



Fisher Folk Net

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A newsletter to share information among fisher folk organisations and people in fisheries on matters relating to sustainable fisheries management and other issues of interest to fisher folk organisations throughout the region

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Fisheries co-management — the order of the day

Fisheries authorities and fishers' organisations continue to recognise that the key to the sustainability of their industry lies in working together to manage their resources. We hope you enjoy reading in this issue of Fisher Folk Net the several instances we've highlighted of fisher folk collaborating with fisheries authorities and others in their countries to come up with solutions to some long-term problems.

FADs could bring an end to off-season in St Lucia

The Department of Fisheries in St Lucia recently brought together fishers from across St Lucia to train them in the construction and deployment of fish aggregating devices (FADs) with the hope that this will ensure that fishers can earn money all year round.

As a result of the FADs training, the department believes that fishers will be able to easily attract catches of migratory species, such as tuna and bill fishes, which

fetch higher prices on the local and tourist markets.



Fishers in St Lucia splicing a rope and working as a team to construct a fish aggregating device

The increased revenue brought by these fish catches in the low season would in effect provide fishers with a higher annual income and allow them to improve their socio-economic status, while better honouring their financial obligations.

FADs as solution to low fish catches in Sauters, Grenada?

The Fisheries Division of Grenada has responded to an ongoing problem of low fish catches by Sauters' fishermen by training

fishers in that St Patrick's community in the making and deployment of fish aggregating devices (FADs).

Between January 28 and 31, fisheries officer and gear technologist Roland Baldeo, fisherman Augustus Williams and fisheries extension officer Francis Calliste trained 27 fishermen, and two women - one attached to the St. George's University and the other attached to the Fisheries Division - in, among other things, the functions and maintenance of a FAD and fishing around one.



Fishers in Grenada being trained in attaching buoys to a FAD

Hands-on training went on for three days at the Sauteurs Fish Market, with participants being taught to construct and deploy a FAD.

The Fisheries Division sees a number of benefits from this training, including exposure to a practical approach to co-management as a means of solving fisheries issues; improved socio-economic conditions of Sauteurs fisher families through increased fish landings and fuel savings; and a greater chance of fishers being rescued in times of distress by fishing around the FAD instead of out in the open seas.



JFCU increasing ways to protect its members

The Jamaica Fishermen Co-operative Union (JFCU) is working hard to ensure that its approximately 4,000 members have the necessary insurance coverage for both equipment and themselves. Management of the JFCU is presently in dialogue with prospective insurance companies to develop a group plan that would include all fisher folk.

The JFCU also continues to work with the environmental authority and non-governmental organisations to train fishermen in changing their cultural practices which are harmful to the marine environment. The JFCU has taken a stand on these principles by refusing to sell equipment to fishers that would have a negative impact on fish stocks, such as 1½ inch netting, to ensure that juvenile fish remain free.

However, the JFCU reports that it continues to face an uphill battle in tackling pollution and preserving Jamaica's mangroves from developers.

TTUF holds first AGM

The Trinidad and Tobago United Fisherfolk (TTUF) held its first annual general meeting on December 13, 2007, electing a board of executives drawn from seven of its 34-member organisations.

Emile Louis of the All Tobago Fisherfolk Association was elected president; Peter Gloden of the Moruga/La Ruffin Fishing Association - vice-president; Bernadette Fonrose of Women in Fishing Association

(Guayaguayare /Mayaro) - treasurer; Dexter Khan of the Trinidad and Tobago Industrial Fishing Association - secretary; Salim Gool of the San Fernando Fishing Co-operative - assistant secretary; and David Dubar of Cacandee/Felicity Fishing Association and Kishore Boodram of Claxton Bay Fishing Association elected - alternates.



