



Food and Agriculture
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REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES
THIRTEENTH SESSION
SALALAH, SULTANATE OF OMAN, 15-18 SEPTEMBER 2025
Report of the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA)
The Commission is requested to: Review and consider the discussions and recommendations of the WGA at its 11th meeting, and endorse the outcomes

INTRODUCTION

1. The eleventh meeting of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) was held 12 to 13 August 2025, virtually. The meeting was convened by RECOFI and FAO and attended by participants from all eight RECOFI member countries.

2. The meeting unanimously elected Faris Mohammed AlGhamdi, Advisor for the Assistant Deputy for Livestock and Fisheries, Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, Saudi Arabia, as chairperson for the WGA. The meeting unanimously elected Dawood Al-Yahyai, Director General of Fisheries Research, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources, Oman, as vice-chair of the meeting.

REVIEW THE RELEVANT OUTCOMES OF THE 12TH SESSION OF RECOFI, 13TH SESSION OF THE FAO SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE, 10TH MEETING OF THE RECOFI WORKING GROUP ON AQUACULTURE

3. The meeting noted the important role that regional aquaculture bodies play in facilitating regional cooperation in aquaculture, and that the COFI: AQ often highlights the strengthening of linkages at the regional level. Further, the meeting recognized the important role that the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA), of which Saudi Arabia and Iran (Islamic Republic of) are members, and the Global Sustainable Aquaculture Advancement Partnership (GSAAP), play for regional aquaculture cooperation and development. The RECOFI Secretariat will liaise with the GSAAP and NACA to better understand how to formalize a partnership or become a member organization. Saudi Arabia is hosting the next annual NACA meeting in April 2026, the RECOFI Secretariat will be invited to the meeting.

4. The meeting was informed that the nominations for the COFI: AQ bureau have been received from all regions with the exception of the Near East North Africa (NENA) region, and urged participants to liaise with their counterparts to ensure a nomination from the NENA region is sent through the appropriate

channels with copy to COFI-Aquaculture@fao.org as soon as possible so the first meeting of the new Bureau for the 14th Session can be held with all regions represented.

5. The WGA acknowledged the importance of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) aquaculture questionnaire, as a key tool for self-assessment on its progress on the integration of international tools on aquaculture development. The meeting recognized that the role of National Focal Points (NFPs) for the CCRF aquaculture questionnaire is essential for the easy flow of information and communication and future work and urged members to ensure they have nominated a focal point for the CCRF aquaculture questionnaire. The meeting further agreed that the RECOFI Secretariat could also follow-up on this through the WGA focal points.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND RFBS: A GLOBAL REVIEW

6. The WGA recognized the importance and utility of the work undertaken by CEFAS and ROPME highlighting the specific impacts of climate change in the RECOFI area and the effects on aquaculture. The WGA acknowledged the need to better understand how to use this and other climate-related information, as well as how to better integrate the impacts of climate change into the work of RECOFI.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOFI RECOMMENDATION ON MINIMUM DATA REPORTING ON AQUACULTURE, MOVING FORWARD FROM RAIS, AND NEXT STEPS

7. Kuwait noted that they are communicating for countries submit their data to RAIS, however the system has been down for a period of time, and also highlighted that the focal points for communication were not updated making it challenging to update. The WGA appreciated the efforts of Kuwait to make RAIS a relevant and useful site for aquaculture information in the region.

8. The WGA acknowledged the progress being made on the Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 terms of the development of a data submission template and database with the technical support of the FAO NFISI team. The WGA appreciated that this would be incorporated into the new RECOFI webpage being developed and noted it would be useful to pursue a similar process for the MDR aquaculture. *This item is discussed in presented in more detail in Agenda Item 11, Working Document RECOFI/XIII/2025/9.3.*

PROGRESS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDELINES FOR SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE IN THE RECOFI AREA

Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture

9. The meeting recognized the importance of Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture, which were adopted at the 36th Session of COFI in 2024¹ and acknowledged that the following recommendations should be noted as priority items for the WGA in an effort to implement the GSA:

- Climate change adaptation and resilience
 - Develop and implement climate change and disaster preparedness strategies
 - Promote adaptive and resilient farming systems
 - Conduct studies and risk assessments specific to desert and arid environments

¹ GSA available in English: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/74874c9b-237b-415e-b522-9e24d9025550> and Arabic: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/04ed8a87-51d3-4f16-bc8b-f5c5750bbcf3>

- Biosecurity and disease management
 - Establish, update and implement national and regional aquatic organism health and biosecurity strategies
 - Prioritize capacity-building and disease surveillance
- Supporting small-scale aquaculture
 - Increase recognition and targeted support for small-scale aquaculture
 - Conduct capacity building to empower local communities
- Spatial planning and licensing
 - Develop spatial planning tools to balance aquaculture expansion with all stakeholders' needs
 - Enhance multi-stakeholder engagement to mitigate negative impacts on environment and society
- Technology adoption and data management
 - Encourage innovative technology adoption
 - Facilitate knowledge sharing on best practices, technical innovations and market access strategies
 - Invest in infrastructure and technical expertise

10. The WGA agreed that progress on the implementation of the GSA should remain an agenda item of the meetings of the WGA.

11. The WGA recognized the importance of the upcoming Regional Workshop on the Promotion of the FAO Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture in Near East and North Africa, which will be held 3-4 November 2025 in Muscat, Oman, and that all RECOFI members should ensure to participate.

Progress on the development of regional guidelines for sustainable aquaculture in the RECOFI area

12. The WGA appreciated the work to develop of regional guidelines for sustainable aquaculture in the RECOFI area, including the overall plan and the status of the initial questionnaire period and looked forward to the full presentation of the questionnaire results, once all the submissions had been received. The WGA further urged those countries who had not yet submitted their completed questionnaires to do so as soon as possible.

13. The WGA acknowledged that this is an initial phase in the development of regional guidelines, and that progressing towards the formulation of the guidelines is important, and so should be maintained in the programme of work. The WGA appreciated that the development of regional guidelines was an important action by RECOFI in the implementation of the GSA.

BIOSECURITY AND AQUACULTURE IN THE RECOFI REGION: UPDATES ON RECENT WORK

14. The WGA re-affirmed the importance to undertaking these activities in the upcoming period, and highlighted that the past work of the WGA on this topic should be incorporated to ensure continuity.

WORKPLAN OF THE RECOFI WGA FOR THE PERIOD 2026-2027

Activity	Tentative Date	Location	Duration (days)	Indicative budget (USD)	Priority
Technical Activities/Workshops					
Aquaculture biosecurity: 1 day workshop on prioritizing cultured species to develop a risk profile and a 4-day diagnostics training course on fish disease	Nov/Dec 2025	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	5	35 000	
Implementation of Recommendation RECOFI/8/2015/1 Minimum Reporting on Aquaculture Data and Information: template and database development	Over the course of 2026/2027		Online sessions and 1 workshop	50 000	
Continuing development of regional guidelines for sustainable aquaculture in the RECOFI area	Over the course of 2026/2027		1 online meeting and 1 workshop + consultancy	35 000 * to be calculated prior to the RECOFI session	
Biennial meetings of the WGA					
12th meeting of the WGA	2 nd /3 rd quarter 2027	Virtual	2-3 days		