

**Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management**  
**Annual Report 2023**

**Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 of the European Parliament and of the  
Council of 17 May 2017**

on the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in  
the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy  
and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008 (recast)

**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

**Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/39 of 12 January  
2022**

laying down rules on the format and timetables for the submission of national work plans and  
annual reports for data collection in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, and repealing  
Implementing Decisions (EU) 2016/1701 and (EU) 2018/1283

# **Austrian Annual Report for data collection in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors**

2023

Version 1

Vienna, 28 May 2024

# CONTENTS

|                                                                                                                |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION .....</b>                                                                    | <b>4</b>  |
| DATA COLLECTION FRAMEWORK AT NATIONAL LEVEL .....                                                              | 4         |
| TEXT BOX 1B: OTHER DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES.....                                                             | 4         |
| ACTIVITY A: SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT OF FISH AND CRAYFISH STOCKS IN SELECTED SMALL NATURAL<br>AUSTRIAN LAKES..... | 4         |
| ACTIVITY B: FISH-ECOLOGICAL SURVEY AND BIOMASS ESTIMATION OF COREGONUS SP IN LAKE ZELL<br>(“ZELLER SEE”).....  | 9         |
| ACTIVITY C: ORGANIC AQUACULTURE PRODUCTION.....                                                                | 11        |
| ACTIVITY D: SUPPORTING THE SECWEB-PROJECT.....                                                                 | 13        |
| <b>SECTION 6: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DATA IN AQUACULTURE .....</b>                                                | <b>15</b> |
| TEXT BOX 6.1: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL VARIABLES FOR AQUACULTURE DATA COLLECTION.....                               | 15        |

## SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

### Data collection framework at national level

*General comment: Use this text box to describe how data collection is organised in your Member State (institutions involved, contact information) and in which regional coordination groups (RCG) your Member State participates.*

The Data Collection Framework for fisheries and Aquaculture is under the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management.

As Austria's aquaculture production is under the threshold of 1% of the EU's production, there is no obligation to collect socio-economic data according to Chapter II Para 7 of the Commission's Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1168 (see Text Box 6.1). Therefore Austria's Work Plan 2023-2025 contains "Other data collection activities".

The Work Plan 2023-2025 contains the following activities:

- (A) Survey and Assessment of Fish and Crayfish Stocks in elected Small Natural Austrian Lakes:  
The project is implemented by Österreichische Bundesforste (ÖBF, [www.bundesforste.at](http://www.bundesforste.at)) in cooperation with Bundesamt für Wasserwirtschaft (BAW, [www.baw.at](http://www.baw.at)).
- (B) Fish-Ecological Survey and Biomass estimation of *Coregonus sp* in Lake Zell ("Zeller See):  
The project is implemented by Stadtgemeinde Zell am See ([www.zellamsee.eu](http://www.zellamsee.eu)) in cooperation with Bundesamt für Wasserwirtschaft (BAW, [www.baw.at](http://www.baw.at)).
- (C) Organic Aquaculture Production: The project is implemented by Statistik Austria ([www.statistik.at](http://www.statistik.at)). It has no direct link to the EU MAP, but is well in line with the European Commission's Communication "A Farm to Fork Strategy" (COM(2020) 381 final) and the "Strategic Guidelines for a More Sustainable and Competitive Aquaculture for the Period 2021 to 2030" (COM(2021) 236 final). The project is not supported by EMFAF.
- (D) Support to the SEC-Web-Project: Austria supported the project in 2023 out of European solidarity from its EMFAF-allocation. (<https://www.fisheries-rcg.eu/secweb/>). The report concerning this activity was received by the SECWEB-project.

Austria does not actively participate in the regional groups as five of them deal with marine issues, while Austria is landlocked country. As Austria has no legal obligation to collect economic data on aquaculture, Austria is not directly involved in RGECON either.

