



Dear Colleagues,

February 1, 2016

As the current co-Chair of ICCAT's Standing Committee on Ecosystems, it is my pleasure to contact you on a matter of common interest to the tuna RFMOs.

There is an increasing interest among t-RFMOs to implement some form of ecosystem based fisheries management (EBFM) strategy. In theory, a more holistic approach to fisheries management should provide for healthier marine ecosystems but implementing such a comprehensive management strategy appears daunting and beyond the capability of any single group. How do we operationalize these strategies? Will a form of single species management suffice? What additional administrative demands are required? Is there a single framework that will serve everyone?

Although the concept of an ecosystem based approach to fisheries management has had a long history, there are relatively few examples of it being implemented. Where they exist, the approaches differ. Similarly, each t-RFMO may have a different perspective on what this management strategy means to them and possibly different ideas on a way forward. In an attempt to advance the exchange of ideas on the implementation of ecosystem based fisheries management within each t-RFMO, the ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics has agreed to extend an invitation to relevant experts from other RFMOs to share experiences, look for commonalities and discuss specific strategies for operationalizing the approach.

The FAO Common Oceans ABNJ Tuna Project has offered to support joint meetings. Funding will support at least two meetings with the first to be held in 2016 at FAO headquarters in Rome. A draft agenda for the initial meeting is attached and we invite you to review its content and offer your suggestions. You will note that the discussions are to be kept at a very basic level as is appropriate for the first step. It will also be desirable to keep the group relatively small and consequently request suggestions on possible participants. There is financial support for two participants per t-RFMO to attend plus a limited number of technical experts. In order to facilitate the planning, we would appreciate your agreement in principle to attend the first dialogue, ideas on participants and edits to the agenda before the end of February.

Regards,

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*"The one who says it cannot be done should never interrupt the one doing it." – G.B. Shaw (attributed)*

*"If you think you can or think you can't, you are right." - Henry Ford (attributed)*

**2016 ANNOTATED AGENDA OF THE JOINT MEETING OF t-RFMOs ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EBFM**

*(Rome, xx-xx Month, 2016)*

1. Opening, adoption of Agenda and meeting arrangements.
2. Review of RFMO EBFM experiences.  
*Each group will be asked to provide a presentation that describes the actions that have been taken and future plan for implementing an ecosystem based fisheries management framework. The presentation should attempt to address the following questions. What is the understanding of the EAFM in your organization? Who is responsible for developing the EBFM approach? Has a subcommittee been tasked with the responsibility? In what way does your strategic plan support the implementation of EBFM? Describe the role that scientists, managers, the Commission and other stakeholders play in developing the EBFM approach? What are the dimensions of the framework, their components and required steps for implementation? Have management objectives been defined with respect to the components of your framework? What steps have you taken to operationalize your conceptual management objectives? How will the EBFM framework be used within your organization? What are the impediments to developing and implementing the framework?*
3. Discuss the merits of each organizations approach and the problems they have encountered.  
*In a roundtable discussion the group will summarize the problems that were identified and discuss? offer plausible solutions. The problem areas can be broadly categorized into a) Communication b) Institutional/Organizational c) Data d) Capacity/Knowledge and e) Leadership.*
4. Identify opportunities to collaborate.  
*Determine how the 5 organizations might work together to advance the implementation of an EBFM framework.*
5. Discuss next steps.  
*Develop a work plan which would facilitate the implementation of the EBFM approach among the 5 tuna RFMOs. Set a future meeting time and location.*
6. Other matters.