



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



DEPARTMENT OF
FISHERIES



***Regional Capacity Building Workshop on
Strengthening Regional Representation
in Global Stock Status Reporting
(FAO State of Stocks Index):
Preparing the BOBP-IGO Members
for the FIRMS and SDG 14.4.1 Data Calls***

**29 – 31 May 2025
Four Points by Sheraton, Kochi**



Background

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has delivered invaluable insights to stakeholders worldwide on the state of fish stocks using the State of Stocks Index (SoSI). Since 1971, these assessments have been central to FAO's flagship publication, The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA). Published biennially since 1995, SOFIA provides data, statistics, and analyses that have become indispensable for scientists, policymakers, and decision-makers working towards sustainable fisheries management.

FAO's journey in assessing marine fishery stocks began with the first global review of marine fishery resources in 1971. Since then, FAO has continuously monitored the state of world marine fishery resources. The primary objective of these evaluations is to provide a comprehensive overview of global and regional marine fishery resources, supporting policy and management interventions that secure the long-term sustainability of fishery resources.

The current stock assessment methodology classifies fish stocks into three categories — *underfished*, *maximally sustainably fished* and *overfished* — based on a tiered approach to assessments primarily driven by information criteria, and utility in the region. Simplified categories and standardized procedures improve consistency and regional comparability, while an uncertainty score highlights data reliability. Challenges in this process include representativeness, reliance on expert elicitation, and the lack of transparency and replicability in the unweighted stock assessments.

Starting with 146 stocks in 1974, the numbers increased to 500 in 2012 with standardized methodology to ensure the integrity of its time series analyses. In 2024, the 2012 list was slightly increased with 531 stock units based on 445 species.

Today's needs call for a complete paradigm shift in terms of expanding the number of stocks assessed so that there is better stock assessment of a larger number of species. This is because the last half century had seen shifts in dominating stocks and exploitation techniques by the fishing industry. The UN Sustainable Development Goals Indicator 14.4.1 has led to parallel monitoring systems. To align with national reporting initiatives, increase expert participation, promote transparency, and preserve time series integrity, FAO believes it is time to conduct a methodological update on global fish stocks. The new methodology for the stock assessment process will continue to generate stock status indices at the FAO fishing regions level, where gaps in assessment can be narrowed over time in a process of continuous improvement. This can be made possible through collaborative action and the involvement of regional fisheries bodies.



FIRMS and the paradigm shift in stock assessment

FIRMS Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System

The Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) is the result of a partnership of intergovernmental fisheries organizations that are competent for resource assessment, management and conservation. The partners have committed to providing a single point from which to obtain authoritative fisheries information which they have validated, with a link to original source materials. FIRMS was established in February 2004 to meet the need for reliable fisheries information. FIRMS works as a monitoring system for capture fisheries. It is conducted under the general framework of the 2003 FAO Strategy for Improving Information on Status and Trends of Capture Fisheries (Strategy-STF), which was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly.

FAO is reconfiguring its data architecture with FIRMS as its central database, serving as a primary feeder for FAO's State of Stocks Index (SOSI) and Status of Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA), the flagship biennial report starting from the next cycle, i.e. 2026. This signals a paradigm shift from a top-down approach to a cooperative resource assessment and reporting by FAO as the coordinator and RFBs and countries as key collaborators and contributors.

The list of fishery stocks analysed in each FAO region has been upwardly revised to better reflect current fishing activities better. Candidate lists of stocks were compiled by regional experts and from global databases (GRSF and national Sustainable Development Goal 14.4.1 reporting). A reference list for each FAO major fishing area was decided through a series of consultative workshops with the participation of fisheries experts from each region.

This improved methodology seeks to achieve better coverage of global fisheries, more accurate assessments, and greater transparency in frameworks and reporting. By 2025, FAO aims to introduce a new edition of its technical documentation to incorporate detailed comparisons between the old and new methodologies. The updated approach will provide full transparency regarding stock assessments, methods used, and classification results.

BOBP-IGO and FIRMS

BOBP-IGO signed an agreement with FAO as a Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) Partner on 13 Dec 2024. This will enable BOBP-IGO to strengthen the participation of the region in the global march towards evidence-driven fisheries management, in alignment with the global sustainability targets and ensure better visibility of the regional fisheries performance to the global audience.

As part of the agreement, BOBP-IGO shall help coordinate capacity building activities among members to properly feed SOFIA-SoSI and aid in ensuring consistency and convergence with the National SDG14.4.1 indicator.

Hence, it is now proposed to prepare BOBP-IGO member countries on the methodologies and other details of stock assessment as well as reporting formats and timelines. The focus will be on building as much as possible on stocks assessed at operational level by RFBs

and countries. This will call for revisiting the process of assessment wherein the stocks for the region were finalized with the inputs from the countries; reporting using a tiered approach (Tiers 1, 2, 3).

The objectives of the workshop

- Provide an understanding of FAO stock status methods and reporting processes for FIRMS.
- Assess progress in the development of country-level reference lists of stocks.
- Introduce and discuss proposed new approaches for stock status classification and reporting.
- Identify options to improve country-level data and information collation, assessment and stock status reporting.
- Review the data and support assembling data as per the FIRMS template.