### Text Box 1b: Other data collection activities

#### **Activity A: Survey and Assessment of Fish and Crayfish Stocks in Selected Small Natural Austrian Lakes**

*General comment: Use this text box to provide information on other data collection activities that relate to your EMFAF operational programme and need to be included in the work plan and the annual report. Describe activities that are funded by the DCF but fulfil objectives under other EMFAF priorities, like marine knowledge, or activities funded by the DCF, but without a direct link to the EU MAP specific requirements or WP template tables, like freshwater fisheries. You can also include one-off specific studies for a particular end-user need that do not enter the regular data collection.*

## 1. Aim of the test study

During the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, all large lakes (>50 hectares) in Austria have regularly undergone standardised surveying and evaluation according to the stipulations of this directive. In contrast, the knowledge about the limnology and biology of small lakes (<50 hectares), which frequently come under heavy use for angling and tourism, is sketchy due to the absence of studies on fishing activity and fish ecology of these lakes.

There are three native freshwater crayfish species listed in the Habitats Directive in Annex II respectively V, which obligates Austria to protect and conserve them. Due to the lack of a standardised sampling approach, no comparative data of populations are available, which would be of highest importance concerning the conservation of endangered native freshwater crayfish.

The objective of the data collection activity is to close the current knowledge gaps regarding the fish and crayfish species and to ensure their sustainable availability through proposals for management measures to be developed during the project.

The current method used in Austria for the examination of fish ecology and evaluation of bodies of standing water >50 ha according to the EU Water Framework Directive will be adapted for its application in small lakes. In addition, the capture-mark-recapture technique will be used to verify adaptations of the methodology and further data as regards individual growth and preferences regarding habitat selection.

It is envisaged investigating the fish ecology of representative alpine lakes between 10 and 50 ha in size and evaluating them in terms of their ecological state by means of adapted assessment schemes. To verify the methodology, two lakes between 50 and 60 ha in size will also be examined using the methodology described. There is comparative data for these lakes so that the adaptations implemented are checked via the direct comparative values and any deviations applied to improve the methodology.

Fish and crayfish species in these lakes will also be examined using e-DNA and compared with the surveyed inventory of fish species to use this non-invasive method alternatively/in addition to the capture methods in future. The analyses will likewise consider whether this method is also suitable for estimating the potential risk to fish and crayfish from disease.

The aim of a nationwide standardised sampling approach is to develop a tool for stagnant waterbodies that enables the creation of comparative data by assessing the conservation status and the state of risk for all freshwater crayfish species native to Austria.

## 2. Duration of the data collection activity

Start: First quarter 2023; End: Final quarter 2025

## 3. Methodology and expected outcomes of the data collection activity

### Standard methodology for surveying fish stocks

The standardised methodology and assessment scheme according to the guidelines of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management will be adapted for its specific application to small lakes.

The adapted survey method will be used to examine lakes in terms of fish ecology and to evaluate them according to the stipulations of the EU Water Framework Directive. Gillnets, electro-fishing, and echo counting will be used for this standardised fishing procedure.

The standardised net fishing method is based on stratified random sampling in different depth ranges. The level of effort required for capture will depend on the surface and depth of the lake.

#### Marking and recapture method

In view of the shallow water areas of particular relevance to small lakes, a very dense monitoring network will be set up in addition to the existing method, use of weirs and electro-fishing. The fish captured via weir and electro-fishing can be individually marked with PIT tags. Where these fish are captured using multi-mesh gillnets or by angling, the recapture rate allows a meaningful conclusion to be drawn regarding the total fish population. This makes it possible to control the adaptations of the sampling setup required for small lakes while also getting information on the territorial behaviour and individual increases in weight/length.

With the data collected, the guidelines used for evaluating fish ecology of lakes >50 ha can be adapted for small lakes.

#### Sampling and assessing the conservation status and state of risk of freshwater crayfish.

Based on results of an evaluation of sampling methods, the following monitoring methods will be applied:

- Hand capture by day
- Hand capture by night
- Trapping and artificial hides
- Diving
- eDNA

#### Sampling design for e-DNA water samples

The populations of fish species in the small lakes selected will be surveyed applying traditional standardised methods. Water samples, to be used for e-DNA analysis investigating fish and crayfish species and for comparison with the capture data, will be taken in parallel.