Some of the TTUF's new executive members (from left) Emile Louis, Bernadette Fonrose, Peter Glodon, Salim Gool

This new executive will carry out TTUF's mandate, including negotiating with governmental and non-governmental agencies; supporting fisher folk on issues affecting the industry; assisting fisher folk in obtaining training; and supporting fisher folk business activities. Emile Louis can be contacted at ttuf_net@yahoo.com

Financial training benefits Barbadian fisher folk

Members of the Central Fish Processors organisation in Barbados are continuing to reap the benefits of training in business management undertaken last September, according to their president Vernel Nichols.

The training, which was conducted by the Barbados Small Business Association, and was facilitated through the Barbados Fisheries Division, took participants through the ins and outs of how to manage a small business, bookkeeping and financial organisation.

Nichols said her members benefited from the course's emphasis on tracking how money comes in and is spent and she continued to see several examples of her members putting the training to use.

Government of Belize supports regional fisher folk network initiative

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in Belize has pledged its support to the Caribbean Network of National Fisher Folk Organisations. Sandra Hall, Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry, recently sent correspondence to Executive Director of the CRFM Secretariat Hugh Saul assuring him that the Ministry, and the Fisheries Department, would render their support to the network's Co-ordinating Unit.

JCFU raises concerns with agriculture minister

The Jamaica Fishermen Co-operative Union (JFCU) has made a case to Jamaica's Minister of Agriculture and Lands, Dr. Chris Tufton for greater commitment by central government to the fisheries industry.

The JFCU used a February 13 meeting to make Minister Tufton aware of several major issues facing the island's fisheries, including

the growing marginalization of fishers on beaches where they had fished and traded for decades; and the squeezing out of local fishers from the conch fishery - the most important foreign exchange earner in the fisheries sector - by non-Jamaican fishers.

The JFCU called on him to increase the resources available to the Fisheries Division so that it could better to collaborate with other stakeholders, to develop un-utilized and under-utilized fisheries; initiate an island-wide system of mandatory training seminars and evaluation for fishers as part of the thrust toward developing minimum standards for being licensed; plus enhance the current fuel distribution system it manages. Meanwhile, the JFCU is willing to partner with the division to create and manage a trust fund or a revolving loan scheme to help fishers recover from natural disasters.

The JFCU also requested the Minister to commit to the proper development and maintenance of a national radio communication system as a means of guaranteeing safety of life and equipment at sea.

New executive elected to serve Oistins Fisherfolk Association in Barbados

The Oistins Fisherfolk Association - one of the oldest members of the Barbados National Union of Fisherfolk Organisations (BARNUFO) is going forward over the next two years under new leadership.

Elections were held for the association's 2008 - 2010 period on March 2, at the annual general meeting. Continuity was maintained as

several members from the last board remained on the executive including the immediate past-president Alvin Belgrave, who is now the assistant secretary; Kurt Baynes, who was previously vice president but is now the public relations officer; and Clifton Ifill and Shirley Young, who returned as secretary and treasurer, respectively.



Sitting (from left): Stephen Cox, vice president; Bernard Seale, president; Kurt Baynes, public relations officer. Standing (from left): Shirley Young, treasurer; Clifton Ifill, secretary; Harold Greenidge, assistant treasurer; and Alvin Belgrave, assistant secretary

Among the early promises made by new president Bernard Seale was that he would try to re-energise the organisation, and also make the association's office more open and accessible to all members who needed it.

Dominica NFO is building a stronger executive, stronger FFOs

Executive members of Dominica's National Association of Fishermen's Cooperatives (NAFCOP) are reaping the benefit of their commitment to build unity within the leadership by meeting monthly. These meetings have reportedly helped tremendously in bringing the various primary

fisher folk organisations (PFOs) together for discussion of ideas, program planning and interaction with one another.

NAFCOP is also gearing itself to invite two new PFOs into its ranks. The two - one in Scotts Head and the other in the village of Dublanc - have been recently registered and NAFCOP has plans to soon approach the two organisations to discuss membership.

