

7TH MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

The Hague, The Netherlands, 23 to 27 January 2019

COMM 7 – Doc 09 SPRFMO-FIRMS Partnership *Secretariat*

1. Background

1.1. About FIRMS

Since 2004, the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS, <http://firms.fao.org>) draws together a unified partnership of 14 international organizations and 19 regional fishery bodies (RFBs) aiming to provide access to a wide range of high-quality information on the global monitoring and management of fishery marine resources.

The backbone information of FIRMS consists of Excel based Marine Resource and Fishery inventories where information provided by the partners is organized in a database and published in the form of Fact sheets, under two domains:

- The biological domain (see example on Orange roughy: <http://firms.fao.org/firms/resource/13377/en>)
- The Fisheries domain (see example on the Northeast Atlantic Mackerel fisheries (2017) <http://firms.fao.org/firms/fishery/485/en>)

This system provides the data owner with tools to ensure controlled dissemination of high quality and updated information. These Fact sheets can be accessed through dedicated search interfaces and through the recently developed “Stocks and Fisheries map viewer”¹.

FIRMS only disseminates public data, always acknowledging the provenance and ownership, and its content can be re-used by the partners.

1.2. Benefits of joining FIRMS

By joining FIRMS, SPRFMO would benefit in the following areas:

- Access to high quality information for the enhancement of fisheries management at a regional level;
- Ensure regional visibility at the global level guaranteeing a role in the global policy agenda;
- Improving transparency and accuracy of information, while respecting ownership, confidentiality and security;
- Visibility of national, regional and global programs and project opportunities;
- Contributing to regional data sharing needs, such as building foundation information layers (inventories, fact sheets) that act as catalyst to develop/enhance regional databases;
- Facilitating global policy processes by standardising stocks and fisheries inventories;
- Leveraging on the information reported to FIRMS for our own processes (such as information requests);
- Use of FIRMS data services (e.g. map viewer, analytical tools, data dissemination capacity), access to FIRMS editorial tools as well as restricted information (e.g. GIS layers) and relevant services of FAO, e.g. training in the use of FIRMS and other information products;
- Influence on the overall development of the FIRMS database structure, content and access policies.

¹ <http://firms.fao.org/firms/stocks-fisheries-map-viewer>



1.3. SPRFMO Scientific Committee Recommendation

At the 3rd meeting of the SPRFMO Scientific Committee (SC3) held in Vanuatu 2015, the SC was invited to consider whether it would like to recommend that SPRFMO joins the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) (SC-03-31). The final report of the SC3 meeting, when addressing whether SC would like to recommend that SPRFMO joins the FIRMS states, *“It was decided to postpone a final recommendation to the next SC meeting”*.

However, this issue was not addressed in the following SC meetings (SC4 and SC5) and therefore the Secretariat brought this issue back to the 2018 SC6 meeting held in Chile by providing an update² on the developments of FIRMS since 2015.

The SC6 report states *“The SC also expressed its support for FIRMS participation”*.

2. Cost associated with joining FIRMS

The costs for the system are mostly borne by FAO. There are two options to join FIRMS:

2.1. FIRMS “Partnership Arrangement”³:

The Partnership Arrangement is made of two sections:

- The standard Arrangement signed by FAO (on behalf of FIRMS Secretariat) and the applicant Partner, and
- Two Annexes:
 - Annex 1: Current FIRMS Partners on the date of signature by the two Parties, and
 - Annex 2: Outline and detailed arrangements on the nature of information and the conditions under which it is made available under the partnership arrangement. Find, as example, the Annex 2 of NAFO: http://www.fao.org/fishery/docs/DOCUMENT/FIGIS_FIRMS/2013/2iNAFOe.pdf

Each Partner submits the agreed information in the formats required and covers the travel to FIRMS Steering Committee (FSC) meetings⁴. Withdrawal from the Arrangement is possible at any time with three months' notice.

2.2. “FIRMS Collaborative Arrangement”:

The Collaborative Arrangement aims at a more flexible collaboration with focus on content provision but without the right to vote within FIRMS. Thus, the ability for SPRFMO to influence FIRMS development, policies and related global standards under this arrangement are much reduced.

3. Final consideration

- The Commission is invited to consider whether, following the SC recommendation, SPRFMO joins the FIRMS (as a Partnership Arrangement).

² <http://www.sprfmo.int/assets/2018-SC6/Meeting-Documents/SC6-Doc28-Should-SPRFMO-become-a-member-of-the-FIRMS-Fisheries-and-Resources-Monitoring-System.pdf>

³ http://www.fao.org/fishery/docs/DOCUMENT/FIGIS_FIRMS/Partnership_Arrangement/FIRMS_Partnership_Arrangement.pdf

⁴ Participating in the 2019 FSC is budgeted at NZD 11 000, See FAC 6 – Doc08.2 “Secretariat Travel Plan for Financial Year 2019-2020”.