial fisheries vessels, giving priority to the main species, so as to obtain a complete catalogue of the basic biological parameters.
- Intensify sampling for length frequencies and species composition of catches including bycatch in all the main fisheries.

**RCG 2022 response:** The EU-fisheries in Guinea-Bissau were re-opened in July 2019, when the last Protocol of the SFPA came into force. Spain resumed their Programs of Observers onboard cephalopod-finish trawlers (last quarter of 2019 and 2021, after the 2020 gap) and Observers onboard shrimp trawlers (2021) to meet the requirements in relation to length sampling of these bycatch species of demersal fisheries in Guinea-Bissau, either as retained bycatch species (concurrent sampling) or discarded species.

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**Shrimp South- Southern pink shrimp (*Penaeus notialis*) and Deepwater rose shrimp (*Parapenaeus longirostris*)- Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Gabon, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola.**

These recommendations affect EU shrimp fleets operating in Guinea-Bissau through SFPAs and Spanish shrimpers fishing in waters off Guinea, Congo and Angola through direct authorizations.

- For Angola, monthly size and biological sampling of this species on board vessels are recommended.
- Sampling of biological parameters should be initiated for the countries where this is not done.

**RCG 2022 response:** Spain has resumed the Program of Observer onboard shrimp trawlers in Guinea-Bissau in 2021 after a period with no fishery (December 2017-July 2019) and the 2020 gap. This will allow to meet the requirements in relation to length and biological samplings of *P. longirostris* and *P. notialis*, as target species of the Spanish shrimp fleet in Guinea-Bissau. In addition, Spain initiated in 2018 a program of observers onboard shrimp trawlers in Angola, that had to be stopped in 2019 and 2020 (IEO administrative issues and COVID related issues) and newly resumed in 2021.

**Cephalopods- Octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*), cuttlefish (mainly *Sepia hierredda*) and squid (*Loligo vulgaris*)- Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, C. Ivoire, Ghana, Benin,**

## Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Gabon, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola.

These recommendations affect EU cephalopods-finish trawlers operating in Guinea-Bissau through SFPAs or in others coastal States through direct authorizations and other EU demersal trawlers catching these species as bycatch.

- To conduct biological studies on cuttlefish throughout the subregion. Specifically, information is needed on monthly mean weight in catches, biometric relationships (length–weight, mantle length–total length), monthly maturity indices and length at first maturity.

**RCG 2022 response:** Spain will contribute to meet the requirements in relation to length and biological samplings of *O. vulgaris* and *S. hierredda*, as target species of the Spanish cephalopod-finish fleet in Guinea-Bissau, through the IEO Program of observers onboard resumed in 2021.

It should be noted that in addition to the administrative problems already mentioned for the programs of observers onboard Spanish demersal fleets, the lack of experienced observers is an additional issue faced to fulfil the requirements of the DCF. The hard working and living conditions onboard these vessels, together with low incentives, discourage observers to work in these sampling Programs.

### 6.1.2 JSCs of SFPAs

The Joint Scientific Committees (JSCs) of mixed Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPA) between the EU and West African countries are very relevant end users of the information collected under the DCF on the EU fisheries developed in some CEEAF countries (Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau). This information is generally provided to the JSCs through data calls launched by the EC (DG MARE) to the MS having any fishing activity in these West African countries.

#### JSC EU- Morocco

Last Annual JSC with Morocco was held online on 04-08 October 2021, with some complementary meetings the 3rd and 5th of November 2021<sup>10</sup>.

The following sampling recommendations were made for different fishing categories:

- Category 2 (small-scale, bottom longline fishing, North): to reinforce the monitoring of the species targeted by this category in order to have the scientific elements needed for the sustainable management of this fishery. Particular attention must be paid to species with an unfavourable status, in particular: scabbardfish (Family *Trichiuridae*) and red seabream (*Pagellus bogaraveo*).
- Category 4 (demersal fishing with bottom trawls and bottom longlines, South): to increase the number of scientific observers embarked to obtain better information on discards; to set up a program for monitoring the Atlantic pomfret *Brama brama* in the Moroccan zone in order to assess it; to further analyse the biological cycles of the concerned stocks in the area.

<sup>10</sup> Report available in: [https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/publications/report-2021-meeting-joint-scientific-committee-eu-morocco-fisheries-partnership-agreement\\_en](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/publications/report-2021-meeting-joint-scientific-committee-eu-morocco-fisheries-partnership-agreement_en)

## JSC EU-Mauritania

The EU-Mauritania JSC has continued its collaboration under the new SFPA. In the first half of 2022, several online meetings with JSC experts have already taken place. Tasked by the Joint Committee in June 2022, the JSC is currently reviewing and evaluating a draft proposal for a “sustainable fisheries management plan for small pelagic species, applicable to all fleets operating in Mauritanian waters” according to Article 9(9) of the new protocol. The new protocol requires such a management plan following the 2021 advice of the Joint Scientific Committee on Mauritania’s zoning audit; the JSC 2021 requested the proposed zoning changes to be accompanied by a reduction in fishing effort of the coastal pelagic segment<sup>11</sup>.

The 2022 annual JSC meeting is scheduled to take place from 21-25 November in Nouadhibou, Mauritania.

The RCG highlights that the newly negotiated SFPA and protocol with Mauritania<sup>12</sup> contains improvements as regards scientific observers. The negotiators accepted all texts that the JSC experts had suggested during the preparations of the negotiations. The specifications can be found in ANNEX III MONITORING OF FISHING EFFORT IN THE MAURITANIAN EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE, Appendix 2 DATASHEETS.

For all fishing categories there is a Point 7: Scientific observers.

For FISHING CATEGORY 6: PELAGIC FREEZER TRAWLERS, point 7 (page 79 of the English PDF version<sup>13</sup>;) reads as follows:

*“The presence of two Mauritanian scientific observers is mandatory on board all vessels in this category. They are required to measure the fish below deck while simultaneously monitoring by-catches on the fishing deck. If full coverage of all fishing trips by observers is not feasible, all pelagic trawlers must take on board a team of two scientific observers at least when requested to do so by IMROP. If a trawler refuses to take on board scientific observers, it will not be authorised to leave port. IMROP must put in place balanced sampling of the different fleet segments. The number of missions depends on the total effort (total number of trawlers in the zone) and the variability of the catches in terms of space and time.*

*In addition to on-board observations, observations on land are also organised by Mauritania. The data thus collected are made available to the Independent JSC and to CECAF. Samples are to be taken each month and at each landing site throughout the sub-region. The minimum sampling rate is at least one sample (of at least of 100 individuals per 1 000 tonnes of catch) –( ref. CECAF 2019).”*

The RCG suggests that DGMARE negotiators include the same text in all future (new or renegotiated) SFPAs. Furthermore, the RCG recommends to also include the option that African observers can be replaced by EU observers, in case there are no African observers available. Moreover, DGMARE

<sup>11</sup> Full JSC 2021 advice on Mauritania’s zoning audit in: [https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/publications/report-2021-meeting-joint-scientific-committee-eu-mauritania-fisheries-partnership-agreement\\_en](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/publications/report-2021-meeting-joint-scientific-committee-eu-mauritania-fisheries-partnership-agreement_en)

<sup>12</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L:2021:439:TOC>

<sup>13</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:2021:439:FULL&from=EN>

informed that a study is in the planning to follow-up on the very useful results of the “*Study on improvement for the analysis and exploitation of observer reports in EU fisheries from NW African waters*” (Specific Contract No 12 under the Framework Contract EASME/EMFF/2016/008) and on the four manuals for scientific observers. These manuals were consolidated by all EU and most African institutions involved during the “*Workshop on the standardisation of on-board observer methods*” held in Santa Cruz de Tenerife from 27 to 31 January 2020.

DGMARE would appreciate comments by RCG LDF experts on the draft ToRs before launching this study.

### JSC EU-Senegal

The last official JSC meeting took place in 2018<sup>14</sup>. Samplings recommendations for EU black hake fishery coming for this meeting were already reported in the RCG LDF report of 2019.

### JSC EU-Guinea-Bissau

The eighth meeting of the JSC EU and Guinea-Bissau (GB) was held between March 29 and April 5 2022, after a long period, since the previous one was held in 2017. The report has not been published yet and thus, sampling recommendations coming from this JSC are not available for this RCG.

## 6.2 SPRFMO

With regard to the SPRMFO, its website gives clear details on the data required and the format for data submission.

