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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE

Thirty-third Session

Łódź, Poland, 10-13 May 2022

Report from the outcome of the debate of the 7th Session of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish)

Executive Summary

This document presents the final report¹ of the Seventh Session of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish), held physically in Istanbul, Turkey, from 11 to 13 October 2021 following a postponement of one year due to COVID-19 restrictions.

- The Commission was briefed on the main decisions and recommendations arising from the latest sessions of the FAO Governing Bodies, namely the Regional Conference for Europe and the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), as well as CACFish.
- The Commission noted the solid financial position, despite the existing arrears.
- Discussions took place about strategic approaches to increase the number of CACFish Members and further strengthen cooperation with non-CACFish Members. The Commission agreed to contribute to providing both Members and non-Members with the necessary financial support to attend the events of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.
- The Commission encouraged all countries located in the wider Central Asia and Caucasus region that are not yet members to become members or, alternatively, to collaborate formally with the Commission as observers.
- The Session noted that (i) limited progress was made with the delivery of the second five-year Regional Work Programme covering the period 2016-2020; and (ii) the Regional Work Programme had not generated the expected impacts since its inception in 2010. The Commission decided to abolish the five-year Regional Work Programme, as suggested by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).
- The Commission reviewed the key outcomes and main recommendations of the Fifth Meeting of the TAC.

¹ The full report with annexes is available on the FAO CACFish website and through this link: <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb8226b>

Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

The Commission welcomed the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022) and noted that FAO is the lead agency responsible for celebrating the year, in collaboration with other relevant organizations and agencies of the United Nations system.

Suggested action by the Regional Conference

ERC is invited to review the CACFish report and to:

- encourage relevant Members² of ERC from Central Asia and the Caucasus to announce their intention to join the Commission; and
- promote the celebration of IYAFA 2022 and propose regional and national artisanal fisheries and aquaculture (AFA)-oriented policies and strategies to optimize the role of AFA.

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² The Members of CACFish are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey. For more information, see <https://www.fao.org/unfao/govbodies/gsb-subject-matter/statutory-bodies-details/en/c/662/>. FAO Members from Central Asia and the Caucasus eligible to join the Commission are, *inter alia*, Afghanistan, Georgia, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

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FAO
Fisheries and
Aquaculture Report

CENTRAL ASIAN AND CAUCASUS REGIONAL FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE COMMISSION

Report of the

SEVENTH SESSION OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN AND CAUCASUS REGIONAL FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE COMMISSION

Istanbul, Turkey, 11–13 October 2021

CENTRAL ASIAN AND CAUCASUS REGIONAL FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE
COMMISSION

Report of the
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AQUACULTURE COMMISSION.

Istanbul, Turkey, 11–13 October 2021

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
ANKARA, 2022

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PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This is the final version of the report as approved by the Seventh Session of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish), which was held in Istanbul, Turkey from 11 to 13 October 2021. The report was prepared by the CACFish Secretariat. The material in the appendixes is reproduced as submitted.

ABSTRACT

The Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish) held its seventh session physically in Istanbul, Turkey from 11 to 13 October 2021 following a postponement of one year due to COVID-19 restrictions. Four Member States attended the CACFish session: Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkey. Seven invited States were present, namely: Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The EUROFISH International Organization and the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution participated in the Session as intergovernmental organizations with observer status. The Commission was briefed on the main decisions and recommendations arising from the latest sessions of the FAO Governing Bodies, namely the Regional Conference for Europe and the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) as well as CACFish. The Commission noted the solid financial position, despite the existing arrears. Discussions took place about strategic approaches to increase the number of CACFish Members and further strengthen cooperation with non-CACFish Member States. The Commission noted that limited progress had been made with respect to the delivery of the Second Five-year Regional Work Programme (2016–2020). The Commission also reviewed the Third Five-year Regional Work Programme for 2021–2025. The Commission decided to abolish the Five-year Regional Work Programme as suggested by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The Commission reviewed the key outcomes and main recommendations of the Fifth Meeting of TAC. The Commission agreed on its work plan for 2021–2023 intersessional period. The Session had lengthy discussions over the financial mechanisms that would facilitate an increase in the membership of the Commission.

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Opening of the session

1. The Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish) held its seventh session physically in Istanbul, Turkey from 11 to 13 October 2021 following a postponement of one year due to COVID-19 restrictions. Four Member States attended the CACFish session: Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkey. Seven invited States were present, namely: Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The EUROFISH International Organisation and the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution participated in the Session as intergovernmental organizations with observer status. The list of participants is provided in *Appendix II*.

2. The session was officially opened by Mehman Akhundov, Director of the Centre for Biological Resources Research, Biodiversity Protection Service, Ministry of Ecology, and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the chairing State of CACFish. Opening statements were also made by Viorel Gutu, Sub-regional Coordinator for Central Asia and FAO Representative in Turkey and Uzbekistan, and Mustafa Altug Atalay, Director-General of Fisheries and Aquaculture of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Turkey. The full text of the statements from Akhundov, Gutu, and Atalay is contained in *Appendices III, IV and V*, respectively.