Key benefits to participating countries

- At the national level, FIRMS plays a crucial role in providing easy access to high-quality information, which is essential for the development and enhancement of fisheries policies and management plans both nationally and regionally.
- By ensuring the visibility of national and regional data on a global platform, FIRMS not only supports informed decision-making but also elevates the status of these fisheries on the global policy agenda.
- This global visibility facilitates the monitoring of stock status worldwide and promotes the adoption of sustainable practices, aligning national and regional efforts with international sustainability goals.



Deliverables

- Detailed report summarizing the sessions, discussions, and key outcomes.
- Standardized stock assessment and reporting templates will be finalized and distributed to all countries.
- Draft action plans developed during the workshop will be reviewed and finalized in consultation with national representatives.

Expected outcomes

- Development and implementation of standardized templates for data submission aligned with FIRMS requirements.
- Strengthened partnerships among member countries, regional fisheries bodies (RFBs), and FAO for collaborative assessments and data-sharing initiatives.
- Improved consistency, transparency, and replicability of stock assessments through the application of the updated methodologies.

Participants

National experts involved in fisheries sustainability, stock assessment, fishery data management, statistics and allied areas.

The nominees are those involved in / candidates to the national SDG14.4.1 Working Group, which back the reporting on the national indicator, and in the BOBP-IGO's knowledge networks like BOBSAN (BOB Stock Assessment Network).



Provisional agenda

Day 1: 29 May 2025

Overview of FAO's role in structuring global state of stocks monitoring (SOFIA SoSI)

- AO's support to global fisheries management
- FAO's role as custodian agency for SDG Indicator 14.4.1
- The FIRMS Partnership in support of the collation of fishery stock assessment at global and regional level

Introduction to FAO's updated State of Stocks Index (SOFIA-SoSI)

- Categorization of stock assessment methodologies: tiered approaches (Tiers 1, 2, 3)
- Data categories and collection methods: categories of data sources
- Revising and expanding stock lists (SoSI list area 51, 57)
- **Hands-on:** SoSI list breakout session

Resource Persons

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Anne Elise NIEBLAS

Fisheries Data Analyst,
Information and Knowledge
Management Team (NFISI),
FAO, Rome.

Day 2: 30 May 2025

Stock status determination in data poor situations - a light refresh on data limited assessment methods

National SDG14.4.1 reporting framework

Hands on: Current status of SDG data from BOBP-IGO member countries

FIRMS reporting framework

- FIRMS stock and fisheries templates,
- SoSI minimum data requirements,
- Area standards for the BOBP region
- Ensuring data quality and consistency
- **Hands-on:** FIRMS training in using the reporting templates

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Day 3: 31 May 2025

Addressing challenges and identifying solutions to an effective data reporting workflow

- Review "Operational data providers" for the SoSI list of stocks
- Data dissemination rules

Strengthening BOBP - FAO partnership and knowledge sharing with Member Countries

Breakout session: Action plan to improve data collection and reporting

Members Countries debrief and finalization of action plan

Finalizing recommendations and next steps

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Field visit

31 May 2025 | 1400 - 1900 hrs

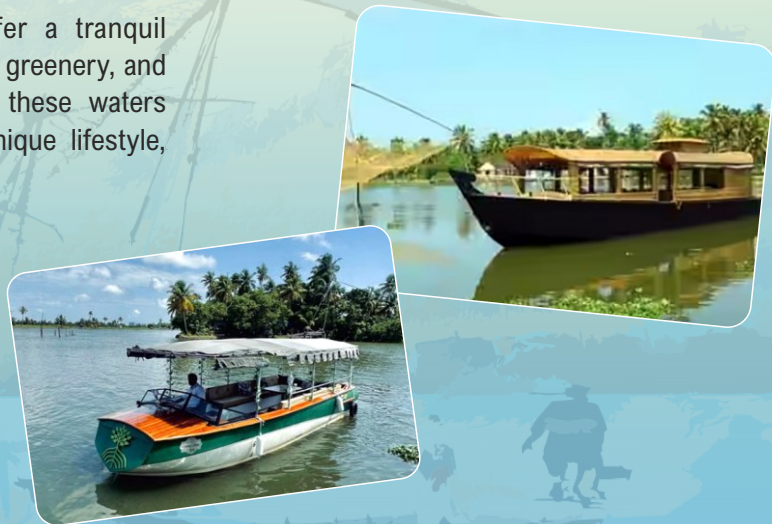
Fort Kochi

Fort Kochi, a historic coastal town in Kerala, is renowned for its rich colonial heritage, quaint streets, and cultural diversity. Landmarks such as the Chinese fishing nets, St. Francis Church, and Dutch Palace reflect its Portuguese, Dutch, and British influences. The town is also a hub for art and cuisine, drawing global travelers.



Boating in Backwater

The serene Kochi backwaters offer a tranquil experience with winding canals, lush greenery, and traditional boats. Cruising through these waters provides a glimpse into Kerala's unique lifestyle, fishing traditions, and natural charm.



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