There were no changes in SPRMFO Data Standards adopted in May 2018 (*CMM 02-2022 Conservation and Management Measure on Standards for the Collection, Reporting, Verification and Exchange of Data*), published on Organization’s webpage. Thus, from the perspective of EU fishing activity, the Data Standards provided for no changes to data requirements in 2022 sampling year.

In 2022 the SPRFMO Commission has adopted a revised “*Conservation and Management Measure Establishing the SPRFMO Observer Programme*” (CMM 16-2022). One of the key changes related to the entry into force of the obligation to have on board fishing vessels operating in the SPRFMO area the scientific observers sourced from a national observer programme or service provider accredited by SPRFMO – the new date of entry into force of this obligation is 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025. Until 31 December 2024, Member States may continue using their own non-accredited national observer programme or service provider to meet observer coverage requirements.

Intersessional activity of the RCG LDF Subgroup addressing the EU Observer Programme accreditation is described in Section 8.3.

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<sup>14</sup> [https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas/senegal\\_en#scientific-advice](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas/senegal_en#scientific-advice)

## 6.3 State-of-play 2021 data collection

### 6.3.1 SPRFMO

In 2020, despite the lack of possibility of placing observers onboard fishing vessels due to the restrictions imposed worldwide in relation to COVID-19 pandemic, no biological sampling could be performed due to the fact, that the whole EU fishing quota for Chilean jack mackerel (*Trachurus murphyi*) in this year was transferred to Chile.

In 2021 no sampling in SPRFMO was hampered due to various reasons:

- Serious COVID-19 development in Poland in the first quarter. The pandemic slowed down in the summer season but increased dramatically again in the fall (with a very high death rate).
- Safety measures taken at the Institute employing observers, including ban on at sea sampling (lifted in May 2022) and ban on travelling abroad.
- Problems with observers availability (COVID-19 infections, COVID related family issues, staff reduction, not available due to the engagement in a number of other projects).

In 2021, three EU fishing vessels were active in the SPRFMO area (under DEU, LTU and POL flags). Placing observers onboard vessels fishing in Pacific in 2021 was a great logistical challenge due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on people's movement still in force, including i.a. obligation for observers to be in possession of a negative COVID PCR test prior to departure to South America and on arrival there, with 2-3 days of quarantine after arrival (and another PCR test on disembarkation prior to boarding the return flight). Despite those challenges, in March and April 2021 a scientific observer was on board the vessel flying DEU flag. In June 2021 another observer travelled to Panama first to board the reefer vessel which took him on the fishing ground. After observing two transshipments at sea from two EU fishing vessels, the observer boarded at sea a DEU fishing vessel which transported him to fishing ground to board the target POL vessel.

The SPRFMO requirement to have a minimum 10% observer coverage in terms of fishing trips was achieved and exceeded by having four fishing trips observed out of total of 10 fishing trips executed by EU vessels in 2021.

By July 2022 two EU vessels were active in the SPRFMO area under POL and LTU flags). Two observers were placed onboard POL vessel – after one fishing trip one observer returned to Poland and the second one stayed onboard for next fishing trip. Poland indicated its plans to place another observer also on the LTU vessel by end of July to reach the goals of collecting data from both EU vessels engaged in fishery in this area as well as to have a minimum 10% coverage of fishing trips in 2022 as required by the SPRFMO conservation measures.

### 6.3.2 CECAF

#### Madeira

Under the 2021 Portuguese Data Collection Plan, monthly concurrent samplings on shore were performed for the main métiers operated by the local fleet in Madeira waters. Stock specific landing sampling for deep water species, mainly targeting *Aphanopus* spp. (LLD\_DWF\_0\_0\_0) covered 59 trips and 7957 individuals. With regards to the demersal fish fishery (LLS\_FIF\_0\_0\_0, LHP\_FIF\_0\_0\_0 and FPO\_FIF\_30\_0\_0) there was a noticeable increase in the sampling effort and in the number of individuals sampled (73 trips and 3117 individuals sampled) in relation to 2020. Concerning the purse seine fishery, targeting small pelagic fishes (PS\_SPF\_16\_0\_0), 72 fishing trips and 7923 specimens were sampled. Finally, 625 individuals were sampled from 16 trips of limpets' hand harvesting (MIS\_MOL\_0\_0\_0).

#### Canary Islands

For the metier PS\_SPF\_10\_0\_0 (artisanal fleet targeting small pelagics) one fishing trip per month is planned to be sampled at sea in Tenerife Island (concurrent length sampling) together with stock-specific samplings at the main landing places carried out by the IEO sampling network for the target species (*Scomber colias*, *Trachurus* spp., *Sardinella aurita* and *Sardina pilchardus*). In addition, monthly biological sampling of the main target species is carried out in the laboratory. For the metier MIS\_DES\_0\_0\_0 (artisanal fleet targeting demersal species), five fishing trips per month are planned to be sampled at sea in Tenerife Islands (concurrent length samplings). Moreover, monthly length samplings of main landed species are also planned to be carried out by the IEO information and sampling network. The species abundances are very variable, fact that caused deviations in both directions (*Sparisoma cretense* more than planned and small pelagic species less than planned). Regarding some biological variables of small pelagic species, (eg, *Sardina pilchardus*, *Sardinella aurita*), the impossibility to obtain samples at market in the months with low catches, caused a lower number of sampled individuals than planned.

Deviations for metier PS\_SPF\_10\_0\_0 are due to the start of sampling in the eastern region of the archipelago. This increase in sampling has been included in the Spain Work Plan from 2023 onwards. Deviations for the metier MIS\_DES\_0\_0\_0 are due to the difficulty in predicting the number trips to be sampled which is very dependent on the abundance of the target species in the catches.

#### West Africa

Until the end of 2017, data collection of small pelagics in CECAF waters was arranged for through a multi-lateral agreement between Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, The Netherlands and Poland. For this agreement NLD operated as the coordinator for the programme. The actual work was subcontracted to a dedicated partner having a vast experience in the region.

Following the conclusions from the second meeting of the RCG LDF in 2017 (Copenhagen, November 2017), the new multilateral agreement was concluded upon shortly after the meeting for period 2018-2020 with Poland coordinating the data collection in the CECAF waters. In February 2018 a meeting was held in the Hague, the Netherlands, between the representatives of the Polish National Marine Fisheries Research Institute (NMFRI - coordinator of the joint sampling programme), the Dutch

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Wageningen Marine Research and the Dutch fishing companies engaged in the fishery for small pelagics in the CECAF area. The purpose of this meeting was to set up the rules of cooperation between the NMFRI and the Dutch vessels' operators in executing the joint sampling programme and in placing Polish observers on board the fishing vessel operating in the CECAF area. Contacts have also been established with operator of the Polish vessels active in the CECAF area.

In March 2018, in cooperation between Institutes from Germany, the Netherlands and Poland, a new "Manual for scientific observers on board EU pelagic trawlers in CECAF area" was set, with two fishing trips per quarter and per area planned to be sampled by observers.

In 2018, despite the efforts made, placement of observers on board the Dutch vessel operating in the CECAF area was possible only in December, mainly due to lack of space on board the vessels.

In 2019 biological data were collected by Polish observers during two fishing trips in Mauritanian waters in the first quarter on board the Dutch vessel. Despite attempts made, placement of observers on board the EU vessels operating in the CECAF during remaining period of 2019 was not possible due to lack of space on board the vessels, caused by the fact that SFPFA rules oblige the vessels to embark a certain (quite large) percentage of crew from the SFPFA country.

At the beginning of 2020, attempts were made to deploy observers during the first quarter of the year. However, according to information received from vessel operators, there were no plans to start pelagic fishery in January and February. First information from a vessel moving to Moroccan grounds were received late March 2020 when the restriction on people's movement due to the COVID-19 pandemic were already in place in Poland, including border closure and closure of air traffic, making it impossible for scientific observers to leave the country.

In 2021 no sampling in CECAF was performed due to various reasons, including those described above for the SPRFMO area.

Despite the issues mentioned above an attempt was made in April 2021 to place an observer on a NLD vessel but when the vessel's operator indicated the possibility to take an observer onboard in May-June, no observer was available. From July 2021 onwards no EU fishing activity was planned in neither Mauritanian nor Moroccan waters. Apart from the above, vessel operators are usually reluctant to take scientific observers onboard vessels fishing in Moroccan and Mauritanian waters due to the obligation of embarking a certain % of crew and observers from those countries.

In April 2022, a POL vessel operator offered to take a scientific observer onboard and the observer was ready to travel early June. However, in May, a fire broke out on the vessel causing the vessel to leave the fishing ground in an emergency, and thus canceling the plans to send an observer. At the time of the RCG LDF meeting 2022, no information was available on when it would be possible to deploy observers on board the vessels fishing in the CECAF area.

