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Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries
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Progress on Programme of Work

Programme of Work of the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries 2020-2021

Summary

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Team of Specialists (ToS) on Sustainable Fisheries promotes, facilitates and supports the development and implementation of fishery data standards throughout the supply chain, which contribute to the sustainable and ecosystem-based management of marine and aquatic resources on a global scale. Such standards include the Fisheries Language for Universal eXchange, developed by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/ FLUX).

This document presents the Programme of Work of the ToS for the period 2020-2021, and will be submitted to the twenty-sixth Plenary of UN/CEFACT for decision.

I. Background

1.   World fish stocks are being depleted by overfishing, destructive fishing practices and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. These activities not only threaten fish stocks, but also the coastal communities which rely on fisheries resources for economic survival and as a reliable source of protein. The importance of protecting fishery resources is recognized by the international community through Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

2.   An essential step to attain effective and sustainable management of fishery resources is timely acquisition and exchange of information on fishing location, gear used, species and quantity caught, etc. Until now, fishing vessels have mainly used paper-based logbooks to record and exchange such information. To improve information acquisition and management, the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) has developed an open and global standard which allows the electronic exchange of fishery data.

3.   The Fisheries Language for Universal eXchange (FLUX) provides a harmonized message standard which allows Fishery Management Organizations (FMOs) to automatically access electronic data from fishing vessels, such as vessel and trip identification, fishing operations (daily catch or haul-by-haul) and fishing data (catch area, species and quantity, date and time, and gear used). With this standard, FMOs around the world have, for the first time a tool which automates the collection and dissemination of fishery operational data needed for sustainable fishery management and for detecting and combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. In addition, the development of a reliable and up-to-date database on fish catch will improve the knowledge base for science-based fisheries management.

4.   The UN/ FLUX standard was presented at the twenty-seventh UN/CEFACT Forum in Geneva, where experts from government, regional and international organizations, regional FMOs, industry, research, and control and enforcement authorities agreed on its importance as a standardized tool to exchange fisheries information in an effective, transparent and efficient manner. At this forum, it was decided that a community should be established to promote and support the implementation of the UN/FLUX standard.

5.   The Agricultural, Agri-Food and Fishery Programme Development Area of UN/CEFACT supported and approved this proposal and decided to create a Group of Experts from this community. The establishment of the Group of Experts, now referred to as the Team of Specialists (ToS) on Sustainable Fisheries, was approved by the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the UNECE in June 2017.

II. Introduction

6.   The present document sets out the Programme of Work (PoW) of the UNECE ToS on Sustainable Fisheries for 2020-2021. UN/CEFACT is invited to adopt it at the twenty-sixth Plenary (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2018/22/Rev.1), and thereafter submit it to the EXCOM of the UNECE for approval.

III. Scope, overall objective, activities, work areas

A. Scope

7. The activities of the PoW are open to the participation of all UN member States, fishery management organizations (FMOs) and other organizations involved in fishing activities and sustainable fisheries management. They support efforts which combat IUU fishing and sustain the livelihoods of those who depend on fisheries activities and resources.

8. They do so by promoting, facilitating and supporting the development and implementation of

- fishery data standards;

- software and applications to register, monitor, report, inspect and maintain sustainable fishery and fisheries activities.

9. The PoW is linked to the revised mandate and term of reference of the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries of UN/CEFACT (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFCAT/2017/16/Rev.2) as approved at the 105th meeting of the UNECE Executive Committee EXCOM (ECE/EX/2019/L.6).

B. Overall objective

10. The overall objective of the ToS is to contribute to integrated maritime governance by promoting, facilitating and supporting the implementation of fishery data standards on a global scale. The ToS is expected to achieve its overall objective and implement the necessary activities on the assumption that:

(a) there is active participation and contribution by experts from governments, academia, civil society and the private sector during meetings of the ToS, and through other relevant networks;

(b) Governments are willing to engage in policy dialogue with key stakeholders for sustainable fishery management and take measures to implement policy recommendations and standards; and

(c) extra-budgetary resources for capacity-building, advisory services and field projects are adequate.

C. Activities

11. To achieve this goal the ToS will:

(a) Actively promote fishery data standards on policy and technical levels;

(b) Share experiences on the implementation of fishery data standards;

(c) Develop and share best practices on fishery data standards;

(d) Advise and assist on implementation issues concerning fishery data standards and how to relate to broader sustainability standards and certification;

(e) Propose changes to standards in the Agricultural, Agri-Food and Fishery PDA of UN/CEFACT.

D.   Work areas

12.   The Programme of Work is structured around the following work areas (WA):

- WA1: Policy dialogue and advice;

- WA2: Technical monitoring, assessment and guidance;

- WA3: Communication and outreach;

- WA4: Capacity-building and partnerships;

- WA5: Development and support of software tools for sustainable fisheries management.

WA1: Policy dialogue and guidance

13.   This Work Area involves active promotion and support of the implementation of fishery data standards on a policy level. This Work Area encompasses active engagement with policymakers on a global scale by contributing to events on fisheries and by engaging authorities and Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs).

14.   Activities of this Work Area are as follows:

- Participate in international Conferences and Fora (UN/CEFACT Forums, United Nations Ocean Conferences, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Committee on Fishery sessions, Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI) Board and Research Data Alliance meetings, etc.);

- Have meetings with Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs);

- Produce a paper on policy and legal issues related to regulations, coding and identifiers, data usage and data rights.