#### Outcomes of the test study

- List of fish species for the lakes selected
- Basic parameters for fish ecology (growth, maturity, age structure, ...) of the commercial fish species in these small lakes
- Assessment of populations and state of risk of freshwater crayfish
- Design for e-DNA sampling
- Gain in expertise for the use of e-DNA to survey fish and crayfish communities in lakes
- Evaluation of fish ecology
- Recommendations for management
- Adapted guidelines for the examination of small lakes and evaluation of their fish ecology

Guidelines for sampling and assessing native crayfish populations

*(max 900 words per study)*

## **Activity A: Survey and Assessment of Fish and Crayfish Stocks in Selected Small Natural Austrian Lakes**

Brief description of the results (including deviations from the plan and justifications as to why if this was the case).

The project started as planned in April 2023 with the selection of lakes and the determination of surveys and methods for each individual lake. Fish surveys were carried out in Hintersee and Offensee, crayfish surveys only in Offensee. The stock assessment of fish and crayfish was executed by a group of experts.

The stock assessment of crayfish in Offensee was gathered by diving, snorkelling and visual mapping.

In total, 422 European crayfish (*Astacus astacus*) were detected. As expected, most of the crayfish were found in the outlet of Offensee and the shoreline. A higher density of crayfish was observed in areas with the existence of heterogeneous habitats and higher water temperatures. Since heterogeneous habitats were available in deeper areas, we can conclude that the water temperature is the limiting factor of distribution area. At around two meters water depth the crayfish abundance decreased significantly. Therefore, about 90 % of crayfish were spotted at a water depth above 2 m and only 10 % in deeper areas.

The standardized fish sampling method referred to in the methodological part of the work plan was carried out as planned in Hintersee (18.09. - 20.09.2023) and Offensee (28.08. - 01.09.2023) by positioning gill nets, electro-fishing and echo counting.

First results of Hintersee show a total number 1846 fish with a total weight of 151.1 kg, covering six different fish species. The six fish species were represented by roach, perch, chub, brown trout, lake trout and arctic char. The most common fish species by weight were roach 41% (62.5 kg) and perch 37 % (56.6 kg). In total, 96 % (n = 1773) of fish were caught with the benthic gill net and 4 % (n = 73) with the pelagic gill net. To ensure comparability of the data, a catch per unit effort (CPUE) and biomass was calculated for the catch with gill nets over all depth ranges and resulted in 78 fish/100m<sup>2</sup>/12h (pelagic n = 1; benthic n = 77) and a biomass of 6.0 kg/100m<sup>2</sup>/12h (pelagic 0.1 kg; benthic 5.9 g). In addition to the gill net, the guideline of the standardized fish sampling method includes electro-fishing at the shore. In total 189 fish species were caught by electro-fishing in Hintersee, which were identified to species level and were measured. Perch (n = 82; 70 %) and roach (n = 74; 39 %) were highly abundant at the shore. In addition, chub (n = 31), minnow and brown trout (both n = 1) got sampled.

In Offensee a total number of 2126 fish (total weight 55.5 kg) were caught, including five fish species of perch, pike, bullhead, roach and arctic char. The most common fish species in terms of weight were perch 58 % (32.3 kg) and roach 25 % (14.0 kg). The total number of catch with gill nets is divided into 61.2 % (n = 1302) with benthic gill net and 38.8 % (n = 824) with pelagic gill net.

The outcome of the CPUE in Offensee resulted in 62 fish/100m<sup>2</sup>/12h (pelagic n = 9; benthic n = 53) and a biomass of 2 kg/100m<sup>2</sup>/12h (pelagic 0.1 kg; benthic 1.9 kg). Electro-fishing in Offensee yielded 211 individuals, which again were identified to species level and underwent a measurement

of total length. Roach (n = 148; 70 %) was mainly represented at the shore. In addition, perch (n = 52) and pike (n = 11) were detected.

Except the performance of Capture-Mark-Recapture (CMR) and analyses of eDNA all analyses could be completed. Due to unexpected illness of an expert, Capture-Mark-Recapture and eDNA analyses had to be postponed to 2024.

Achievement of the original expected outcomes of the study and justification if this was not the case.

