Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Partnership Arrangement providing for international cooperation in the development and maintenance of the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS)

Explanatory notes

The attached Partnership Arrangement is essentially in three parts and consists of:

1. Preamble:

Recognising the origins of the need to develop the FIRMS through a variety of partnerships.

2. Articles:

Article 1. OBJECTIVES OF THE PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENT

Article 2. PRINCIPLES OF THE PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENT

Article 3. PARTNERS RESPONSIBILITIES

Article 4. PARTNERS BENEFITS AND RIGHTS

Article 5. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

3. Annexes:

Annex 1 Current FIRMS Partners on the date of signature by the two Parties.

To be updated and revised on each new Partnership Arrangement.

Annex 2: Outline and detailed arrangements on the nature of information and the conditions under which it is made available under this partnership arrangement, including any institutional collaborations and additional entitlements that a partner may wish to include.

Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System FIRMS

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Partnership Arrangement providing for international cooperation in the development and maintenance of the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS)

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries:

- provides guidance which may be used where appropriate in the formulation of international agreements and other legal instruments, both binding and voluntary;
- calls for the promotion of international cooperation and coordination in all matters related to fisheries, including information gathering and data exchange, and fisheries research, management, and development; and
- recognises that the special requirements of developing countries in implementing the Code need to be taken into account.

RECOGNIZING that partnerships between international and national institutions will assist in meeting the objectives of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, including the implementation of International Plans of Action approved by the Committee of Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the FAO Strategy for Improving Information on Status and Trends of Capture Fisheries.

RECOGNIZING ALSO that such partnerships may occur at many levels, including

- global and regional fisheries organisations and arrangements (Regional Fishery Bodies);
- national agencies and research institutions; and
- global and regional network partners providing complementary information.

NOTING that international and national fisheries institutions have a wide variety of mandates and responsibilities, which may change over time, and that Partnerships should be in conformity with such mandates and responsibilities and adapt to new and changing institutional circumstances, as appropriate. Also noting that the Regional Fishery Bodies have a general obligation to disseminate information on the status of fisheries and fish stocks, or to provide assistance to their Member Countries for that purpose.

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION the Memoranda of Understanding that exist between the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and other Regtional Fishery Bodies that are FIRMS Partners.

NOW THEREFORE, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (hereinafter, the 'WCPFC') and the FAO, as a partner acting in the interest of furthering the objectives of FIRMS, have agreed to enter into this Partnership Arrangement:

- to establish the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of the Partners; and
- to specify in detail the provisions on the nature, scope, and conditions under which information is made available.

Article 1. OBJECTIVES OF THE PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENT

1.1 The principal objective of the FIRMS Partnership Arrangement ("the Arrangement") is to establish a framework between the Partners as listed in Annex 1 that will promote development and extension of fisheries status and trends reporting to all fisheries resources by:

1.1.1 building a community of responsible institutions that will report in an objective way on fisheries status and trends, thus contributing to the promotion of responsible fisheries management; and

1.1.2 developing, sharing and maintaining services for the collation, management and dissemination of information through a System for Fisheries and Resources Monitoring (FIRMS), hereafter referred to as the "FIRMS Partnership".

Article 2. PRINCIPLES OF THE PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENT

2.1 The Arrangement is based on the following principles:

2.1.1 information on fisheries is shared and appropriately disseminated;

2.1.2 information contributions related to fisheries remain within the full control and ownership of the WCPFC which has primary monitoring or management responsibility over resource and fishery units, including control of what and when information is made available, and how it is processed; and

2.1.3 whenever possible, the WCPFC will maintain the documentation on information sources, ownership, data origins and collection methodologies, and on their rules on dissemination and publication.

Article 3. PARTNERS RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 FAO will provide the Secretariat to the FIRMS Steering Committee ("FSC"). The Secretariat will have the following responsibilities:

3.1.1 to support the FSC in the performance of its functions and responsibilities, which are described in Article 5 of this Arrangement;

3.1.2 to implement decisions of the FSC in accordance with the Information Management Policy and the Rules of Procedures adopted by the FSC;

3.1.3 to coordinate and administer financial inputs, in conformity with FAO Financial Rules and Regulations, for the development of FIRMS and for the conduct of this Partnership;

3.1.4 to maintain databases for the presentation of fishery information;

3.1.5 to make available the information provided under this Arrangement to Partners and other interested parties as may be decided upon by the FSC;

3.1.6 to supervise the implementation of FIRMS Partnership services, including

3.1.6.1. the application of systems of information quality control for presentation and consistency purposes;

3.1.6.2. the development and implementation of software and information methodologies; and

3.1.6.3. the development and implementation of training tools and methods, and the conduct of training, as appropriate.

