



FCWC

Fisheries Committee for
the West Central Gulf of Guinea



FCWC
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THE POOLING AND SHARING OF INFORMATION AND DATA

The Convention on the Pooling and Sharing of Information and Data of the Area of the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) was adopted by the FCWC Ministers in 2014. It was formulated to address the overexploitation of the regions' fish stocks, the ongoing problem of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and inadequate cooperation for shared fishery resources management. Increased cooperation, including enhanced information sharing, is vital to address these concerns.



IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SHARING

FCWC Member States have agreed to coordinate and harmonize their fisheries management policies relating to shared stocks of common interest in their respective exclusive economic zones (EEZs) in order to jointly develop their shared fisheries resources. To facilitate this, the need to develop protocols and mechanisms for information and data exchange relating to Member States' fisheries production, fishing activities including trade and the monitoring, compliance and enforcement activities have been agreed.

The FCWC Strategic Plan includes goals to 'strengthen cooperative research and ensure that resource-related decisions are based on sound knowledge, scientific methodology and best information available' and to 'ensure the effective implementation of the Committee's work through results-based management, improved communication, and better financial, human and knowledge management systems and tools'.

In order to meet these objectives, it is essential that information on all aspects of fisheries are shared between relevant stakeholders. This is reiterated by the Convention on the Pooling and Sharing of Information and Data on Fisheries in the FCWC area, which sets out how this will be achieved, through establishment of:

- a participatory approach involving all stakeholders in the fisheries sector.
- a cross-sector approach to enrich the knowledge base.
- a Regional Fisheries Management System to store data including: production, research, monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), socio-economic, environmental and other fishery-related data.
- a Regional Record of Vessels engaged in fishing activities in the zone, based on national registers kept by each member State.



WHY SHARE INFORMATION?

Exchange of information between FCWC Member States is vital for managing shared fish stocks and for controlling the small-scale and industrial fishing fleets, which follow the fish across borders and offload their catches in ports throughout the region. Information sharing is also essential to enable harmonization of conservation and management measures and the development of a regional strategy for the conservation of fisheries resources and marine ecosystems.

It is not only regional information sharing that is important – encouraging national interagency cooperation is also vital. Cooperation between agencies including Fisheries MCS, Navy and Coastguard, Maritime Authorities, Air Force, Police, Port Authorities, Customs and others enables fisheries enforcement officers to put systems in place to share information in their efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and associated crimes.

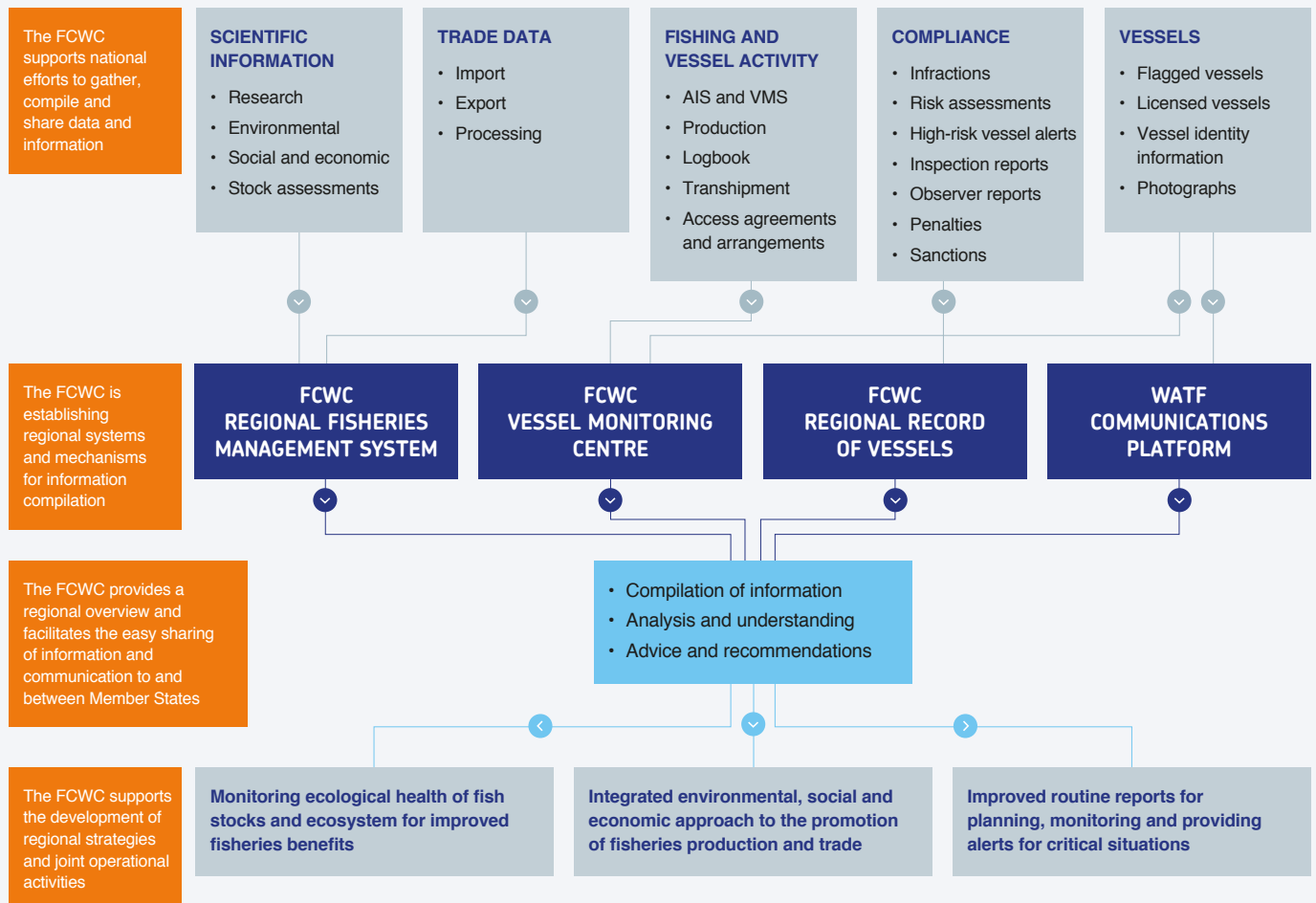
Increasing transparency in the fisheries sector has also been widely identified as a key factor in tackling illegal fishing and fighting corruption. Regional level pooling and sharing of information and data is a critical first step to increase transparency in the FCWC region.