Overall, the standardized stock assessment according to the guidelines referred above provides insights into the composition of fish assemblages in lakes. The results obtained are almost in line with expectations, since we would have expected a detection of lake trout and burbot in Offensee. In 2024 the results will be reviewed with the method of eDNA-sampling. The observation of crayfish populations in Offensee showed a recovery from the crayfish plague (*Aphanomyces astaci*) in 2014. Moreover, the outcome illustrates that crayfish likely inhabit heterogeneous areas with higher water temperatures, of which the water temperature is the limiting factor for the distribution area of crayfish.

Incorporation of study results into regular sampling by the Member State.

The collection of data on fish stocks in freshwater lakes cannot be compared to the sampling schemes for **marine** Member States as described in Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/39 laying down rules on the format and timetables for the submission of national work plans and annual reports on data collection in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. There is no legal obligation to collect data on these stocks at EU level.

However, the data collected will be digitalized and uploaded in the national fish database (FDA) administered by the Federal Agency for Water Management of Austria.

The project intends to create a management plan for each lake and to develop a method and a standardized guideline for a sustainable, non-lethal method for fish and crayfish stock assessment for small alpine lakes to ensure their long-term preservation.

**Activity B: Fish-ecological Survey and Biomass Estimation of *Coregonus sp* in Lake Zell (“Zellersee”)**

*General comment: Use this text box to provide information on other data collection activities that relate to your EMFAF operational programme and need to be included in the work plan and the annual report. Describe activities that are funded by the DCF but fulfil objectives under other EMFAF priorities, like marine knowledge, or activities funded by the DCF, but without a direct link to the EU MAP specific requirements or WP template tables, like freshwater fisheries. You can also include one-off specific studies for a particular end-user need that do not enter the regular data collection.*

### 1. Aim of the data collection activity

An investigation in 2020 showed changes in spawning maturity of whitefish (*Coregonus sp*) compared to 2006 in lake Zell („Zellersee“). In addition, a relatively high biomass was found. In general, an earlier spawning maturity in Alpine lakes has been discovered in recent years - previously in 4+/3+ year classes, currently often in 2+ or even 1+. Climate change could be one of the explanations.

The management measures in lake Zell should therefore be changed towards increased catches via a reduced minimum conservation reference size and higher catches per licence. In order to monitor the implications of these changes, the most important parameters of the *Coregonus sp* population should be monitored annually in addition to the total biomass towards the end of the project using scientific hydroacoustic methods. Based on the results of these surveys, changes can be responded to while the multiannual data series will contribute to sustainable fisheries in lake Zell.

### 2. Duration of the data collection activity

June 2023-December 2025

### 3. Methodology and expected outcomes of the data collection activity

150-200 individual *Coregonus sp* will be caught every year using gillnets with graduated mesh sizes or with Nordic multimesh nets. This should allow to catch all year classes equally well. The fishing trips will be carried out once a year end September/early October. The same effort will be used every year to make the catches comparable. The caught *Coregonus sp* will be measured, weighed and analysed for distinctive features such as injuries or parasites. In addition, scales will be taken for age determination. Sex and maturity will also be analysed. Age determination will be carried out in the laboratory. Six cleaned and dried scales will be put in a double glass frame, projected on the wall and the annual rings will be counted. In order to avoid mistakes, there will always be two persons doing the age determination without previous knowledge of length and weight. The results will be presented as histograms or plots using the average weight and length of the respective year classes. After every fishing trip a brief intermediate report containing the most relevant data of the *Coregonus sp* population will be generated to adapt the management measures accordingly. At the end of the project a final report will be drawn up.

The estimation of the fish biomass will be carried out with a scientific echosounder of the company SIMRAD (EK 60 or EK 80 with a composite split beam transducer) and a working frequency of 120 kHz. The images will be taken along the transects of the 2020 investigation (mentioned at the start) at three different dates in autumn and winter. The recordings will be taken at night. The speed of the boat will be approximately 5-6 km/h. The echosounder will be calibrated with a calibration ball. Data will be saved during the recordings. The analysis will be done with a computer programme, namely SONAR 5-Pro. The results will contain abundance, length distribution and the total biomass. They will be presented in the intermediate and final reports.

The combination of a classic catching method with gillnets and modern echosound technology should be strengthened, to modernise fisheries management in our lakes and to consequently optimise sustainable catches.