WA2: Technical monitoring, assessment and advice

15.   This Work Area facilitates and supports the development and implementation of fishery data standards on a technical level. This involves the development of handbooks and sharing information and best practices on technical implementation matters.

16.   Activities of this Work Area are as follows:

- Identify the needs for the development and implementation of fishery data standards;

- Produce a questionnaire and conduct a survey on the need for advice and support to enhance and disseminate knowledge;

- Draft a handbook on policy issues and technical implementation for fishery data standards (including an implementation document template);

- Produce FAQs on lessons learned from implementation of fishery data standards (e.g. European Union, Brazil, Thailand, etc.);

- Prepare a brochure on the interaction between UN/CEFACT FLUX and the open source FOCUS community[1], the implementation of vessels monitoring systems and other implemented sections of FLUX;

- Draft a briefing of general information on what it takes to move to FLUX (regulatory, financial, IT requirements, etc.);

- Provide technical support on implementation requirements through an expert group;

- Liaise with other relevant bodies (e.g. Research Data Alliance, Working Party of Fishery Statistics).

WA3: Communication and outreach

17.   Activities of this Work Area are as follows:

- Establish a communication group;

- Prepare and disseminate handbooks and implementation guides for the fishery data standards;

- Develop information on the work of the ToS and on fishery standards via policy briefs, press briefs, and flyers;

- Develop the website of the ToS, contribute to content design and maintenance, and use social media and videos, as appropriate;

- Participate in and contribute to relevant conferences, fora and events to disseminate information;

- Perform outreach activities beyond the promotion of fishery data standards to highlight the benefits of other standards/processes within sustainable fisheries, such as tracking and tracing, or statistics, and risk management;

- Produce a handbook on regulation, content structure such as code lists, and identifiers and data rights;

- Cooperate with the track and trace initiatives in the supply chain;

- Cooperate with standards setting and certification bodies on sustainable fishery management (e.g. FAIRTRADE[2], International Trade Centre (ITC) sustainable network);

- Raise funds for the activities laid out in the Programme of Work.

WA4: Capacity building and partnerships

18.   Special attention will be given to small fishery communities which have neither the knowledge nor the financial means to adopt and implement fishery data standards.

19.   By seeking partnerships, this Work Area will establish a solid foundation for the promotion and implementation of fishery data standards and work on sustainable fishery and combatting IUU fishing. It will also support of the implementation of relevant targets under SDG 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources, and SDG 17 on partnerships.

20.   By sharing knowledge and expertise through collaborations and partnerships, this Work Area will connect with fishery management organizations and fishery communities to exploit the benefits of collaboration and minimize the chance of working separately on the same issues.

21.   Collaborations have already been established, and need to be further developed, with:

- The European Union represented by the Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE);

- The Fisheries Open Source Community Software (FOCUS) 3;

- The World Animal Protection's Global Ghost Gear Initiative;

- The FAO's Global Record on Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels4

- World Trade Organization (WTO) work in relation to fishery subsidies contributing to IUU fishing, overfishing, and overcapacity (SDG 14.6);

- ITC work in support of sustainable fishery management (sustainability network);

- World Customs Organization, in relation to their work on customs issues for fishery trade;

- FAO and the World Health Organization's work on health-related issues and CODEX Alimentarius;

- Branch organizations (e.g. International Sustainable Seafood Foundation) in supply chain and certification organizations (e.g. FAIRTRADE, Marine Stewardship Council); and

    Relevant private sector companies.

WA5: Development and support of software tools for sustainable fisheries management

22.   Special attention will be given to authorities in developing economies which has neither the knowledge nor the financial means to

- adopt and implement sustainable fisheries management;

- develop software tools and applications for the fisheries management system;

- register vessels, fishing trips, fishing activities, catchment, landing and sales;

- query fisheries management systems about fishery activities, equipment and catchments;

- do inspections in port and at sea;

- report to (regional) fishery management organisations about the fishery in their jurisdiction.

23.   These software tools and application will be made available as open source software, free to implement and use by the authorities and fisheries communities.

24.   This software is and will be developed in close cooperation with the Fisheries Open Source Community Software (FOCUS).

IV.   Guiding principles

25.   The work of the ToS and the execution of this Programme of Work is guided by the following principles:

- Expert advice;

- Respect and mutual acceptance of any level of involvement or contribution;

- Full alignment of the work of the ToS with the Terms of Reference and Programme of Work.

V.   Governance

26.   The Team is guided by its Chair, which is supported by one or two Vice-Chairs.

27.   It is the responsibility of the Chair that the objectives of the ToS are met and follow the Programme of Work.

28.   Members of the ToS, as resources permit, undertake the substantive work. They undertake the preparation of substantive documentation for the meetings and the reports to be submitted to the annual UN/CEFACT Plenary.

29.   The ToS is supported by the UNECE Secretariat.

30.   Participation in the ToS is on a voluntary basis. All members of the ToS must register as experts of UN/CEFACT, in accordance with relevant procedures.

VI.   Funding

31.   Members of the ToS shall support its activities and are encouraged to find the necessary resources.