WHAT IS THE FCWC DOING?

- Established the West Africa Task Force (WATF) as a mechanism to operationalise the Convention and facilitate MCS cooperation and information exchange between countries and national agencies.
- Creating a Regional Fisheries Management System and coordinating the collection of data from each Member State.
- Establishing the FCWC Vessel Monitoring Centre.
- Facilitating information sharing on licensed and flagged vessels and vessel activity, including non-compliance, through the Regional WATF communications platform.
- Maintaining confidentiality of sensitive information.
- Developing a Regional Record of Vessels.

THE FCWC ROLE IN IMPROVING INFORMATION POOLING AND SHARING



WHAT DO FCWC MEMBER STATES NEED TO DO?

- Establish national systems and procedures for the gathering and sharing of information.
- Regularly and systematically share information relevant to MCS through the WATF.
- Collect and submit required fisheries data in a harmonised format.
- Encourage the use of electronic logbooks to report catch statistics.
- Submit data from port and at-sea inspections, and at-sea observers to the Regional Fisheries Management System.
- Submit details of offences and sanctions.
- Identify national agencies for cooperation in accessing and sharing information such as trade data.

HOW IS COMPILED DATA SECURED?

A protocol to ensure the confidentiality of shared information was adopted by the FCWC Ministers in 2017. This sets out to secure data through processes managed and coordinated by the FCWC Secretariat:

- Using official sources of production and transmission.
- Providing secured access to users with priority given to Members States and the WATF Technical Team.
- Applying a confidentiality rule to all users.

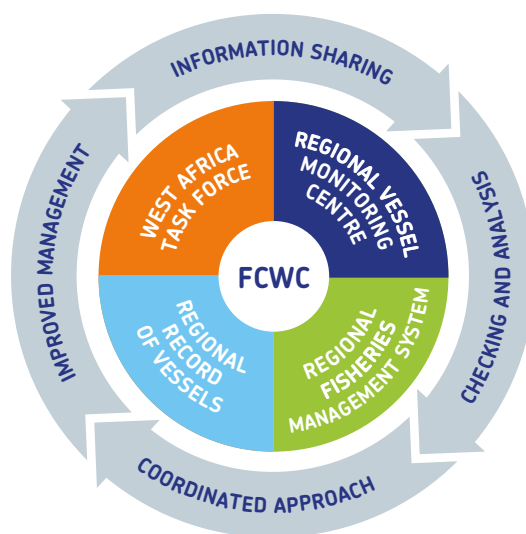
THE FISHERIES COMMITTEE OF THE WEST CENTRAL GULF OF GUINEA (FCWC)

WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2007 TO FACILITATE COOPERATION IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BETWEEN THE MEMBER COUNTRIES: BENIN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, GHANA, LIBERIA, NIGERIA AND TOGO. THE COUNTRIES HAVE SEVERAL SHARED FISH STOCKS AND IDENTIFIED A NEED FOR COOPERATION AND GUIDANCE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THESE RESOURCES.

The sharing of information both regionally and nationally within the FCWC region is a key element in efforts to improve fisheries management and sustainability in the Gulf of Guinea, essential for growing the blue economy, alleviating poverty and improving food security.

FCWC member States will benefit from a harmonized system of collecting and sharing information through:

- More accurate data on which to base management decisions.
- Improved basis for managing fishing effort and implementing closed seasons.
- Stronger basis for access agreement negotiation.
- Shared vessel information will enhance MCS activities.
- Improved ability to tackle IUU fishing through a regionally coordinated approach.
- Improved ability to tackle IUU fishing through increased national interagency cooperation.



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