3.1.7 where required, to receive and process information inputs from the WCPFC, in particular for developing country institutions;

3.1.8 where required, to collate, control and process information on the status and trends of fisheries; and

3.1.9 to seek to ensure that the FIRMS Partnership will include global-level information on the status and trends of fisheries in accordance with information management policies adopted by the FSC.

3.2 The Partners will contribute to FIRMS according to their mandate. To this effect, the Partners will be responsible *inter alia*, for:

3.2.1 presenting for inclusion in FIRMS databases fishery assessment and management reports, statistics and other related information in a timely manner and according to its own policies on ownership, transparency and quality assurance, as referred to in Annex 2;

3.2.2 collating fishery information, or establishing databases jointly with FAO or with others;

3.2.3 ensuring collaboration with and participating in the work of the FSC, including in the identification of information that will complement each Partner's information sources and prevent duplication, and in attending meetings of the FSC.

Article 4. PARTNERS' BENEFITS AND RIGHTS

4.1 The general benefits of the Arrangement are to enable the Partners:

4.1.1 to assist them in fulfilling their commitment to improving transparency and accuracy of information on the status and trends of fisheries, while respecting confidentiality and security under which the information has been submitted, in ways that satisfy the owners of information concerned.

4.1.2 to make available to the public, through dissemination channels referred to in Annex 2, information on fisheries status and trends in ways that provide background for, and facilitate interpretation of, fishery resources assessments and fishery management advisory reports. This information covers, *inter alia*:

4.1.2.1. the distribution and population dynamics of a fishery resource;

4.1.2.2. the techniques, nature, conduct and production of the fisheries for that resource;

4.1.2.3. the fishery management systems in place or being developed, and

4.1.2.4. indicators of the effect of such management.

4.2 In addition to what may be provided for in Annex 2, the WCPFC will, for FIRMS purposes, have access to:

4.2.1 FIRMS tools for the editing, dissemination and maintenance of information;

4.2.2 FIRMS information and databases beyond the restrictions normally applied under FAO dissemination policy, e.g. to geographic information system (GIS) layers or other value-added products;

4.2.3 FIRMS Secretariat services for training in the use of information tools and standards, for the use of the shared software library and other information products.

Article 5. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 Eligibility of Partners

5.1.1 National institutions, mandated by a national government, and intergovernmental bodies, that hold responsibilities for the preparation or publication of fisheries information relevant to the framework of the partnership may become a Partner.

5.1.2 Only one institution per country endorsed by its national government may become a FIRMS Partner. That institution may act as a focal point to other institutions in a given country, as appropriate.

5.2 The WCPFC will cease to be a FIRMS Partner and be deemed to have withdrawn from the Arrangement following a declaration made by the FSC in accordance with article 5.4.5.

5.3 FIRMS Steering Committee (FSC)

5.3.1 The FSC will be constituted of one member nominated by each Partner, including FAO in its capacity as a Partner.

5.3.2 The FSC will be activated when the FIRMS Partnership enters into force.

5.4 In administrative matters, the FSC will:

5.4.1 meet at regular intervals, as appropriate or required in accordance with its Rules of Procedure.

5.4.2 adopt its Rules of Procedure and any amendment thereof;

5.4.3 make decisions according to the Rules of Procedure within the scope of this Partnership Arrangement.

5.4.4 identify potential partners that will contribute to the achievement of the FIRMS objectives, and prioritise their eligibility, with a view to ensuring that:

5.4.4.1. their fisheries information reporting complements what FIRMS already covers;

5.4.4.2. their internal information policies are in conformity with quality assurance rules and standards provided for in the FIRMS Information Management Policy referred to in 5.5.4;

5.4.4.3. their mandate is within the FIRMS thematic scope; and

5.4.4.4. the additional workload generated can be absorbed by the FIRMS Secretariat.

5.4.5 declare a Partner, including the WCPFC, as having withdrawn from the Arrangement based on the inactivity of the Partner in FIRMS; and

5.4.6 discuss with and advise its members and FIRMS Secretariat on any other matters pertaining to FIRMS.