Spanish small pelagic purse seiners operating in Morocco were sampled by the IEO information and sampling network, at landings in the Spanish port of Barbate (Cádiz, SW Spain). Monthly length samplings (both concurrent and anchovy-stock specific samplings) were carried out. The on-shore and the at-sea sampling programs coordinated by the IEO resumed in 2021 after administrative and COVID-19-related issues in 2020. Landing samples for biological sampling of anchovy *Engraulis encrasicolus* and for sardine *Sardina pilchardus* from North-Morocco were obtained only for three months out of total five months of fishing activity in 2021, due the IEO administrative issues explained above.

In relation to demersal fisheries, the Spanish demersal métiers operating in West Africa are sampled by the IEO at-sea observers programs. In 2021, sampling actions have been hindered by different issues, depending on the fishing ground or métier (lack of space, refusals, travel difficulties, etc.), and the on-board observer programmes resulted in sampling of only 3 out of 4 trips planned for both shrimper and cephalopod-finish trawlers and 5 out of 12 for the fresh fleet targeting black hake. No observations were possible on-board the freezer fleet targeting black hake during the sampling year due to aerial transport shortcomings still related to COVID-19 protocols.

## 7 Regional data collection analysis and storage (ToR 4)

### 7.1 Launched mechanisms to continue strengthening regional cooperation including funding

At the beginning of 2021, the COM launched following MARE/2020/08 grants, with a duration of 24 months:

- Streamline, on regional work plans for the Mediterranean and Black Sea region [www.streamlineproject.eu](http://www.streamlineproject.eu);
- Fishn'Co, on regional work plans for the NANSEA and Baltic, including RCG ECON and large pelagic fisheries [www.fisheries-rcg.eu/fishnco](http://www.fisheries-rcg.eu/fishnco);
- SecWeb, on setting up a secretariat for the RCG work [www.fisheries-rcg.eu/secweb/](http://www.fisheries-rcg.eu/secweb/); and
- RDBFIS on the Mediterranean and Black Sea database <https://medbsrdb.eu/>.

A brief information on the current status of the Fishn'Co and SecWeb projects were provided to the Group. As during the 2021 meeting, Members of the RCG LDF were asked to familiarize themselves with the current structure of the new website (<https://www.fisheries-rcg.eu/secweb/>), the purpose of which is to provide comprehensive information on the role and functioning of various RCGs and to provide their feedback and suggestions for improvement to the interim RCGs Secretariat mailbox ([secretariat@fisheries-rcg.eu](mailto:secretariat@fisheries-rcg.eu)).

### 7.2 Potential new data collection requirements related to EU joining the North Pacific Fisheries Commission

Based on information received prior to and during the 2022 meeting, there will be no data collection needs for 2022 in NPFC, as the EU fleet is not authorised yet to undertake any fishing operation in the Convention area.

### 7.3 Potential implication of the SMEFF Regulation

Concerning the SMEFF regulation<sup>15</sup>, the group discussed the following issues and updates concerning SMEFF fisheries.

**LTU and POL are planning to send requests for fishing operations in FAO area 41.**

During the discussion it was suggested that if more than 1 EU MS is going to fish in a "SMEFF area" on the high seas, then these MSs should cooperate on data collection and on potential research surveys.

<sup>15</sup> Regulation (EU) 2017/2403 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2017 on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets, and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1006/2008. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017R2403>

One challenge for operators and MS is to find out who else is fishing under the SMEFF Regulation. ESP and PRT RCG members confirmed that ESP and PRT vessels are already fishing in area 4 I. The following MARE website also provides an overview of active SMEFF fisheries, however it might not be updated regularly: [https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/fishing-outside-eu\\_en](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/international-agreements/fishing-outside-eu_en)

### **SMEFF needs as regards data collection and research programmes**

The group discussed whether there are specific data collection needs of SMEFF fisheries. As the CFP applies to SMEFF fisheries, they also fall under the regular data collection programmes of the DCF. Species lists under the EU-MAP will have to be updated along the way. However, the RCG recommends to take a flexible approach, i.e. not to hide behind the tables and potentially lacking species in the tables. If there are species targeted by SMEFF fisheries that are not yet included in the EU-MAP, then these fisheries do need to be monitored, and the RCG should advice on the best data collection approaches.

This discussion also triggered questions of roles of the RCG LDF and of the Long Distance Advisory Council (LDAC) as regards SMEFF fisheries. Scientific survey and data collection activities have to be communicated to the RCG. Due to the apparent lack of coordination between MS as regards ongoing or envisaged SMEFF activities, the group discussed whether there is a need for a “platform” for SMEFF fisheries. The group concluded that the RCG LDF itself is the relevant platform for MS to discuss all issues related to data collection and scientific research programmes related to SMEFF fisheries.

### **SMEFF study kicked off**

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DGMARE and CINEA launched a “SMEFF study”<sup>16</sup> last year, and it kicked-off in April. The findings of this study are expected to facilitate the work processes of fishing operators, MS authorities and the EC around the granting of fishing authorisations in non-EU waters. Some RCG members are working on the study. During the 2023 RCG meeting, it should be possible to present some results.

### **Conclusion:**

The group suggests to establish a process that can facilitate timely and transparent exchange of information on ongoing and envisaged SMEFF fisheries between operators, MS, the RCG and the EC. The RCG considers transparent and timely information exchange crucial to ensure that SMEFF operators from different MS fishing in the same SMEFF areas start collaborating on data collection and scientific research programmes.

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<sup>16</sup> Full title: “Scientific and technical knowledge of the EU-fisheries, exploited stocks and sensitive marine habitats in the high seas and third countries waters not subject to SFPAs and/or RFMOs jurisdiction” (EASME/EMFF/2019/014 Specific Contract No. 04)

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### 7.4 Time frame for RCG LDF actions

Based on the Rules of Procedures currently relevant for the RCG LDF, the following general milestones are considered current for organizing the RCG work, including the data call and organisational aspects. In practice, due to day-to-day issues and practicalities, not all deadlines can be met. However, given the nature of the work, participants (heavily) being involved in other groups, and shifting timelines due to external factors, some flexibility is required to be able to organize this meeting.

| When                                                             | What (incl. reference to RoP Article)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Who                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| t – 2 months (at the latest)                                     | Formal request if an independent organisation or individual seeks to attend an RCG meeting as an observer (11.2). Note that SPRFMO and CECAF have a standing invitation to the RCG LDF (11.7)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Any organisation or individual        |
| t – 2 months (at the latest)                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspect EUROSTAT data to identify new areas of relevance.</li> <li>Launch data call according to schedule:</li> </ul> <p>2023: RDB call to all MS active in relevant regions (based on 2022 contributions)</p> <p>2024: RDB call to all MS active in relevant regions (based on 2023 contributions)</p> <p><u>OR</u></p> <p>RDBES call to all MS active in relevant regions (based on previous contributions) to upload historic data as well as 2023 data</p> <p>2025: RDBES call to all non-landlocked MS</p> | Chair (or delegated data coordinator) |
| t – 2 months                                                     | Provide details of accommodation, travel and other organizational information relevant for the meeting. (4.4)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Host Member State                     |
| t – 6 weeks                                                      | Consult members regarding observers (11.2)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Chair                                 |
| t – 1 month                                                      | Provide details on participants to the chair                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | NC's of participating MS              |
| t – 1 month                                                      | Provide draft agenda to participants                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Chair                                 |
| t – 4 weeks                                                      | Inform observers whether or not invited                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Chair                                 |
| t                                                                | Annual technical meeting (4.1)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | All participants                      |
| t + 2 weeks (at the latest 2 months before the decision meeting) | <p>Circulate proposed decisions to the relevant MS for consideration prior to the decision meeting (if any).</p> <p>Circulate draft regional workplan (if any) for decision to NCs (8.6)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Chair                                 |

## 7.5 RCG LDF decision meeting

At the RCG LDF meeting in 2022, no proposal for a decision regarding the Group's work was developed that would require approval during the NCs meeting in September 2022.

## 8 Future data collection set up in CECAF/SPRFMO (ToR 5)

### 8.1 Data collection of small pelagics in CECAF area – future Data needs

At the 2017 RCG, a renewed agreement was reached for sampling small pelagics in CECAF waters. This agreement covered the period 2018-2020. At the 2020 meeting, the RCG agreed that the best option available would be to extend the current agreement. Subsequently, at the decision meeting in September 2020 this agreement was extended to the end of 2023.