3. Haydar Fersoy, CACFish Secretary, also welcomed the participants and expressed his pleasure in serving on the Commission as the new Secretary.

Adoption of the agenda

4. The Commission adopted the agenda without changes as shown in *Appendix I*.

Election of chairperson and vice-chairpersons

5. Edil Niiazov (Kyrgyzstan), Director of the Fishery Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources, and Regional Development of the Kyrgyz Republic, and Atalay (Turkey) were elected Chairperson and first Vice-Chairperson, respectively, for two consecutive terms. No nomination or election was made for the position of second Vice-Chairperson.

6. Niiazov, the new Chairperson, thanked the outgoing Chairperson and the Vice-Chairpersons for guiding the work of the Commission during their period in office. He also acknowledged and appreciated the work undertaken by the CACFish Secretariat during the inter-sessional period leading up to the seventh session.

Main decisions and recommendations of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe and FAO Fisheries Bodies

7. The Commission was provided with an outline of the meeting document (CACFish/VII/2021/2) on the main recommendations arising from the latest sessions of the FAO Governing Bodies, namely the Regional Conference for Europe and the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) as well as CACFish.

8. This intervention included a presentation by Hiromoto Watanabe, Senior Fishery Officer and Secretary of COFI, FAO Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, on key decisions and recommendations from the 34th session of COFI held virtually 1-5 February 2021. Additionally, the Secretary outlined the key agenda items, decisions and recommendations arising from the 32nd session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC), which convened virtually 2-4 November 2020; and the sixth session of CACFish held 15-18 October 2018.

9. The Commission reiterated the importance and relevance of regular attendance by the Central Asian and Caucasus States at FAO Regional Conference for Europe and COFI events and at its subcommittee meetings. In this regard, attention was drawn to the 12th meeting of the COFI-Sub-Committee on Aquaculture to be held in Turkey in 2023.

Secretariat report on administrative, operational, and financial Issues

10. The Secretary presented the document CACFish/VII/2021/3 summarizing administrative, operational, and financial issues and a report on the Commission's activities conducted in the intersessional period 2018-2021. The Commission was informed of the appointment of the new

CACFish Secretary, Haydar Fersoy, who joined the FAO Regional Office for Europe as Senior Fishery and Aquaculture Officer in November 2019.

11. Information on the activities of the intersessional period was provided. The Commission noted that, overall, the Commission's expenditures decreased considerably in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions and, despite some arrears, the surplus budget is large enough to enable the Commission to carry out a considerable number of activities in the upcoming intersessional period.

12. The Secretary highlighted that the Commission have followed a considerable number of scientific recommendations since the Inaugural Session (2011). However, he drew attention to the fact that the recommendations pursuant to Article V (Recommendations on development and management measures) of the Agreement establishing CACFish had not been adopted by the Commission and thus had no binding effect.

13. Discussions took place about strategic approaches to increase the number of CACFish Members and further strengthen cooperation with non-CACFish Member States. The Secretary highlighted that in accordance with the agreement establishing CACFish, non-Member States of CACFish, upon their request made to and granted by the Commission, had observer status in the Commission. The Commission invited the participating non-CACFish Member States to consider becoming parties to the Commission or, alternatively, to apply for observer status in the Commission to collaborate officially. The Commission tasked the Secretariat to take an active role in having a larger membership by closely following up on the process with the respective authorities of possible members.

14. There was a suggestion that the Commission strengthen its operational, administrative, and technical capacities while allocating particular effort to having its own projects and programmes.

The status and future direction of the Second Five-year Regional Work Programme (2016-2020)

15. The session was given an update by the Secretary on progress in the implementation of the Second Five-year Regional Work Programme (RWP2) covering the period 2016-2020, based on the document CACFish/VII/2021/4. The Session noted that (i) limited progress was made with the delivery of RWP2 activities, and (ii) the regional work programme had not generated the expected impacts since its inception in 2010. The major factors identified as contributing to the limited inputs delivery and weak collective impact of the RWP were noted as follows: (i) the RWP relies too heavily on external financial resources, (ii) its dependence on external inputs from regional FAO programmes/projects, and (iii) insufficient allocation of funds from the CACFish autonomous budget.

16. The Secretariat presented the proposed Third Five-Year Regional Work Programme (2021–2025) of the Commission (RWP3), which was formulated by the Secretariat taking into consideration the remarks and recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) in respect of RWP2.

17. The Chairperson led a discussion on the future of the RWP, suggesting that the Committee consider two options: (i) abolish the programme, as suggested by the TAC Advisory Committee at its Fifth Meeting (2020), or (ii) continue the programme for an additional five-year term (i.e., adoption of the Third Five-Year Work Programme of the Commission, RWP3). Following discussions, the Commission agreed to abolish the RWP considering that: (i) an ineffective programme overshadows the positive vision of the Commission; and (ii) the programme continues to experience difficulties in finding external donor funding as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Following the abolishment of the RWP, the intersessional programme of work remains the current operational activity mechanism.