5.5 In technical matters, the FSC will:

5.5.1 monitor the development and performance of FIRMS and advise on improvements;

5.5.2 consider Partners' requests on additional analyses or presentations;

5.5.3 discuss, advise and take decisions on further system developments;

5.5.4 formulate, adopt and keep under review the Information Management Policy;

5.5.5 review and comment upon the resources made available for the furthering of FIRMS objectives whether in kind or financial, and advise the FIRMS Secretariat on their allocation.

5.6 Cost-sharing of the FIRMS Partnership

5.6.1 FAO will cover the costs of FIRMS development, FSC administration and the provision of the WCPFC entitlements under the Arrangement through regular and trust fund arrangements, to the extent that these funds allow and in accordance with its Financial Rules and Regulations.

5.6.2 The WCPFC will cover the costs of information contributions to FIRMS, attendance at FSC meetings and additional FIRMS services, which might include information system functionality or customisation for the specific use of the WCPFC, to the extent that funds have been allocated thereto.

5.7 Entry into force, amendment and termination of this arrangement

5.7.1 The WCPFC may withdraw from this arrangement, after giving three months' notice to the FIRMS Secretariat, which will inform the other Partners.

5.7.2 FAO may terminate its service as the FIRMS Secretariat. FAO will give twenty-four months' notice to FSC before this termination.

5.7.3 The Arrangement may be amended or terminated with the consensus of all Partners.

5.7.4 The FSC will hold a first session within one year from the date of entry into force of the Partnership Arrangement.

Article 6. MISCELLANEOUS

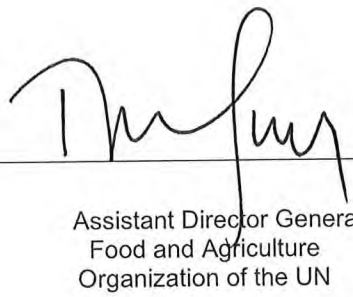
6.1 Annex 2 is an arrangement specific to each signing Partner (WCPFC) and may be reviewed and amended as appropriate by the signing Partner (WCPFC) in collaboration with the FIRMS Secretariat.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Partners affix their signatures:

Signature:  *Name:* Rhea Moss-Christian

Position: *Executive Director, WCPFC* *Date:* 8 June 2026

For and on behalf of: **Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)**

Signature:  *Name:* Manuel Barange

Position: Assistant Director General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN *Date:* 8 June 2026

For and on behalf of: **Secretariat: on behalf of the FIRMS Partnership (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)**

Annex 1
Current FIRMS Partners on the date of signature by the two Parties.

	Institutional Partner	*Date of Signature*
1	Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)	2 December 2003
2	Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)	19 December 2003
3	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)	30 January 2004
4	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) – Fisheries Department	2 February 2004
5	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)	2 February 2004
6	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)	2 February 2004
7	Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)	22 October 2004
8	Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC)	14 December 2004
9	Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT)	31 May 2005
10	Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)	6 February 2006
11	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)	1 March 2007
12	North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC)	1 March 2007
13	South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO)	1 March 2007
14	North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO)	16 December 2013
15	South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO)	13 May 2019
16	Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC)	13 May 2019
17	Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)	21 August 2020
18	North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC)	23 June 2023
19	Bay of Bengal Programme - Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP)	13 December 2024

Annex 2
Information to be contributed to FIRMS by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)

1. Data and statistical information

Types of information to be contributed. The information to be contributed to FIRMS by the WCPFC will be collected from the WCPFC Commission and Scientific Committee reports. The WCPFC data submissions feed the FIRMS Marine Resource and Fishery information modules as well as the FIRMS Global Tuna Atlas (GTA).

A data reporting format will be developed in line with the Excel-based Marine Resource and Fishery templates for FIRMS data submissions and in consultation with the WCPFC Secretariat and its Scientific Services Provider (SSP), the Oceanic Fisheries Program of the Pacific Community, to produce the WCPFC marine resources and fisheries fact sheets. The WCPFC supports the FIRMS Global Tuna Atlas (GTA) by submitting data using the standardized scripts and workflow as mutually agreed between the SSP and the GTA technical working group.

Only the WCPFC public data will be submitted to FIRMS and no sensitive data should be shared.

Scope of information to be contributed. The above information will be provided for tuna and tuna-like species and oceanic pelagic shark stocks in the WCPFC Convention Area for which the WCPFC Scientific Committee prepares Stock Status reports. See Table 1 for the list of stocks under the WCPFC mandate.

Standards to be used in this Partnership Arrangement. The information to be contributed by the WCPFC will conform, where possible, with the Information Management Policy [1] established by the FIRMS Steering Committee. The contributions by the WCPFC will be managed using standards that do not alter the integrity of the WCPFC's Annual Reports and other publications.