Although the agreement is not ending until 2023, RCG LDF discussed a further extension of the agreement into 2024 to align with an updated agreement for SPRFMO (see section 8.2)

The reluctance of ship-owners to embark EU observers in the last years has resulted in incomplete sampling coverage. This, together with the exceptional circumstances of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, make it very difficult for the group to proceed with a reliable analysis of the EU data.

### 8.2 Data collection of small pelagics in SPRFMO area

At the 2018 RCG LDF meeting, the multi-lateral agreement between Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands for sampling small pelagics in SPRFMO waters was extended to 2020.

At 2020 meeting, similar to the CECAF agreement, the RCG agreed that the best option would be to extend the current agreement, which was approved at the decision meeting in September 2020 by extending the agreement to the end of 2023.

Although the agreement is not ending until 2023, RCG LDF discussed a further extension of the agreement into 2024 as this will be the last year under the current SPRFMO monitoring obligations. Starting from 2025 onwards, new obligations will be in place based on observer requirements. RCG LDF concluded therefore that the extension of the current agreement into 2024 is appropriate to ensure an efficient continuation of the data collection under the current obligations. The extension of the CECAF and SPRFMO agreements will be prepared prior to the 2023 meeting by Poland and The Netherlands.

#### Recommendation 2022-2 : Extension of the SPRFMO and CECAF Agreements into 2024

|                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RCG LDF 2022 Recommendation               | Further extension of the agreement on joint sampling programme in the SPRFMO area into 2024 is required as this will be the last year under the current SPRFMO monitoring obligations.<br><br>Further extension of the agreement on joint sampling programme in the CECAF area into 2024 is advisable to align it with an updated agreement for SPRFMO. |
| Follow-up actions needed                  | Poland and The Netherlands to liaise and draft agreement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Responsible persons for follow-up actions | Irek Wojcik (Poland) and Sieto Verver (The Netherlands)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Time frame (Deadline)                     | At the RCG LDF 2023 meeting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

### 8.3 Feedback from ISSG SPRFMO-OP

Regarding the future SPRFMO requirements as provided for in the “Conservation and Management Measure Establishing the SPRFMO Observer Programme” (CMM 16-2022), and in particular the requirement for observer programme to undergo the SPRFMO accreditation procedure, the 2020 RCG LDF concluded that “This issue needs to be addressed in the upcoming years to prepare the ground for a solid solution once the OP commences. RCG LDF will initiate intersessional work to progress on this during the year.”

To meet the above obligation and following a RCG LDF recommendation 2020-2, the Intersessional Sub-Group on SPRFMO Observer Programme (ISSG SPRFMO-OP) was established with a kick-off meeting in May 2021.

After the 2021 RCG LDF annual technical meeting and Liason Meeting in September, RCG LDF ISSG SPRFMO-OP continued internal discussion with the aim to have a clear picture of accreditation process. Seven ISSG SPRFMO-OP meetings were organized until RCG LDF technical annual meeting in July 2022:

- The second ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 26 October 2021;
- The Institutes and the industry representatives meeting on 27 October 2021;
- The third ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 8 December 2021;
- The fourth ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 21 December 2021;
- The fifth ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 17 January 2022;
- The sixth ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 25 April 2022;
- The seventh ISSG-OP meeting on 22 June 2022;

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The Minutes of the key meetings of ISSG SPRFMO-OP are provided in Annex 4 to the report. The main achievements by the end of 2021 were:

- The plan of action was determined on the way the accreditation should be arranged;
- Decision was taken to initiate the accreditation process in 2022 and to suggest to the EU Delegation to announce the start of the EU accreditation process in the Annual SPRFMO session on the 24-28 January 2022.

The agreed plan of action for the OP accreditation process implementation provides for:

- Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands appointed a national focal point for the accreditation process – respectively Christoph Stransky, Vilda Griuniene, Irek Wojcik, and Sieto Verver;
- The Netherlands will act as project leader for the process. Scientist Tom Bangma (Wageningen Marine Research) coordinates the project and will be the focal point in communication with MRAG (MRAG Ltd is an independent fisheries and aquatic resource consulting firm and has been selected to evaluate SPRFMO Member States’ observer programs against the requirements set out in CMM 16-2022).
- Initiate the accreditation process by announcing the planned accreditation at the 10th annual SPRFMO meeting (24-28 January);

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- Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands to identify candidate observers to establish a pool of observers to undergo the accreditation process. Preliminary; 4 candidates from Poland, 1-2 candidates from Germany, 1-2 candidates from The Netherlands and 1 candidate from Lithuania;
- This observer pool will form the basic team of EU observers that will undertake the observer trips from 2025 onwards.
- Consultation with MRAG to outline the accreditation process;
- Addressing administrative requirements and documentation according to SPRFMO CMM 16-2022 (Q4 2022 – Q1 2023);
- Evaluation by MRAG (Q1-Q4 2023);
- Finalization accreditation (Q4 2023 or Q1 2024 at the latest);
- Setup multilateral agreement between Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands to set up and arrange practical implementation of the observer programme (It depends on the progress of all OP steps but preliminary in 2023 or 2024 on RCG LDF annual technical meeting).

When the plan of action for the OP accreditation process implementation was concluded (on the fourth ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 21 December 2021), it was circulated to MS's Ministries and the European Commission. The agreed Action Plan is presented in an Annex 5.

On the 24-28 January 2022 EU delegation has made the announcement in the SPRFMO 10th annual session about the intention to start the accreditation process. Also, during the SPRFMO annual session minor changes concerning the accreditation process were adopted:

- The accreditation deadline was extended until 01/01/2025;
- The timeframe to finish accreditation in 6 months was removed.

In 2022 three meetings of ISSG SPRFMO-OP were arranged, the most important of them was the seventh meeting on 22 June 2022. The aim of this meeting was to discuss the plan of action for the OP accreditation process with representatives from MRAG, to consider the next steps forward and to set the timeframe for the process of collecting documents.

MRAG representatives prepared a Manual document (Accreditation assessment) for the accreditation process. The main accreditation steps are listed in the table below.

| Date                                                                                                                | Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Annual Commission Meeting                                                                                           | Members, CNCP or service provider (applicant) provides notification of intention to be assessed.                                                                                                        |
| Following Annual Commission Meeting                                                                                 | Assessor (MRAG Ltd) contacts each applicant and agrees a timetable for the assessment process (Starting at time T) and shares assessment guidelines.                                                    |
| T + 0 days (Start of process at least 6 months before Commission meeting i.e. prior to 6 <sup>th</sup> August 2022) | Assessment process to begin with applicant.<br>Applicant provides all required documentation to assessor, in country visits or online meetings take place to discuss information provided by applicant. |

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| Date                                                                                      | Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| T + 14 days                                                                               | Assessor will liaise with applicants as appropriate (including, but not limited to, bilateral consultations) and may request additional documentation if substantive or essential information is missing                                                                               |
| T + 28 days                                                                               | Assessor receives additional documentation requested during assessment process and collates all materials                                                                                                                                                                              |
| At least 120 days before Annual Commission Meeting (i.e. by 9 <sup>th</sup> October 2022) | Assessor provides Draft Preliminary Evaluation Report to applicant for comment<br>Following this Applicants will be offered 30 days for Bilateral consultations to ensure that they have an opportunity to provide additional information and corrections relevant to their evaluation |
| At least 90 days before Annual Commission Meeting (i.e. by 8 <sup>th</sup> November 2022) | Assessor provides Preliminary Evaluation Report(s) to Applicant(s) and Secretariat                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 60 days before Annual Commission Meeting (i.e. by 8 <sup>th</sup> December 2022)          | Assessor provides Final Evaluation Report(s) including recommended conditions and incorporating feedback received on the preliminary evaluation.                                                                                                                                       |
| 30 days before CTC meeting (i.e. 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2023).                           | Secretariat circulates the Final Evaluation Report(s) as an Annexes to the SPRFMO Observer Programme Implementation Report                                                                                                                                                             |
| Annual Commission Meeting (6 <sup>th</sup> February 2023)                                 | The Commission evaluates all reports and recommendations and will decide whether to grant accreditation (including specified conditions).                                                                                                                                              |

The deadlines as stated in the above table are indicative. Overall, the representatives from MRAG confirmed that they are trying to fulfil the terms and meet the deadlines stated in the table, but the evaluation process can last longer. "T" in this table means the starting point, i.e. when an applicant provides all required documentation to the accreditation evaluator. The discussion between MRAG and the applicant concerning the information provided can be arranged in country visits or online meetings. In case of the EU Observer Programme, four scientific institutes will be evaluated. On the seventh ISSG-OP meeting a timeframe was set:

- to collect all the documents from EU Member States until Q4 2022 or Q1 2023;
- to provide them to MRAG no later than Q1 2023.

