

ToRs EWG 24-06 Outermost Regions

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ToR 1: Guidelines for the assessment of balance in the outermost regions

Background information

In 2014, the Commission developed guidelines for the preparation of the annual fishing fleet report (COM(2014) 545 final). These set out a common methodology for the assessment of the balance over time, between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities, at fleet segment level.

In recent years, STECF has raised concerns regarding the applicability of some of the indicators in the outermost regions.

The STECF EWG on ORs is therefore asked to:

- On the basis of previous and recent i) EWG balance capacity reports, ii) PLEN reports and iii) relevant ad hoc contracts, review the existing guidelines (COM(2014) 545 final) and provide views and concrete recommendations on the current suite of indicators applied for the assessment of balance of the fleets in the outermost regions.

The EWG should take into account the particularities and limitations of the ORs and their fisheries, based on the available scientific evidence and experts' knowledge.

Background documents:

- EWG balance capacity reports of the last 2 years.
- Associated information available in the plenary reports of the last two years.
- STECF ad hoc contracts launched in the last 2 years.

ToR 2: Preparation of the Member States DCF workplans

Background information

Member States will submit revised DCF Workplans next October. Data collection remains a challenge in many ORs, as regularly highlighted by several recent STECF reports over the last few years. STECF has previously provided a roadmap to help MSs improve data collection and DG MARE is also aware of significant efforts made by MSs in recent years in the area of Data Collection. It would be beneficial for MSs to receive updated advice from STECF as to how their respective workplans could be improved to address the shortcomings previously identified.

The STECF EWG on ORs is therefore asked to:

1. Verify to what extent improved data (in terms of coverage and quality) has been delivered under the 2024 Economic data-call (French OR data).
2. Review the EWG 19-19 roadmap achievements and identify priority areas of improvement
3. Outline data requirements, analysis and assessment approaches to obtain sustainability indicators (i.e. indicators used to assess the balance between fleets capacity and fishing opportunities). Cross check with what is currently collected.
4. Based on the above analyses, propose recommendations to further improve WP 2025+ and their implementation. Baseline: WP 2024 and the AR 2022 (evaluated in 2023).
5. Currently national labs are the primary end user of the biological data for stocks not covered by RFMOs. Discuss options for an independent forum for scientific assessments and advice and make recommendations for future evaluations, as per STECF 22-02 conclusions¹, including data requests and feedback loop back to national data collection programmes.

Background documents:

- The OR study: Overview of the state of data collection and scientific advice in the EU ORs, with case study on a roadmap towards regular stock assessment in French Guiana - European Commission (europa.eu)
- EWG 19-19 report and roadmap, updated in 22-02 plenary STECF PLEN 22-02.pdf - Plenary Meeting Reports - European Commission (europa.eu)
- 2024 fleet economics data call: JRC database AER - European Commission (europa.eu)
- 2024 WP and 2022 AR (DCF website, EWG 23-08 report and annex 1) Work Plans - European Commission (europa.eu) Annual Reports - European Commission (europa.eu) EWG 23-08 - European Commission (europa.eu)

ToR 3: French Guiana waters**Background information**

In the context of the annual Fishing opportunities regulation, the Commission authorises vessels from Venezuela, via a licensing system (45 licences), to fish for Red Snapper (*Lutjanus purpureus*) in the waters off the coast of French Guiana on a yearly basis. Since several years however, there is a recorded uncertainty regarding the management of the stock of red snapper targeted by Venezuelan vessels, that has been referenced in the 2021 STECF Plenary report¹. The French authorities have commanded a new report by IFREMER scientific institute, which delivered results in 2023.

The STECF EWG on ORs is therefore asked to:

assess the conclusions of the IFREMER report and advise on measures to recover the red snapper stock in Guiana waters through the licensing system and via technical measures.

¹ STECF concludes that one of the priorities of the EWG could be to review and endorse stock assessments produced by local scientists working in the OR context, in cases where they such reviews have not been undertaken by relevant RFMOs or other competent scientific bodies.