## **Activity B: Fish-ecological Survey and Biomass Estimation of *Coregonus sp* in Lake Zell (“Zellersee”)**

Brief description of the results (including deviations from the plan and justifications as to why if this was the case).

A total of 261 whitefish (*Coregonus* sp) were caught in the gillnet fishery. Of the total net catches, 71 % (n = 188) were caught in the open water nets and 29 % (n = 77) in the bottom nets. The total weight of the whitefish in open water was 38.5 kg and 8.3 kg above ground. For the comparability of the data with future catches, the catch per unit effort CPUE of 18.7 fish/100 m<sup>2</sup>/12h (same fishing effort per year) was determined.

Important population dynamic parameters were obtained from the investigation of the whitefish population in Lake Zell (net fishing). Whitefish of almost all size classes were caught, ranging from 7 cm to 43 cm. The most frequently caught individuals were 32 cm (n = 39) and 33 cm (n = 25).

The almost complete distribution of the length classes reflects the age very well. The age structure is made up of individuals from 0+ (one-seeded) to 7+ year old fish. The high population of 0+ indicates good reproduction in Lake Zell. The occurrence of the age classes of 1+, 3+ and 4+ year old whitefish was also very high. An average weight of 232 g was recorded for the 30 cm size class in 2023. This value was slightly below that of 2022 (238.1 g), but above 2020 (222.5 g). To document the nutritional status of the whitefish in Lake Zell, the Fulton condition factor was calculated. With a mean value of 0.78 ( $\pm 0.07$  std; n = 261), it was the same as in the previous surveys.

Another focus of the survey was the examination of the sexual maturity of the whitefish. Mature individuals could be detected from a total length of 28.5 cm, from a total length of 31 cm 90% of the animals were sexually mature. These size classes, which are rather small for potential mother fish, have a high population in the lake and should be reduced if possible. In terms of age, 29% of the 2+ year old fish could be classified as sexually mature (2022: 25%; 2020:56.3%). From an age of 3+ years, 91% of the examined whitefish were sexually mature.

The only deviation from the work plan is that the hydroacoustic recordings could only be carried out twice instead of the planned three inspections due to the poor weather conditions (onset of winter). However, as the two recordings that were carried out corresponded very well, it was decided to carry out the missing one in fall 2024.

Achievement of the original expected outcomes of the study and justification if this was not the case.

The results obtained are largely in line with expectations. The whitefish population is still characterized by high densities and a good age structure. Thus, detailed recommendations for fisheries management could be made on the basis of the results obtained and these suggestions have already been taken into account for the drafting of the 2024 fishing regulations.

Incorporation of study results into regular sampling by the Member State.

The collection of data on fish stocks in freshwater lakes cannot be compared to the sampling schemes for **marine** Member States as described in Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/39 laying down rules on the format and timetables for the submission of national work plans and annual reports on data collection in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. There is no legal obligation to collect data on these stocks at EU level.

However, the approach and the methods used may be incorporated into fisheries management in other Austrian lakes, in addition to providing a basis for future management decisions in Lake Zell.

### Activity C: Activity C: Organic Aquaculture Production

*General comment: Use this text box to provide information on other data collection activities that relate to your EMFAF operational programme and need to be included in the work plan and the annual report. Describe activities that are funded by the DCF but fulfil objectives under other EMFAF priorities, like marine knowledge, or activities funded by the DCF, but without a direct link to the EU MAP specific requirements or WP template tables, like freshwater fisheries. You can also include one-off specific studies for a particular end-user need that do not enter the regular data collection.*

#### 1. Aim of the data collection activity

The aim of the study is to create a reliable and sound baseline for organic aquaculture production in Austria in order to measure progress towards the objective of the national programme under EMFAF 2021-2027, namely to sustainably increase organic aquaculture production.

#### 2. Duration of the data collection activity

2023-2025

#### 3. Methodology and expected outcomes of the data collection activity

Currently, data about aquaculture production and its value are collected according to regulation (EC) 762/2008 on the submission by Member States of statistics on aquaculture implemented in Austria through “Verordnung des Bundesministers für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft betreffend die Statistik über die Aquakulturproduktion 2012” – see [BGBI 344/2012](#) (available in German only). Neither the EU regulation nor the Austrian implementing ordinance require data collection on organic aquaculture production. Discussions to modify the regulation (EC) 762/2008 have been ongoing for quite some time, but no official proposal by the European Commission has materialised so far.