According to the deadlines - the finalization and grant of the accreditation is expected on Q4 2023 or Q1 2024. After granting accreditation, new updates of the accreditation will be mandatory every 5 years.

The eighth ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting was organized on 14 July 2022 during the annual technical meeting of RCG LDF. The project leader Tom Bangma presented to the group the practical guidelines for the documents upload. Concerning the process of the evaluation for all nominated SPRFMO observers The Netherlands proposed to organize the training courses for them in Wageningen Marine Research institute.

RCG LDF ISSG SPRFMO-OP will continue the work and further discussions between relevant EU MS concerning the accreditation process and preparation of the required documentation. Next ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting will be held in the autumn of 2022.

## 9 Any other business (ToR 6)

### 9.1 Rules of procedures for future RCG work

The Rules of Procedure for the RCG LDF were established on 9th of July 2018 by the following MS coordinating their data collection activities for Long Distance Fisheries in 2018: Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Spain and Poland. Since Portugal has also become a member of RCG LDF, the RoP were also adopted by Portugal in September 2020.

In 2021, common RoP for RCG NANSEA and RCG Baltic were adopted by the NC decision meeting in September. Following this decision, the 2022 RCG LDF reviewed the option to align its RoP with the common RoP to avoid the situation where one MS as a member of two or more RCGs would need to adhere to a different set of rules. The 2022 RCG LDF concluded that the current situation is not causing any conflicts for the MS, though an in-depth analysis would be appropriate to ensure that the different RoP are not in conflict by design. This analysis will be done intersessionally prior to the 2023 meeting under the responsibility of the RCG LDF chair.

From 2022 onwards, the governance of data collection in the NAFO area falls under the remit of RCG LDF. Resulting of this move, Estonia became a new member of RCG LDF. Therefore, pending the revision of the current RoP and with the approval of Estonia, RCG LDF considers Estonia to be a full member of the group as if Estonia was included in the current RoP.

### 9.2 Surveys, studies and pilot projects

RCG LDF did not propose new surveys, nor studies or pilot projects in 2021-2022.

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Future studies of potential interest to the LDF (status in brackets)

- Study on Deepwater shark assessment and tagging in the SIOFA area (ToRs drafted),
- Studies under the Framework Contract for the provision of scientific advice for fisheries beyond EU waters (EASME/EMFF/2019/014) to provide scientific support for RFMOs, coordination meetings and thematic meetings (ongoing)

### 9.3 Call for tenders for studies in support of the CFP

No new call for tender was addressed during the RCG meeting.

### 9.4 Chairmanship, timing and venue of the RCG LDF meeting in 2023

The second term of the chairmanship of Irek Wójcik (Poland) ends in 2023. At the RCG LDF annual Technical meeting in 2023 a new chair will be elected.

The 2023 RCG LDF meeting is expected to be held in early July. Most likely, the dates will fall during the week 3rd–7th of July. The meeting will be chaired by Irek Wójcik.

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Regarding the venue, Lithuania invites the group to visit Klaipeda or Vilnius (t.b.c.) for its next RCG LDF meeting. As back-up options, Spain, Poland and The Netherlands also flagged the offer to host next RCG LDF meeting.

The following table provides an overview of the venues and chairmanship of this RCG.

| Year | Venue                                   | Chair                                                                       |
|------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2022 | Funchal, Madeira (Hybrid meeting)       | Irek Wójcik (Poland)                                                        |
| 2021 | Online WebEx meeting                    | Irek Wójcik (Poland)                                                        |
| 2020 | Online WebEx meeting                    | Irek Wójcik (Poland)                                                        |
| 2019 | Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain           | Sieto Verver (The Netherlands)                                              |
| 2018 | Riga, Latvia                            | Sieto Verver (The Netherlands)                                              |
| 2017 | Copenhagen, Denmark<br>Hamburg, Germany | Sieto Verver (The Netherlands)                                              |
| 2016 | Vilnius, Lithuania                      | Sieto Verver (The Netherlands)                                              |
| 2015 | Hamburg, Germany<br>Cádiz, Spain        | Irek Wójcik (Poland)                                                        |
| 2014 | IJmuiden, The Netherlands               | Irek Wójcik (Poland)                                                        |
| 2013 | Constanza, Romania                      | Irek Wójcik (Poland)                                                        |
| 2012 | Madrid, Spain                           | Irek Wójcik (Poland)                                                        |
| 2011 | Ljubljana, Slovenia                     | Maria Teresa Garcia (Spain) and<br>Dirk-Jan van der Stelt (The Netherlands) |
| 2010 | Madrid, Spain                           | Maria Teresa Garcia (Spain) and<br>Jaime Mejuto (Spain)                     |

### 9.5 Draft ToR 2023

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#### Draft Terms of Reference – RCG LDF 2023

- 1. Review progress since 2022 following up the Liaison Meeting or other expert groups reports**
- 2. Review feedback from end users**
  - CECAF/ SPRFMO / NAFO
  - Other input received
- 3. Analyse data from 2022 RCG LDF data call**
  - Data compilation, providing overviews of fisheries
  - Consider inclusion of emerging fisheries
  - Feedback from WGRDBESGOV / comments on experience RDB upload
- 4. Regional data collection, analysis and storage**
  - State of play of sampling in CECAF, SPRFMO and NAFO areas in 2022
  - Discuss possibility of new data collection requirements related to EU joining the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC)

- Discuss potential implications of the SMEFF Regulation (Regulation 2017/2403 on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets)

**5. Future data collection set up in CECAF/SPRFMO/NAFO**

- CECAF future data needs
- Feedback from ISSG SPRFMO-OP on the EU Observer Programme accreditation procedure adopted by the SPRFMO
- NAFO current and future data needs

**6. AOB**

- Discuss relevant upcoming calls for tender, studies
- Review option of harmonization/unification of the RCG LDF RoP with RoPs of other RCGs
- Place and date of the next RCG LDF

## 10 Recommendations / Decisions

RCG LDF 2021 proposed 2 recommendations to be put forward to the NCs

*From section 3.5*

| Recommendation 2022-1:<br>Inclusion of new and updated reference codes in the RDB |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RCG LDF 2022 Recommendation                                                       | WGRDBESGOV to take the proposed new and updated reference codes as provided by RCG LDF 2022 into consideration and to include these references in the RDB codes lists. |
| Follow-up actions needed                                                          | Contact WGRDBESGOV, ICES and put request on agenda for December meeting. Inclusion requested prior to the 2023 RCG LDF data call.                                      |
| Responsible persons for follow-up actions                                         | Chair RCG LDF / Data manager RCG LDF                                                                                                                                   |
| Time frame (Deadline)                                                             | After LM 2022                                                                                                                                                          |

*From section 8.2*

| Recommendation 2022-2 :<br>Extension of the SPRFMO and CECAF Agreements into 2024 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RCG LDF 2022 Recommendation                                                       | <p>Further extension of the agreement on joint sampling programme in the SPRFMO area into 2024 is required as this will be the last year under the current SPRFMO monitoring obligations.</p> <p>Further extension of the agreement on joint sampling programme in the CECAF area into 2024 is advisable to align it with an updated agreement for SPRFMO.</p> |
| Follow-up actions needed                                                          | Poland and The Netherlands to liaise and draft agreement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Responsible persons for follow-up actions                                         | Irek Wojcik (Poland) and Sieto Verver (The Netherlands)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Time frame (Deadline)                                                             | At the RCG LDF 2023 meeting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

## II Annexes

### Annex I: Agenda for LDF 2022

Regional Co-ordination Group for the Long Distance Fisheries  
(RCG LDF 2022)

Funchal, Madeira, Portugal (hybrid)  
13-15 July 2022

#### Agenda

##### **Wednesday:**

10:40 seat-in, connect and set up  
11:00 - 17:00 meeting time

##### **Friday:**

9:00 - 13:00 - meeting time  
(end time pending the progress made)

##### **Thursday:**

9:00 - 17:00 meeting time

##### **General**

Coffee-break 10:30 & 15:30  
Lunch 13:00 – 14:00

#### Work Plan

##### **Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

10:40 – 11:00 : Seat-in, set up connections etc.

