



FCWC

Fisheries Committee for
the West Central Gulf of Guinea



FCWC
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THE FCWC REGIONAL VESSEL MONITORING CENTRE

The establishment of the Fisheries Committee of the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) Regional Vessel Monitoring Centre (RVMC) will provide improved regional monitoring of the activity of fishing vessels, reefers and support vessels in West Africa.



Based at the FCWC regional headquarters, but accessible to all FCWC member countries, the RVMC will:

- Combine data from a regional Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) with Automatic Identification System (AIS) information, and visual data.
- Monitor the position, speed, direction and activity of registered fishing vessels and support vessels.
- Allow FCWC Member States to track and monitor fishing activities across the region.

In line with the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy implementation the RVMC will help combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and related crimes. It will:

- Increase oversight of fishing and related activities in the Gulf of Guinea.
- Improve targeting of at-sea patrols and in-port inspections.
- Provide timely information for planning and operational FCWC joint patrols.
- Provide increased maritime domain awareness.
- Develop greater understanding of fishing activity in West Africa.
- Enhance national capacity.



WHY IS A REGIONAL VESSEL MONITORING CENTRE NEEDED?

IUU fishing continues to undermine the development of sustainable marine fisheries in West Africa. The resulting environmental damage, high economic losses, and increasing levels of maritime insecurity make acting against IUU fishing a regional priority.

Current capacity to monitor fishing related activity in national exclusive economic zones is limited. By developing a RVMC it will be possible to monitor all fishing vessels flagged or licensed by FCWC Member States, on a regional VMS. This will give Member States without an existing VMS the opportunity to monitor vessels operating in their waters, and improve the ability of all Member States to monitor the highly mobile fleet active in the FCWC region.

Once fully established a regional system has the potential to provide significant cost savings to national authorities.



WHAT DATA WILL BE USED?

The RVMC will utilise three main information types:

Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)

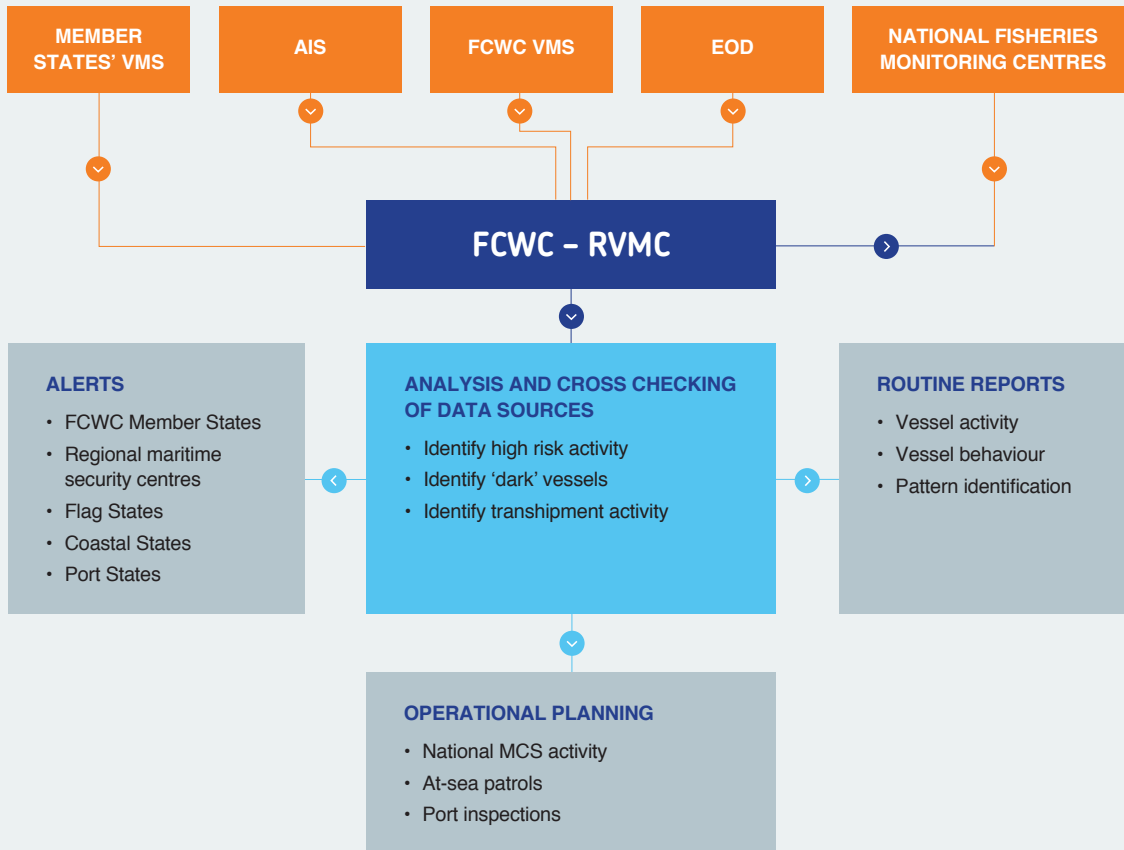
Developed for remote monitoring of fishing vessels. Sealed units are installed on board fishing vessels and position reports are sent through conventional satellite communication systems, ensuring that each message is predictably relayed. The reliability of VMS data provides authorities with a strong basis to act if reports from a vessel are not received, or if positional information reveals non-compliant activity.