Report on recommendations and activities of the Technical Advisory Committee

18. The Vice-Chairperson the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Mahir Kanyılmaz, presented the outcomes and main recommendations of the Fifth Meeting of TAC, which was held virtually on 23-24 November 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He stated that, contrary to expectations, there was almost no technical discussion at the meeting.

19. The Secretariat was asked to update the list of the National Focal Points of the Commission and its subsidiary body, namely Technical Advisory Committee through official correspondences.

Commission budget and member contributions for 2021 and 2022

20. The CACFish Secretary introduced the Commission's proposed budget for 2021 and 2022. The Session had lengthy discussions over the financial mechanisms that would facilitate an increase in the membership of the Commission. Unclear benefits of membership were identified as one of the factors that deters some States from joining the Commission.
21. A revision of the current scheme for the calculation of annual budget contributions was suggested. The Session had varying ideas on the different schemes proposed. The most widely accepted proposal was a two-year exemption from paying this contribution.
22. The Commission asked the Secretariat to explore, in consultation with the respective units of FAO, the possibilities of writing off outstanding arrears and contribution payment exemptions and to inform the Member States of the result.
23. The Commission noted that budget had earned USD 19 751 of accrued interest since the first financial year of the Commission (2012). The Commission approved the incorporation of the earned interest amount into its autonomous budget.
24. The Commission noted the solid financial position, despite the existing arrears. The Commission endorsed the same annual member contribution amount for both 2021 and 2022, a detailed breakdown of which is given in *Appendix VI*. The expenditure proposals for 2021 and 2022 were approved as contained in Annex Table III of the session document CACFish/VII/2021/6.
25. One delegation informed the Commission that its State may commence internal procedures with regard to payment of their arrears if legal barriers are lifted.
26. The Commission agreed to contribute to providing both Member States and non-Member States with necessary financial support to attend the events of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. In this regard, the Commission decided to grant financial support to two Member State delegates and one representative from a non-Member State, respectively.

The International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022

27. This agenda item was introduced by Alessia Di Grigoli, FAO Consultant, based on the document CACFish/VII/2021/7. The Commission noted that in 2017, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2022 the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture. FAO is the lead agency for celebrating IYAFA 2022, and, in this regard, FAO will collaborate with other relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system.
28. While some discussions took place over the definition, value, and likely contributions of the artisanal fisheries, particularly to food security and livelihood of rural communities, the delegations made no comments on this item. The Commission noted that the Central Asian and Caucasus regions have witnessed some developments in relation to small-scale fisheries and aquaculture. An example of the scheme of artisanal fisheries model was given by Uzbekistan.
29. The delegation of Tajikistan informed the Commission that its State has huge potential for the development of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture and requested technical assistance from FAO to further improve the sector while serving the objective of IYAFA 2022.

Work programme for the 2021–2023 intersessional period

30. The Commission agreed on the following work programme for the 2021-2023 intersessional period:

Activity	Date	Estimated budget (USD)	Location
Regional workshop on inland stock assessment in selected large water bodies	2022	40 000	Tajikistan

IYAFSA-2022-related national activities in Tajikistan	2022	30 000	Tajikistan
Regional workshop on Ecosystem-based Planning and Management of Fishery and Aquaculture resources with a focus on Climate Change	October 2022	40 000	TBD
Identification of fish genetic resources from Central Asia and the Caucasus (desk, field, and laboratory study)	2022-2023	50 000	N/A
Bio-economic and management approaches to Culture-based Fisheries development, a modelling study in Issyk-Kul Lake, Kyrgyzstan	2022-2023	40 000	Kyrgyzstan
Regional synthesis on gender in fisheries (desk and field study)	2022-2023	35 000	TBD
Ad-hoc training for artificial propagation of sturgeon	2022-2023	30 000	Turkey
Sixth Meeting of the TAC	May 2023	35 000	TBD
Eighth Session of CACFish	September or October 2023	40 000	Tajikistan
		TOTAL: 340 000	

31. Involvement of non-CACFish Member States into the work plan activities were found essential by the Members in terms of regional collaboration and visibility of the Commission.

The Secretariat was asked to explore possibilities for developing a collaboration mechanism between the FAO-Turkey Partnership Programme on Food and Agriculture (FTPP II) Project “Capacity Building for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Management in Central Asia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey (FISHCap)” and the Commission.

On-going or scheduled regional activities (research projects, sectoral policies, plans and programmes; conferences, workshops, and other events) of relevance to CACFish (verbal report by participating states)

32. Most of the participating States made presentations on the state of the national fisheries and aquaculture industry, focusing on priorities, sectoral vision, strategic planning; institutional, financial, and legislative frameworks; investments; the business environment; partnerships; and national events of relevance to the CACFish. All presentations are provided in *Appendix VII*.

33. The representative of the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution presented information on the fishery and aquaculture initiatives of the organization.

Any other matters

34. Representatives of the invited States reiterated the interest of their States in becoming members of CACFish. The Commission noted that internal initiatives are underway to become members in a few States. The Secretariat was asked to assist in this process.

Date and location of the next session

35. Tajikistan kindly offered to host the Eighth Session of the Commission in September or October 2023.

Adoption of the report

36. The report was adopted on Wednesday, 13 October 2021.

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