11:00 – 17:00 : Plenary session

- Welcome, introduction, organization (task sharing) & “house” rules
- Discuss ToRs, adopt agenda, appoint rapporteurs

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#### ➔ **ToR 1 Review progress since 2021 following up the 18th Liaison Meeting report**

- Follow-up of recommendations / output RCG LDF 2021
- Review of the outputs of the 18th Liaison Meeting
- Participation to the WGRDBESGOV (update)

#### ➔ **CECAF related ToRs and discussions**

- ToR 1 Review progress since 2021 following up the 18th Liaison Meeting report
- **ToR 2: Review feedback and recommendations from data end users**
  - ToR 2: Discuss feedback from CECAF groups
  - ToR 2: State of play of pelagic sampling in CECAF area in 2021
- **ToR 5 Current and future data collection set up in CECAF**
  - ToR 5 CECAF future data needs

#### ➔ **SPRFMO related ToRs and discussions**

- ToR 1 Review progress since 2021 following up the 18th Liaison Meeting report
- **ToR 2: Review feedback and recommendations from data end users**
  - ToR 2: Discuss feedback from SPRFMO
  - ToR 2: State of play of pelagic sampling in SPRFMO area in 2021
- **ToR 5 Current and future data collection set up in SPRFMO**
  - ToR 5: Feedback from ISSG SPRFMO-OP

#### ➔ **NAFO related ToRs and discussions**

- **ToR 2: Review feedback and recommendations from data end users**
  - ToR 2: State of play of sampling in NAFO area - historical background and current status

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- ToR 2: Discuss feedback from NAFO
- **ToR 5: NAFO current and future data needs**
- ➔ **ToR 4: Regional data collection, analysis and storage**
  - Consider future mechanisms to continue strengthening regional cooperation, including expected outcomes from new projects under MARE/2020/08 Grant:
    - Fish'n'Co (development of draft RWP)
    - SecWeb (Implementation of generic tools for RCGs: RDB, Web, Secretariat)
  - overview on commercial sampling during coronavirus pandemic in 2021-2022
  - Discuss possibility of new data collection requirements related to EU joining the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC)
  - Discuss potential implication of the SMEFF Regulation

15:00 – move to “subgroup” session if Wednesday’s agenda points are done

### Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022

9.00 – 17.00 : “subgroup” session / Plenary session (depending on the progress and needs)

- ➔ **ToR 3 Analyse data from 2021 RCG LDF data call**
  - ToR 3 Data compilation
  - ToR 3 provide overviews of fisheries
  - ToR 3 Consider future inclusion of emerging fisheries
  - ToR 3 Identify sampling obligations facilitating current multi-annual work plan
  - ToR 3 Share and comment on experiences related to RDB upload / feedback from WGRDBESGOV
- ➔ **ToR 6 AOB**
  - Review option of harmonization/unification of the RCG LDF Rules of Procedure (RoP) with RoPs of other RCGs

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### Evening (time t.b.c.):

**Madeira dinner at the invitation of the Regional Secretariat for Sea and Fisheries, through the Regional Directorate of the Sea of Madeira**

### Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2022

9:00 – 13:00 : Plenary session

- ➔ **Discuss outcomes and conclusions ToR 3,4,5,6**
- ➔ **Report assemblage and reading**
- ➔ **ToR 6 AOB:**
  - Discuss relevant upcoming calls for tenders/proposals and studies
  - Place and date of the next RCG LDF
- ➔ **Adoption of the draft report**

### Closure of the meeting

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### Annex 2: List of participants

Participants marked in blue font attended the meeting through online platform.

| Name                             | Email address                      | Organisation                                                   |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Christine Röckmann               | Christine.ROCKMANN@ec.europa.eu    | European Commission, DG MARE                                   |
| Christoph Stransky               | christoph.stransky@thuenen.de      | Thuenen Institute of Sea Fisheries                             |
| Didzis Ustups (NC)               | Didzis.Ustups@bior.lv              | BIOR                                                           |
| Elo Rasmann (NC)                 | elo.rasmann@envir.ee               | Ministry of the Environment                                    |
| Eva García-Isarch                | eva.garcia@ieo.csic.es             | IEO-CSIC                                                       |
| Filipe Henriques                 |                                    | Direção Regional do Mar da Madeira                             |
| Graça Teixeira de Jesus Faria    | graca.t.faria@madeira.gov.pt       | Direção Regional do Mar da Madeira                             |
| Irek Wojcik (NC)                 | iwojck@mir.gdynia.pl               | National Marine Fisheries Research Institute (NMFRI)           |
| Jose Miguel Garcia Rebollo       | miguel.garcia@ieo.csic.es          | IEO-CSIC-Spain                                                 |
| Kay Panten                       | kay.panten@thuenen.de              | Thuenen-Institut of sea fisheries                              |
| Leonie O'Dowd                    | Leonie.O'DOWD@ec.europa.eu         | European Commission, DG MARE                                   |
| Liivika Näks                     | liivika.naks@ut.ee                 | Estonian marine institute, University of Tartu                 |
| Mafalda Freitas                  |                                    | Direção Regional do Mar da Madeira                             |
| Maksims Kavsars                  | Maksims.Kavsars@bior.lv            | Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment "BIOR" |
| Mar Domínguez Amaral             | bec_sgicrm15@mapa.es               | General Secretariat for Fisheries - MAPA                       |
| Marcoux Benoît                   | benoit.marcoux@ec.europa.eu        | European Commission                                            |
| Mauro Bertelletti                | m.bertelletti@politicheagricole.it | MIPAAF - DG della pesca marittima e dell'acquacoltura          |
| Monika Sterczewska               | Monika.STERCZEWSKA@ec.europa.eu    | European Commission, DG MARE                                   |
| Pedro Ideia                      | pedro.di.freitas@madeira.gov.pt    | Direção Regional do Mar da Madeira                             |
| Ricard Buxó de la Peña           | rbuxo@mapa.es                      | Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food                    |
| Ricardo Jorge Silva Sousa        | ricardo.js.sousa@madeira.gov.pt    | Direção Regional do Mar da Madeira                             |
| Ricardo Maria Reynolds de Alpoim | ralpoim@ipma.pt                    | IPMA                                                           |
| Romas Statkus                    | romas.statkus@zuv.lt               | Fisheries service under MoA                                    |
| Sara García-Poza SGP             | sara.poza13@gmail.com              | General Secretariat for Fisheries                              |
| Sieto Verver                     | sieto.verver@wur.nl                | CVO-WUR                                                        |
| Susana Rivero Rodríguez          | srivero@cetmar.org                 | CETMAR (RCG Secretariat)                                       |
| Suzana Faria Cano                | sfcano@dgrm.mm.gov.pt              | DGRM                                                           |
| Tom Bangma                       | tom.bangma@wur.nl                  | Wageningen Marine Research                                     |
| Tom Blasdale                     | tblasdale@nafo.int                 | NAFO                                                           |
| Vilda Griūnienė (NC)             | vilda.griuniene@zum.lt             | Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania           |
| Zeneida Romero Romero            | zeneida.romero@ieo.csic.es         | IEO-CSIC-Spain                                                 |

## RCG LDF 2022 REPORT

### Annex 3: The overview of references to be added to the RDB to facilitate both current as well as upcoming data uploads

| Port                  | LOCODE | Island / Member state |
|-----------------------|--------|-----------------------|
| <b>La Barranquera</b> | ESZMG  | TENERIFE              |
|                       |        |                       |
|                       |        |                       |
|                       |        |                       |

| Species                                | AphiaID | English name    | FAO |
|----------------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----|
| <b><i>Austroglossus microlepis</i></b> | 219822  | West coast sole | SOW |
| <b>Cephalopoda</b>                     | 11707   | Cephalopods nei | CEP |
| <b><i>Lobotes surinamensis</i></b>     | 126973  | Tripletail      | LOB |
| <b>Maja spp</b>                        | 106909  |                 |     |

**Annex 4: Minutes of the key meetings of ISSG SPRFMO-OP****RCG LDF Intersessional Subgroup on the SPRFMO Observer Programme  
(ISSG SPRFMO-OP)**

**Meeting date:** 8 December 2021 (online)

**Background**

MS currently involved in fisheries activities and data collection in SPRFMO are: GER, POL, NLD and LTU. MS are collecting data in SPRFMO on the basis of the “*Multi-lateral agreement between Germany, Lithuania, The Netherlands and Poland for biological data collection of pelagic fisheries in SPRFMO waters*”. The agreement is valid until the end of 2023, Poland having the role of coordination of the sampling program.