Automatic Identification System (AIS)

Designed as a collision-avoidance system, vessels automatically transmit their position via radio frequencies so that other vessels and maritime traffic stations can locate them. AIS is less reliable than VMS, as it is dependent on the transmitting unit being within coverage of AIS satellites at the time of reporting. AIS is a crucial tool in the monitoring of vessels providing support to fishing vessels (reefers, tankers, supply vessels, etc. – who do not carry a VMS), allowing for the identification of encounters between VMS-vessels and AIS-vessels.

Earth Observation Data (EOD)

Satellite Aperture Radar (SAR) and optical imagery can provide visual information that can provide vessel identity or activity information, e.g. providing confirmation that unauthorised transshipment has taken place. EOD data sources may be added to the RVMC to supplement AIS and VMS data.



HOW WILL THE FCWC REGIONAL VESSEL MONITORING CENTRE WORK?

A dedicated FCWC administrator will operate the FCWC RVMC, and a secure system will be established to ensure protection of data and information. Each Member State will also have web-based access to the RVMC system.

Member States retain full control over the sharing of information relating to their flagged and licensed vessels. Data will be shared between FCWC Member States in accordance with the FCWC Convention on Data sharing, which was developed in recognition of the benefits for establishing regional information systems to collect, synthesise and disseminate fisheries information.

WHAT DO FCWC MEMBER STATES NEED TO DO?

- Share information on fishing vessels authorized to fish in their waters.
- Ensure that VMS transponders are fitted on all licensed industrial fishing vessels.
- Ensure that airtime is paid for all industrial licensed vessels.
- Confirm that national licensing conditions enable the sharing of VMS data with FCWC Member States.
- Establish interconnection between their national centres and the FCWC RVMC to ensure continuous VMS coverage.

THE FISHERIES COMMITTEE OF THE WEST CENTRAL GULF OF GUINEA

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.

Sub regional and regional cooperation was identified as a strategic policy objective for enhanced governance capacity particularly for shared fish stocks in Africa in the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa. The FCWC process focuses on the development, coordination, and support to implementation of national and regional fisheries management plans that are coherent with the African Union's integration agenda and support the objectives of the United Nations sustainable development goals.

The RVMC, funded under the 11th European Development Fund through the ECOWAS Commission, will advance the cooperation and collaboration of the FCWC members and support the urgent need to develop sustainable fisheries and end illegal fishing.

FCWC Member States will benefit from the RVMC through:

- Increased oversight of vessel activity.
- Reduced costs.
- Greater regional information sharing.
- Improved national and regional capacity in fisheries enforcement.
- Coordinated approaches to joint action including patrols.



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