Officers of the Fisheries Division- which plays an ex-officio role, advising NAFCOP on various issues based upon its requests - have been working with the NFO to fine tune administrative procedures among its members. The division has also identified areas where NAFCOP could play a vital role in disseminating information to its members and help to implement some of programs within the sector over 2007-2008, including management of a fibreglass boat factory and the deployment and management of fish aggregating devices (FADs). NAFCOP members also continue to benefit from Cooperative Division education on various aspects of financial management and group dynamics, which has assisted the national fisher folk organisation (NFO) in performing its function and servicing its members.

CERMES fostering communication among fisheries stakeholders

Clearer, stronger messages that allow fisher folk to effectively input into policy decisions that affect their livelihoods, plus strengthened ties between fisheries management and fisher folk, are two major outcomes expected from a workshop series

currently being held by the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) of the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill.



Barbados' Chief Fisheries Officer Stephen Willoughby (left) and Vernel Nichols, president of Central Fish Processors completing a workshop exercise together.

The workshop series entitled "Enhancing Marine Resource Governance through Developing Capacity for Communication in the Eastern Caribbean" was launched in Barbados on March 25 and continued in Grenada on March 27, St Lucia on April 2. One other session will be held in another eastern Caribbean island later in April.

This falls within the work programme of CERMES' four-year research project on marine resource governance in the eastern Caribbean (the MarGov Project).

Caribbean Fisheries Forum in Suriname on 8-9 May

One of the most important fisheries meetings in the CARICOM region is slated for Suriname 8-9 May 2008. It is the annual meeting of the Caribbean Fisheries Forum, the main regional advisory body within the CRFM on matters of fisheries management and policy. Stay tuned to your NFO for news!

Guyana going places with fisher folk organisation

Ground work continues to be laid for the formation of a NFO in Guyana. The steering committee, which was approved by the minister responsible for fisheries, Robert Persaud, held a meeting on February 5, 2008 at which a programme for achieving their goals by September 2008 was outlined.

The chief co-operatives officer has provided a draft constitution and circulated it to all co-operative societies and stakeholders for comments and suggestions. The committee is currently working to finalise their constitution and move forward.

In other news, the Rosignol Fishermen's Co-operative society held its Annual General Meeting on March 13, and elected a new management committee. This body will also assist in the formation of Guyana's NFO.

Setting up the St. Vincent and the Grenadines NFO

The St Vincent and the Grenadines NFO steering committee expects to have its business plan finalised by June. While the process of drafting the plan is taking longer than expected, all indications are that they are on target to meet this mid-year deadline.

The steering committee is also establishing by-laws for the organisation, having had several meetings, including with the Co-operative Division which will be assisting them in completing the process. The Steering Committee comprises the following members:

Ecocen Victory, Chairman of the Goodwill Fisherman Co-operative Society; Cluston

Rogers, Assistant Chairman of Calliaqua Fisherfolk Co-operative; Leonard Charles, Secretary of Goodwill; Ivo Harry, Assistant Treasurer, Barrouallie Fisheries Development Co-operative; Palma Gibson, Treasurer of Calliaqua; Huelin Pierre, Assistant Treasurer of Barrouallie; Ferrand Walters, Public Relations Officer of Barrouallie.

St. Kitts Nevis advocacy group working on NFO

The activities to establish the St. Kitts Nevis NFO got off to a good start in July 2007 when an advocacy group comprising Winston Hobson (chairman), Ralph Wilkins (secretary), Clyde Thompson, Lee Graham, Shawn Isles, Alex Percival and Theophilus Taylor was elected.

The group met to plan the way forward. Meetings were held with fisher folk groups at fishing communities in St. Kitts and Nevis to sensitize them of the endeavour to create and network NFOs throughout CARICOM. A presentation was made at each location. Towards the end of 2007, each group leader was asked to register two representatives to serve on a national steering committee to replace the advocacy group.

The government Departments of Fisheries and Cooperatives are working towards the establishment of the steering committee to ensure the development of the NFO. To this end rough draft by-laws have been drafted. It is strongly recommended that, as far as possible, the NFO by-laws be harmonized since the aim is to create a Caribbean RFO.

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