The European Commission’s Communication “A Farm to Fork Strategy” (COM(2020) 381 final) called for a significant increase in organic aquaculture. This objective has been repeated in the Commission’s Communication on an “Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production” (COM(2021) 141 final) and in the “Strategic Guidelines for a More Sustainable and Competitive Aquaculture for the Period 2021 to 2030” (COM(2021) 236 final).

Austria’s National Programme under EMFAF 2021-2027 also contains the same objective. The amount of organic aquaculture production shall be increased sustainably. A reliable baseline is essential to monitor progress towards this objective. A critical assessment of the current data on organic production showed that there is room for improvement in particular for the organic production of salmonids.

Therefore – and as a first step - the annual data collection under regulation (EC) 762/2008 will be amended by a request for additional information on organic production in volume of fish for human consumption per fish species. The current questionnaire (online and paper version) will be complemented by a column “organic production”. After a trial period of one year, an evaluation will be carried out to determine if the replies are sufficient and as complete as possible. If necessary an adapted or extended version will be developed.

This project is without a direct link to the EU MAP specific requirements or WP template tables. However it fulfils objectives under other EMFAF priorities, namely Priority 2 “Fostering sustainable aquaculture activities and processing and marketing of fishery and aquaculture products, thus contributing to food security in the Union”. Furthermore, it is perfectly in line with the Farm-to-Fork-Strategy and the Strategic Guidelines for a More Sustainable and Competitive EU-Aquaculture 2021-2030.

### **Activity C: Activity C: Organic Aquaculture Production**

Brief description of the results (including deviations from the plan and justifications as to why if this was the case).

At the start of the project, there was no legal obligation to report data on organic aquaculture production. Therefore, these data were collected on a voluntary basis for the reference year 2022. Without any legal obligation, only few enterprises provided data. Unfortunately, the response rate, coverage and data quality were low which prevented the publication of the results. Without other data sources for organic aquaculture production, there is no possibility for cross-checking or imputation of results.

Therefore, an ordinance - amending the current ordinance on aquaculture statistics - was issued to make data collection on organic aquaculture production mandatory (available in German: [Änderung der Aquakulturstatistik-Verordnung 2012](#)). This activity is in line with the first step described in the work plan.

Achievement of the original expected outcomes of the study and justification if this was not the case.

The amendment of the existing ordinance was completed by its publication on 16 October 2023. This was, however, too late for the survey for the reference year 2022. With the amended ordinance in force a higher response rate, coverage and hence data quality for the upcoming aquaculture survey for the reference year 2023 are expected.

Incorporation of study results into regular sampling by the Member State.

The collection of data on organic aquaculture production cannot be compared to the sampling schemes for **marine** Member States as described in Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/39 laying down rules on the format and timetables for the submission of national work plans and annual reports on data collection in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Nevertheless, with the new ordinance, data collection on organic aquaculture production will be carried out on a regular basis from the reference year 2023 onwards.

## Activity D: Supporting the SECWEB-Project

*General comment: Use this text box to provide information on other data collection activities that relate to your EMFAF operational programme and need to be included in the work plan and the annual report. Describe activities that are funded by the DCF but fulfil objectives under other EMFAF priorities, like marine knowledge, or activities funded by the DCF, but without a direct link to the EU MAP specific requirements or WP template tables, like freshwater fisheries. You can also include one-off specific studies for a particular end-user need that do not enter the regular data collection.*

### 1. Aim of the data collection activity

Support the operation and functioning of the RCG's Secretariat for a fluent regional coordination of data collection activities.

### 2. Duration of the data collection activity

01/01/2023 – 31/12/2025

### 3. Methodology and expected outcomes of the data collection activity

The Secretariat's organizational structured has been set up and pilot tested throughout SecWeb project. The key functions of the RCG's Secretariat have been determined in close collaboration with all RCGs, in particular with RCG and Intersessional Subgroups (ISSGs) chairs. A business model has been developed. In addition, good practices in communication within and among the RCGs have been promoted and installed. The overall capacity to reach out to a wider public and increase the visibility of the work and output of the RCGs has been boosted with the development of a dedicated website and the consolidation of a visual identity.