2. Metadata and information management

Methods of collection and processing. Information on the WCPFC's data collection and management will be available in the Executive Director's Annual Reports. Further information and links to detailed information may be found on the WCPFC website (www.wcpfc.int/about/annual-report-work-commission).

Bibliographical sources. The main bibliographical source for the contributions to FIRMS is the proceedings of the WCPFC meeting reports and affiliated publications published on the WCPFC website, as well as any official communication from the WCPFC to FIRMS containing the data.

Bibliographical reference in FAO style as per the following example:

WCPFC. (Year). COMMISSION <session number> Regular Session <date>. Annual Report on the Work of the Commission in <year>. <City>, <Country> (Hybrid). URL: www.wcpfc.int/...

Ownership and responsibilities. The information contributed to FIRMS by the WCPFC resides under the full ownership and responsibility of the WCPFC. With reference to the FIRMS standards, the ownership presented as the header of each WCPFC fact sheet will clearly

[1] FIRMS Information Management Policy https://www.fao.org/3/ax530e/ax530e.pdf

include "Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission" (acronym "WCPFC") as the data owner entity.

The acronym used throughout FIRMS will be "WCPFC". Further, the WCPFC will be the owner of all descriptions of itself, its areas of competence, and all text outlining its responsibilities and accomplishments, wherever presented by pages linked to or referenced by FIRMS, including pages developed by other organizations or entities. This will be accomplished by appropriate editorial and ownership security privileges within FIRMS under a dedicated fact sheet collection "WCPFC Reports". Methods used in the authentication and verification of information for FIRMS will identify both a WCPFC editor and a WCPFC approver. The editor and approver will, in sequence, ensure that fact sheets owned by the WCPFC are updated and linked to the latest version of the WCPFC documents and information as they are released.

Transmission protocols and dissemination channels.

Conditional on the availability of resources at the WCPFC Secretariat, information provided by the WCPFC will be generally updated within 12 months of receiving the data from the Members, Cooperating Non-Members and Participating Territories. Upon FIRMS biennial calls for reporting in support of the SOFIA State of Stocks Index (SoSI), the WCPFC will ensure a timely response to these calls.

3. Data and information security

All information provided by the WCPFC will be in the form of official communication and other documents that are clearly marked for placing in the public domain. Therefore, no confidentiality issues are foreseen with this information.

4. Capacity development

The WCPFC 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.

5. Collaborative institutions

The WCPFC collaborates with external scientific and technical providers , including the Pacific Community (SPC) and the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC), who provide specialized scientific research and stock assessments, informing the Scientific Committee and subsequently the WCPFC Commission Annual Meeting.

However, the WCPFC is the FIRMS Partner and as such the WPCFC participation in this Partnership Arrangement does not include any collaborative institution.

6. Additional entitlements

The WCPFC Secretariat staff will be entitled to participate in workshops or special courses organized by the FIRMS Secretariat on the use of the electronic publishing tools used by FIRMS. When further partnership efforts need to be extended, this item may be revised by mutual consent of WCPFC and the FIRMS Secretariat.

Table 1 – WCPFC monitored stocks (https://www.wcpfc.int/sustainability/fish-stock-and-ecosystem-sustainability)

WCPO Tuna
Bigeye tuna *Thunnus obesus*
Yellowfin tuna *Thunnus albacares*
Skipjack tuna *Katsuwonus pelamis*
South Pacific albacore tuna *Thunnus alalunga*
North Pacific albacore *Thunnus alalunga*
Pacific bluefin tuna *Thunnus orientalis*
WCPO Billfish
Southwest Pacific swordfish *Xiphias gladius*
North Pacific Swordfish *Xiphias gladius*
Southwest Pacific striped marlin *Kajikia audax*
North Pacific striped marlin *Kajikia audax*
Pacific blue marlin *Makaira nigricans*
WCPO Sharks
Oceanic Whitetip Shark *Carcharhinus longimanus*
Silky shark *Carcharhinus falciformis*
South Pacific blue shark *Prionace glauca*
North Pacific blue shark *Prionace glauca*

North Pacific shortfin mako *Isurus oxyrinchus*
Pacific bigeye thresher shark *Alopias superciliosus*
Southern Hemisphere Porbeagle shark *Lamna nasus*
Whale Shark *Rhincodon typus*
Southwest Pacific shortfin mako shark *Isurus oxyrinchus*