**Participants**

Irek Wójcik (POL), Sieto Verver (NLD), Christoph Stransky (DEU), Vilda Griūnienė (LTU)

**Aim of the meeting**

Over the year, meetings and discussions concerning SPRFMO Observer Programme accreditation were organized:

- The Technical Meeting regarding the SPRFMO Observer Programme organized by COM on 10 March 2021;
- First meeting of ISSG SPRFMO-OP on 12 May 2021;
- the Second Technical Meeting regarding the SPRFMO Observer Programme initiated by RCG LDF chairman and organized by COM with representatives from MRAG (SPRFMO Accreditation Evaluator) on 25 June 2021;
- Discussions in RCG LDF annual session 5-7 July 2021;
- The second ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 26 October 2021;
- The Institutes and the industry representatives meeting on 27 October 2021

The third ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting was organized on 8 December 2021 and the aim was to follow up and summarize the discussion during all the year and to discuss possible ways to move forward in the implementation of the SPRFMO Observer Programme (OP) accreditation.

**Discussion**

Noting that:

- until now, none of the MS currently involved will apply for this accreditation on its own
- and not having accredited procedures might jeopardize data collection on board EU trawlers in the area from 2024 onwards,

We need to prepare the ground for a solid solution once the OP commences.

## RCG LDF 2022 REPORT

Many potential options for the OP accreditation process were discussed during the meetings this year: private companies' incorporation in the accreditation processes (MRAG company was suggested, but this company is the SPRFMO accreditation evaluator); the possibility to use the accreditation option based on another EU observer programme already accredited by other RFMOs (in ICCAT by Spanish Institute of Oceanography) was explored, but despite all the efforts, these options were not suitable. From the Commissions perspective and from outcomes in MS discussions, the most feasible option for carrying out accreditation is to apply for a accreditation by MS institutes. But until now, none of the institutes of MS applied or showed determination to apply for the accreditation.

### Current situation:

National correspondents and MS representatives shared their opinions concerning implementation of the DCF in broader scope: The submission of Work Plans for 2022-2024, the ongoing EMFAF 2021-2027 funding procedures and other issues affected the decisions concerning the postponement of the OP accreditation processes. Finally, all the MS representatives showed the willingness to start the SPRFMO Observer Programme accreditation. During the discussion, it was emphasized that it is necessary to take into account the time frame: The EU Delegation needs to announce the start of the accreditation process in the Annual SPRFMO session, so there are two available dates – next year's January (SPRFMO annual meeting will be held on the 24-28 January 2022) or January 2023 - for the announcement (only after that the accreditation processes can be implemented).

In this respect, an accreditation of a **joint EU SPRFMO OP** (comprising all EU institutes involved) is seen as a prerequisite for an effective expansion of the existing multilateral sampling programme to an accredited OP in accordance with the SPRFMO CMM. This question, however, requires further discussion with the COM or SPRFMO Secretariat.

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Because of the complexity of the matter, many issues need to be discussed gradually and a list of actions needs to be prepared. Trying to share the burden of OP accreditation and implementation after 2024, few issues were taken into account in this meeting:

Shared observers possibility. MS proposed to have the list of observers: preliminary 4 from Poland, 1-2 from Germany, 1-2 from The Netherlands and 1 from Lithuania.

Finding the leader for the project. MS decided to consult in their institutes and find out some candidates for this role.

## Conclusions and follow-up

### 3<sup>rd</sup> ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting

- Indicative time for the next meeting – 22 December,
- After consultation within the institutes, consider the list of the observers and the project leader,
- Discuss gradually the plan of action for the OP accreditation process implementation.

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## RCG LDF 2022 REPORT

### RCG LDF Intersessional Subgroup on the SPRFMO Observer Programme (ISSG SPRFMO-OP)

**Meeting date:** 21 December 2021 (online)

#### Background

MS currently involved in fisheries activities and data collection in SPRFMO are: DEU, POL, NLD and LTU. MS are collecting data in SPRFMO area on the basis of the “*Multi-lateral agreement between Germany, Lithuania, The Netherlands and Poland for biological data collection of pelagic fisheries in SPRFMO waters*”. The agreement is valid until the end of 2023, Poland having the role of coordination of the sampling program.

#### Participants

Irek Wójcik (POL), Sieto Verver (NLD), Christoph Stransky (DEU), Vilda Griūnienė (LTU)

#### Aim of the meeting

Over the year, several meetings and discussions concerning SPRFMO Observer Programme accreditation were organized:

- The Technical Meeting regarding the SPRFMO Observer Programme organized by COM on 10 March 2021;
- First meeting of ISSG SPRFMO-OP on 12 May 2021;
- the Second Technical Meeting regarding the SPRFMO Observer Programme initiated by RCG LDF chairman and organized by COM with representatives from MRAG (SPRFMO Accreditation Evaluator) on 25 June 2021;
- Discussions in RCG LDF annual session 5-7 July 2021;
- The second ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 26 October 2021;
- The Institutes and the industry representatives meeting on 27 October 2021;
- The third ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 8 December 2021;

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**The fourth ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting was organized on 21 December 2021** and the aim was to discuss possible ways to move forward in the implementation of the SPRFMO Observer Programme (OP) accreditation.

#### Discussion

Noting that:

- until now, none of the MS currently involved will apply for this accreditation on its own
- and not having accredited procedures might jeopardize data collection on board EU trawlers in the area from 2024 onwards,

we need to prepare the ground for a solid solution once the OP commences.

## RCG LDF 2022 REPORT

Following the discussions between MS concerned, the most feasible option for carrying out accreditation is to apply for a accreditation by MS institutes. On 8 December 2021 all the MS representatives showed the willingness to start the SPRFMO Observer Programme accreditation.

The main topics for the fourth ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting were:

- discuss gradually the plan of action for the OP accreditation process implementation;
- consider the list of the observers and the project leader.

The plan of action for the OP accreditation process implementation was discussed and stated below:

- Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands all appoint a national focal point for the accreditation process (Jan 2022);
- The Netherlands will act as project leader for the process.
- Initiate the accreditation process by announcing the planned accreditation at the 10<sup>th</sup> annual SPFRMO meeting (24-28 January);
- Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands to identify candidate observers to establish a pool of observers to undergo the accreditation process (Mar 2022);
- This observer pool will form the basic team of EU observers that will undertake the observertrips from 2024 onwards.
- Consultation with MRAG to outline the accreditation process (Mar 2022);
- Addressing administrative requirements and documentation according to SPRFMO CMM 16-2019 (Mar 2022-Jan 2023);
- Evaluation by MRAG (Q1 2023);
- Finalisation accreditation (Q4 2023 at the latest);
- Setup multilateral agreement between Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands to set up and arrange practical implementation of the observer programme (Mid 2023).

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Shared observers' possibility and the candidates for the project leader were discussed during the meeting in more detailed way. MS representatives gathered after the consultation within the institutes to suggest the candidates for the international team of experts for the implementation of accreditation processes. Also, the candidates for the leader of the project were discussed. The initial decision is to appoint colleague from the Netherlands, Wageningen university (Tom Bangma) as the leader of the project. The process of forming the international team of experts from all the institutes for the implementation of accreditation processes (2 from Germany, 1 from Lithuania, 2 from the Netherlands and 1 from Poland) was started and will be developed in future meetings. The observers list also was discussed but will be finalised during the next meetings.

## Conclusions and follow-up

### 4<sup>th</sup> ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting

- The plan of action for the OP accreditation process implementation was concluded, the plan will be circulated to MS's Ministries and COM (European Commission).
- The initial international team of data collection experts working towards accreditation was appointed.
- Next meeting will be organized January 2022 for the implementation of the plan of action.

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## RCG LDF 2022 REPORT

### RCG LDF Intersessional Subgroup on the SPRFMO Observer Programme (ISSG SPRFMO-OP)

**Meeting date:** 21 June 2022 (online)

**Meeting purpose:** Consultation with MRAG representatives to outline the accreditation process. MRAG Ltd is an independent fisheries and aquatic resource consulting firm and has been selected to evaluate SPRFMO Member States' observer programs against the requirements set out in CMM 16-2022.

#### Background

MS currently involved in fisheries activities and data collection in SPRFMO are: DEU, POL, NLD and LTU. MS are collecting data in SPRFMO area on the basis of the “*Multi-lateral agreement between Germany, Lithuania, The Netherlands and Poland for biological data collection of pelagic fisheries in SPRFMO waters*”. The agreement is valid until the end of 2023, Poland having the role of coordination of the sampling program.

#### Participants

Irek Wójcik ( DCF NC POL), Sieto Verver (NLD), Christoph Stransky (DCF NC DEU), Vilda Griūnienė (DCF NC LTU); Tom Bangma (NLD), James Clark (MRAG), John Pierce (MRAG), Fiona Harford (COM).