RCG chairs and the RCG's network in general have acknowledged the added value of having an RCG's Secretariat to the overall aim of improving data collection activities.

Based on SecWeb project outputs the proposed data collection activity will connect the whole RCG network and stakeholders to work together on common goals. The Secretariat provides fluent administrative and coordination support for more efficient regional coordination liberating national experts involved in data collection activities from heavy burden administrative tasks.

#### Overall expected outcomes

- A full-time dedicated Secretariat support service for the RCGs enables a consistent approach to administering RCG activities, facilitates communication, and enhances the intersessional work, supporting also the work of sub-groups.
- A dynamic and permanently updated website will be kept available including as features:
  - Integration – allowing seamless synchronization with third-party information needs and requests
  - Responsive display – to serve content across multiple devices, screens, and browsers
  - User experience- maintaining a satisfactory user experience throughout the website sections
  - Accessibility – To any interested visitor in a user-friendly way across the website sections
  - Retention- keeping visitors coming back to the website
  - Links to relevant restricted access sites and virtual environments.

- The Visual identity for the RCGs is increasingly consolidated and visibility and understanding of the work by the RCGs is enhanced for the relevant stakeholder groups.
- A regularly updated Stakeholders' database improves the communication function among the RCGs' experts and the stakeholders' community.
- Internal communication protocols and help-desk in place makes it easier for any new comer to efficiently join, adopt responsibilities, and contribute to the RCGs objectives and work commitments.
- The public description of the secretariat functions, operational working protocols and commitments will build trust and enhance the whole network transparency and accountability.

Brief description of the results (including deviations from the plan and justifications as to why if this was the case).

During 2023 the RCGs Secretariat services and tools were financed by a short-term/low value contract by the individual Member States (23 out of 26 MS) together with a European Commission service contract running from the end of August 2023 to end of February 2024. These contracts enabled the full-scale operation of the RCGs Secretariat along the year (from March 2023 until Feb 2024).

The pan regional ISSG National Correspondents continued the discussions on how to implement the long-term stabilization of the services and tools and ran several consultations with the MS. A main conclusion from these, is the fact that the administrative procedures at national level are a continuous and complex constraint for some of the MS.

Further discussions on the long-term funding scenarios are planned during 2024. The objective is to develop and implement the long-term funding solution for the RCGs Secretariat and the tools, while simultaneously, a suitable approach needs to be found to keep the services and tools working continuously to guarantee the support to the RCGs and the LM"

Achievement of the original expected outcomes of the study and justification if this was not the case.

See above

Incorporation of study results into regular sampling by the Member State.

Not applicable

## SECTION 6: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DATA IN AQUACULTURE

### Text Box 6.1: Economic and social variables for aquaculture data collection

*General comment: This text box fulfils Article 5(2)(e), Article 6(3)(a), (b) and (c) of Regulation (EU) 2017/1004, and Chapter II point 6 of the EU MAP Delegated Decision annex. It is intended to specify data to be collected under Tables 10 and 11 of the EU MAP Delegated Decision annex.*

#### 1. Description of the threshold application

According to <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tag00075/default/table?lang=en> the EU's aquaculture production in 2020 was 1.070.165, 0277 tonnes, while Austria's production in the same year amounted to 4.526, 915 tonnes, which represents 0,42 % of the EU's production. According to Chapter II Para 7 of the Commission's Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1168, there is no obligation for Member States to collect socio-economic data on a regular basis if there aquaculture production is below 1 % of the EU's production.

#### 2. Deviation from the RCG ECON (ex. PGECON) definitions

Not applicable

#### Deviations from the work plan

Not applicable.

According to <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tag00075/default/table?lang=en> the EU's aquaculture production in 2022 was 1.082.953 tonnes, while Austria's production in the same year was 4.718 tonnes, which represents 0,44% % of the EU's production. Hence, there is still no obligation to collect socio-economic data on a regular basis. Figures for 2023 are not yet available.

#### Actions to avoid deviations

Not applicable.