

*FIRMS Partnership Arrangement*

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

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**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 *memorandum of understanding* that exists between the partners to this arrangement.

**NOW THEREFORE** the *International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)*, 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**

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- 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 Resources Monitoring (FIRMS), hereafter referred to as the "FIRMS Partnership".

## **Article 2. PRINCIPLES OF THE PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENT**

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- 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 Partner 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, ICES 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**

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- 3.1 FAO will provide the Secretariat to the FIRMS Steering Committee ("FSC") with the following responsibilities:
- 3.1.1 to support the FSC, the roles and responsibilities of which are described in Article 5;
  - 3.1.2 to implement decisions of the FSC in accordance with the Information Management Policy and Rules of Procedures adopted by the FSC;
  - 3.1.3 to coordinate and administer financial inputs, in conformity with FAO Financial Rules and Regulations, to 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 purpose;
    - 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 ICES, 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 in general to 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**

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- 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, ICES 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 use of the shared software library and other information products.

#### **Article 5. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

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- 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 focal point to other institutions in a given country, as appropriate.
- 5.2 A Partner will cease to be a FIRMS Partner and 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 of 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 ensure 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 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 ICES 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 ICES 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 ICES, to the extent that funds have been allocated thereto.

### 5.7 Entry into force, amendment and termination of this arrangement

5.7.1 The Arrangement will enter into force on the date of signature of five Partners.

5.7.2 A Partner may withdraw from this arrangement, after giving three months notice to the FIRMS Secretariat which will inform the other Partners.

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

- 5.7.4 The Arrangement may be amended or terminated with the consensus of all Partners.
- 5.7.5 The FSC will hold a first session within one year from the date of entry into force of this arrangement.

**Article 6. MISCELLANEOUS**

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

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Partners affix their signatures:**

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*Signature:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Name:* **Mike Sissenwine**

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*Position:* **President** *Date:* **30 January 2004**

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*For and on behalf of* **International Council for the Exploration of the Sea**

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 *Signature:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Name:* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Position:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

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

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**Annex 1**

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

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**Note:** *To be revised for each new Partnership Arrangement*

|          | <b><i>Institutional Partner</i></b>   | <b><i>Date of Signature</i></b> |
|----------|---|---------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)</b>                                      | <b>2 December 2003</b>          |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)</b>                     | <b>18 December 2003</b>         |
| <b>3</b> | <b>International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)</b>                          | <b>30 January 2004</b>          |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) – Fisheries Department</b> | <b>2 February 2004</b>          |
| <b>5</b> | <b>International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)</b>              | <b>2 February 2004</b>          |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)</b>  | <b>2 February 2004</b>          |

**Annex 2 to the  
Partnership Arrangement between  
the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea  
and the  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
(Representing the FIGIS-FIRMS Partnership)**

**Information to be contributed to FIGIS-FIRMS  
by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)**

**1. DATA AND STATISTICAL INFORMATION:**

**TYPES OF INFORMATION TO BE CONTRIBUTED:**

**Reports:** ICES advisory reports developed for presentation of stock status and trends will be structured for upload and maintained in FIGIS. Links to supporting scientific documents, such as stock assessment documents, will be provided.

**Data:** Catch and fishing effort data will be provided at public domain resolution as determined under the policies of ICES. These data will be available for use by FIGIS in development of summary plots and statistics elsewhere presented within the FIGIS system.

**Biology, ecology, fisheries, and other information:** Summary information from research and investigations specific to stocks and resources in the Northeast Atlantic and the Baltic Sea (FAO area 27) will be provided in the form of links to reports available on the ICES website. Information on the fisheries and fleets that fall under ICES' fisheries advisory remit will be posted on FIGIS.

**SCOPE OF INFORMATION TO BE CONTRIBUTED:**

ICES provides advice on fishery management for Northeast Atlantic and Baltic Sea fisheries in accordance with agreements with its member countries and its Partner Fisheries Commissions. ICES will provide information on stocks for which it provides advice on fisheries management. Advice on exploitation of Atlantic tunas and whales are the remit of ICCAT and IWC, respectively.

Table 1 provides a list of species for which ICES provided advice on fisheries management in 2003.

**Documentation and Standards to be used in this Partnership Agreement:** Sources of information will be documented, and links to electronic versions of source material will be provided when available. A link to the ICES website will be provided for detailed information not suitable for posting to FIGIS. The information to be contributed will conform to ICES policy guidelines for confidentiality and information release and to the Information Management Policy established by the FIRMS/FIGIS Steering Committee.

**2. METADATA AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT:**

**METHODS OF COLLECTION AND PROCESSING:**

Details of ICES data and compilation are provided in ICES reports in particular in the ICES Fish Stock Assessment Working Group Reports.

**BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES:**

Bibliographic sources for the ICES reports are contained in the individual stock assessment reports. These detailed reports will be included by website link on the FIGIS-FIRMS fact sheets, through the appropriate species link in the summary reports which will be posted to FIGIS-FIRMS fact sheets. They may also be directly located when visiting the ICES website

**OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The information contributed to FIRMS resides under the full ownership and responsibility of ICES. Therefore, the ownership presented as header of each stock fact sheet will clearly include "International Council for the Exploration of the Sea" or its acronym "ICES" as the organization and the data owner

institutional entity. The acronym for the Commission used throughout FIGIS-FIRMS will be "ICES". Further, ICES will be owner of all descriptions of itself, and all text outlining its responsibilities and accomplishments, wherever presented by pages linked to or referenced by FIGIS-FIRMS, including pages developed by other organizations or entities within such as UN/FAO/FIRMS. This shall be accomplished by establishment of appropriate editorial and ownership security privileges within FIGIS-FIRMS. In cases where an item has joint ownership, all entities shall show a clear indication of ownership on fact sheets.

#### **TRANSMISSION PROTOCOLS AND DISSEMINATION CHANNELS:**

ICES stock assessment and scientific reports which serve as background documentation for information published on FIGIS-FIRMS will be published on the ICES web site. Links to these reports and relevant texts will be added in various topics of the FIGIS-FIRMS fact sheets under ICES ownership using a combination of the tools offered by the system (XML editing uploading – on-line editing). Transmission schedule is planned to be within three months following publication by ICES of its reports on the ICES web-site.

#### **3. DATA AND INFORMATION SECURITY:**

All contributions from the ICES will be in the public domain. Transparency of the information and results on status and trends of stocks and resources presented by ICES are documented in the course of the scientific peer-review process followed to obtain the results, and the various public meetings of the ICES at which the results, and various options for management and resource conservation, are presented and discussed. Details on these meetings and processes are available at the ICES website.

#### **4. COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONS:**

ICES works closely together with numerous institutions both national and international on promoting marine science in the North Atlantic.

#### **5. ADDITIONAL ENTITLEMENTS:**

When required, this Annex may be revised by mutual consent.

**Table 1** Species for which ICES in 2003 provided advice on fisheries management

Cod

Haddock

Whiting

Saithe

Plaice

Sole

Flounder

Megrim

Anglerfish

Redfish (*Sebastes* spp.)

Greenland halibut

Herring

Mackerel

Horse Mackerel

Sprat

Capelin

Anchovy

Sardine (Pilchard)

Blue Whiting

Norway Pout

Sand eel

Sea bass

Atlantic Salmon

Various Deep water fish species

Nephrops

Shrimp (*Pandalus borealis*)