#### Aim of the meeting

Over 2021-2022, many meetings and discussions concerning SPRFMO Observer Programme (OP) accreditation were organized:

- The Technical Meeting regarding the SPRFMO Observer Programme organized by COM on 10 March 2021;
- First meeting of ISSG SPRFMO-OP on 12 May 2021;
- the Second Technical Meeting regarding the SPRFMO OP initiated by the chairman of the Regional Coordination Group for Long-Distance Fisheries (RCG LDF) and organized by COM with representatives from MRAG (SPRFMO Accreditation Evaluator) on 25 June 2021;
- Discussions in RCG LDF annual session 5-7 July 2021;
- The second ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 26 October 2021;
- The Institutes and the industry representatives meeting on 27 October 2021;
- The third ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 8 December 2021;
- The fourth ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 21 December 2021;
- The fifth ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 17 January 2022;
- The sixth ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting on 25 April 2022;

**The seventh ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting was organized on 21 June 2022** and the aim was to discuss and consult with MRAG trying to outline the SPRFMO OP accreditation process.

#### Discussion

The main topics for the seventh ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting were:

- General introduction (Sieto);

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- Introduction of the current situation and role of RCG LDF/ISSG (Irek);
- Introduction MRAG (James/John);
- Discuss gradually the plan of action for the OP accreditation process with representatives from MRAG;
- Questions;
- Considering the next steps forward.

RCG LDF chairman Irek Wójcik shortly introduced the current situation. The accreditation process in EU falls under a dedicated Intersessional Subgroup (ISSG) of the RCG LDF. Following the discussions between MS concerned in many ISSG SPRFMO-OP meetings last and this year, the plan of action was determined. The most feasible option for carrying out accreditation is to apply for a accreditation by MS institutes. The Netherlands act as project leader for the process - Tom Bangma (Wageningen Marine Research) coordinates the project. Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands identified observers to establish a pool of observers to undergo the accreditation process. Also, the initial international team of data collection experts working towards accreditation was appointed.

James Clark (MRAG) showed a presentation overlooking the accreditation process. According to him, one of the initial tasks for us is to agree upon the date that the accreditation process will commence. MRAG prepared a Manual document (Accreditation assessment) for the accreditation process. The main accreditation steps were given in the table:

| Date                                                                                                                | Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Annual Commission Meeting                                                                                           | Members, CNCP or service provider (applicant) provides notification of intention to be assessed.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Following Annual Commission Meeting                                                                                 | Assessor (MRAG Ltd) contacts each applicant and agrees a timetable for the assessment process (Starting at time T) and shares assessment guidelines.                                                                                                                                   |
| T + 0 days (Start of process at least 6 months before Commission meeting i.e. prior to 6 <sup>th</sup> August 2022) | Assessment process to begin with applicant.<br>Applicant provides all required documentation to assessor, in country visits or online meetings take place to discuss information provided by applicant.                                                                                |
| T + 14 days                                                                                                         | Assessor will liaise with applicants as appropriate (including, but not limited to, bilateral consultations) and may request additional documentation if substantive or essential information is missing                                                                               |
| T + 28 days                                                                                                         | Assessor receives additional documentation requested during assessment process and collates all materials                                                                                                                                                                              |
| At least 120 days before Annual Commission Meeting (i.e. by 9 <sup>th</sup> October 2022)                           | Assessor provides Draft Preliminary Evaluation Report to applicant for comment<br>Following this Applicants will be offered 30 days for Bilateral consultations to ensure that they have an opportunity to provide additional information and corrections relevant to their evaluation |
| At least 90 days before Annual Commission Meeting (i.e. by 8 <sup>th</sup> November 2022)                           | Assessor provides Preliminary Evaluation Report(s) to Applicant(s) and Secretariat                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 60 days before Annual Commission Meeting (i.e. by 8 <sup>th</sup> December 2022)                                    | Assessor provides Final Evaluation Report(s) including recommended conditions and incorporating feedback received on the preliminary evaluation.                                                                                                                                       |
| 30 days before CTC meeting (i.e. 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2023).                                                     | Secretariat circulates the Final Evaluation Report(s) as an Annexes to the SPRFMO Observer Programme Implementation Report                                                                                                                                                             |

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| Date                                                         | Actions                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Annual Commission Meeting<br>(6 <sup>th</sup> February 2023) | The Commission evaluates all reports and recommendations and will decide whether to grant accreditation (including specified conditions). |

The requirement to provide notification of intention to be assessed in the SPRFMO annual commission meeting still is in force, EU has made announcement in the SPRFMO annual session this year. But there are minor changes in this table: The accreditation deadline was extended until 01/01/2025 and the timeframe to finish accreditation in 6 months was removed. The deadlines as stated in table are indicative. Overall, James Clark confirms that from the MRAG side, they are trying to fulfill the terms and meet the deadlines stated in the table, but the evaluation process can last longer.

“T” in this table means the starting point, i.e. when an applicant provides all required documentation to the assessor. The discussion between MRAG and the applicant concerning the provided information can be arranged in country visits or online meetings. According to the EU situation, 4 scientific institutes will be evaluated. Preliminary, it is planned to collect all the documents from EU Member States and provide them to MRAG during Q4 2022 or Q1 2023. According to the deadlines - the finalization and grant of accreditation is expected Q4 2023 or Q1 2024. After granting accreditation, new updates of the accreditation will be mandatory every 5 years. Due to the potentially large size of the documents, the translation issue was raised. The MRAG position was to have as much translated detailed information as possible. COM made us aware again that document translation costs can be compensated to a maximum total of NZ\$ 8000 (cf. SPRFMO letter DC58-2022 of 20 May 2022).

Also, this meeting was initiated to discuss the practical execution of the process with representatives from MRAG so a round of questions was provided by MS to MRAG. It is still unclear how to evaluate observers. In POL, DEU and LTU, there is no institution which can provide the evaluation. E.g. in POL, the Diploma on Ichthyology is enough to become an observer, all other skills are acquired on the vessels, having trainings with experienced colleagues. Only in NLD, such institution exists. It is thus unclear how to proceed in the practical execution of the process - will the NLD institution provide the evaluation for all nominated SPRFMO observers (i.e. to all observers from POL, NLD, DEU, LTU)

Overall, it is decided to move forward and to start collection of the documents and to contact MRAG in the near future if any practical questions appear.

## Conclusions and follow-up

### 7<sup>th</sup> ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting

- To start collect documentation according to the SPRFMO CMM 16-2022 and MRAG manual.
- Provisional plan – to collect the documents from EU MS and provide them to MRAG during the Q4 2022 or Q1 2023. According to MRAG procedures and deadlines, the finalization and grant of accreditation can be foreseen Q4 2023 or Q1 2024.
- Next ISSG SPRFMO-OP meeting: 13-15 July 2022 (during RCG LDF annual technical meeting). Further discussions concerning preparation of the documents are expected between EU MS.

**Annex 5: RCG LDF ISSG on SPRFMO-OP\_Action Plan\_December 2021**

**RCG LDF Intersessional Subgroup on the SPRFMO Observer Programme  
(ISSG SPRFMO-OP)**

22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021

**Agreed action plan for the SPRFMO Observer Programme accreditation**

The Regional Coordination Group for Long Distance Fisheries tasked a dedicated subgroup to draft a work plan towards observer accreditation under the SPRFMO standards.

Data collection representatives from Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands form this subgroup. After several rounds of discussion and consultations, the following work plan was concluded, aiming at completing the accreditation process on behalf of the EU in January 2024 at the latest. The basic approach is based on an international team of data collection experts working towards accreditation, while an international pool of observers will be appointed to undertake the actual observer trips from 2024 onwards.

- Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands all appoint a national focal point for the accreditation process (Jan 2022)
- The Netherlands will act as project leader for the process
- Initiate the accreditation process by announcing the planned accreditation at the 10<sup>th</sup> annual SPRFMO meeting (24-28 January)
- Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands to identify candidate observers to establish a pool of observers to undergo the accreditation process (Mar 2022)
  - This observer pool will form the basic team of EU observers that will undertake the observer trips from 2024 onwards.
- Consultation with MRAG to outline the accreditation process (Mar 2022)
- Addressing administrative requirements and documentation according to SPRFMO CMM 16-2019 (Mar 2022-Jan 2023)
- Evaluation by MRAG (Q1 2023)
- Finalisation of the accreditation (Q4 2023 at the latest)
- Setup multilateral agreement between Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands to set up and arrange practical implementation of the observer programme. (Mid 2023)