



North Pacific Fisheries Commission

NPFC-2020-SC05-OP01

Partnership with the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System of FAO (FIRMS)

About FIRMS

FAO is leading the FIRMS (Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System – <http://firms.fao.org>) partnership, which aims to facilitate access to a wide range of high-quality web-based information on the status and trends of global marine fishery resources, fisheries and their management. The overall goal of the FIRMS partnership is to provide decision-makers with necessary information to develop effective fisheries policies in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

The partnership, founded in 2004, nowadays has sixteen years of experience and brings together 17 Institutions representing 21 Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs). Partners contribute with their information on status and trends nourishing an inventory of over 1000 marine resources/stocks and about 300 fisheries that these organizations provide advice on/or manage. FAO provides the Secretariat to the FIRMS Steering Committee (“FSC”).

In 2017 at its 10th SC meeting, the FIRMS partners deemed the partnership and its operation mature and called for an expansion of FIRMS towards a capacity to monitor comprehensively world fish stocks. The message that new RFB partners are encouraged to join was also relayed by RSN7 Meeting (2018). In 2019 at its 11th SC meeting, FIRMS approved a new partnership instrument (the Collaborative Arrangement¹) and welcomed three institutions which will contribute in their respective capacity (tools, databases, expertise) to this objective of a worldwide comprehensive coverage. This new instrument also offers a lightweight option to RFBs willing to join the partnership with focus on content provision and without the obligation to attend meetings at their own cost, however also losing the entitlement to vote.

The backbone information of FIRMS consists of Excel based Marine Resource and Fishery inventories where information provided by the partners is organized in a database and published in the form of Fact sheets, under two domains:

- “Marine Resources”, the biological domain (<http://firms.fao.org/firms/resource/10064/en> a stock example);
- “Fisheries”, the exploitation and usage, domain (<http://firms.fao.org/firms/fishery/478/en> a deep-sea fisheries example).

This system provides the data owner with tools to ensure controlled dissemination of high quality and updated information. These Fact sheets can be accessed through dedicated search interfaces and through the recently developed “Stocks and Fisheries map viewer”:

<http://firms.fao.org/firms/stocks-fisheries-map-viewer>.

¹ FIRMS Collaborative Arrangement available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7309en/ca7309en.pdf>



FIRMS is disseminating only public data always acknowledging the provenance and ownership, and its content can be re-used by the partners.

FIRMS benefits and opportunities

Nowadays, the potential benefits and opportunities the FIRMS partnership can offer to its partners are:

- At national level: FIRMS supports the need for easy access to high quality information for the development/enhancement of fisheries policies and management plans at national and regional levels. Such high quality is achieved by formalizing, collating, standardizing, and sharing marine resource and fisheries information (the inventories of marine resource and fisheries), and disseminating it through a variety of FIRMS web-based data services (e.g. map viewer, analytical tools, fact sheets, status summaries);
- At regional level: FIRMS inventories provide a foundational information layer which can boost an agenda of information sharing among members, nicely complementing existing regional statistical database or – where such do not exist - acting as catalyst to their development or enhancement. FIRMS inventories properly articulated with the regional statistical database can provide a powerful analytical and reporting structure in support to resource assessments and fishery management;
- At global level: FIRMS ensure national and regional visibility at global level and thus enabling uptake in the global policy agenda of the global stock status monitoring including the promotion of sustainable fisheries, traceability of fishery products, SDGs; as well as access to national, regional and global programs and project opportunities.

FIRMS Partners duties and rights

The FIRMS “Partnership Arrangement” (PA) presents the FIRMS Partners duties and rights. See template at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7313en/ca7313en.pdf>. It is made of two sections, the standard Arrangement signed by FAO (on behalf of FIRMS Secretariat) and the applicant Partner, and two Annexes:

- Annex 1: Current FIRMS Partners on the date of signature by the two Parties, and
- Annex 2: Outline and detailed arrangements on the nature of information contributed by the Partner and the conditions under which it is made available under the partnership arrangement.

Find, as example, the Annex 2 of NAFO:

http://www.fao.org/fishery/docs/DOCUMENT/FIGIS_FIRMS/2013/2iNAFOe.pdf or
SPRFMO http://www.fao.org/fi/static-media/MeetingDocuments/FIRMS/FIRMS_FSC11/2oe.pdf

The agreed information described in the Annex 2 is then submitted in the formats required for inclusion in NPFC - FIRMS inventories.

The FIRMS Collaborative Arrangement is available at

<http://www.fao.org/3/ca7309en/ca7309en.pdf>. It is a lighter partnership instrument designed for i) RFBs willing to contribute status information while avoiding the obligation to fulfil all Partners’ duties, and ii) for actors such as national institutions, INGOs and NGOs willing to support FIRMS goals with resources including e.g. databases, tools, services, or funding. The Collaborative Arrangement can operate on a project basis, as well as with long-term scope. Similarly to the Partnership Arrangement, the Annex 2 of the Collaborative Arrangement outlines and details the nature of data, information and services and their terms and conditions, and possible entitlements for the collaborative institution.

Costs for Partners

By choosing the FIRMS Partnership Arrangement, the Partners cover the travel to FIRMS Steering Committee (FSC) meetings, the in-kind contribution for the provision of data to fill the stocks and fisheries inventories, the participation in online meetings for the FIRMS Technical Working Group (TWG).

By choosing the FIRMS Collaborative Arrangement rather the FIRMS Partnership Arrangement, the joining institutions is exempt to attend FSC meetings hence no costs for travels, but also no voting right. So the ability for NPFC to influence FIRMS development, policies and related global standards under this arrangement would be significantly reduced.

For both the arrangements, the withdrawal is possible at any time with three months’ notice.

Recommendations

The NPFC Scientific Committee is invited to consider whether NPFC should join the FIRMS Partnership, and under which arrangement.