

PRESS RELEASE

CRFM working group conducts multi-country review and analysis of Caribbean groundfish resources

Groundfish stock assessment programmes are critical to ensuring that countries can manage their fisheries sustainably, maintain ecological balance, and ensure economic stability, says Dr. Sandra Grant



Technical officers of the CRFM Secretariat, and the FISH4ACP and EAF4SG projects, worked with fisheries experts from 3 CRFM Member States (Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago) to conduct the multi-country data-limited assessment

(Photo: CRFM)

Belize City, Belize, 23 April 2025 (CRFM)—The Continental Shelf Fisheries Working Group (CSWG)—a technical working group of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) which seeks to foster the sustainable use of continental shelf resources and their associated ecosystems—recently convened a workshop, from 31 March to 4 April 2025, in Paramaribo, Suriname. The workshop focused on the review and analysis of groundfish resources in Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Twenty-nine participants from four partner organizations and the three countries attended the event.

Dr. Sandra Grant, Executive Director (Ag.), CRFM Secretariat, said: “The groundfish resources are crucial—both economically and socially—in this subregion. Groundfish supports the livelihoods of local fishing communities and contribute significantly to the national economies of Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. However, like many other countries, they face challenges in maintaining sustainable fisheries due to environmental changes and limited scientific data on the health of their fish stocks.”



Dr. Grant added that the development of groundfish stock assessment programmes is critical to ensuring that these countries can manage their fisheries sustainably, maintain ecological balance, and ensure economic stability.

Ms. Dawn Maison, Technical Specialist, FISH4ACP Guyana, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), said: “This workshop provided an invaluable opportunity for participants to deepen their understanding of stock assessment principles and gain practical skills in applying various methods. The knowledge and tools acquired will be crucial in ensuring the sustainable management of our groundfish resources in their respective countries.”



The CSWG and partners also visited the Marisa Fisheries/Ocean Delight processing plant in Wanica, Suriname, to observe the post-harvest operations, as workers transferred produce from fishing vessels to the onshore facility.

(Photo: CRFM)

Ms. Nerissa Lucky, Technical and Project Coordinator at the Project Management Unit (PMU), University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago, said that the EAF4SG project (Enhancing capacity for the adoption and implementation of Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries [EAF] in the shrimp and groundfish fisheries of the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem), being executed by the PMU, pledges its continued support.

“We look forward to supporting national fisheries agencies in the region, project partners and industry stakeholders in improving data collection for stock assessments and implementing management recommendations to enhance the livelihoods of fisherfolk and promote sustainable shrimp and groundfish fisheries in the region,” she commented.

“The workshop aimed to build the capacity of Fisheries Division staff from the participating countries in methods that can be applied to assess stock status in data-limited situations,” explained Dr. Tomas Willems, Head of the Statistics and Research Division, Fisheries Department, Suriname.

The workshop objectives were: (1) to increase understanding of the theory behind stock assessment; (2) to learn how to use stock assessment tools; and (3) to perform preliminary assessments on key shrimp and groundfish species for each country. Dr Willems attested that the workshop met all three objectives and could be considered an important milestone in promoting evidence-based fisheries management.

“CRFM and the EAF4SG project will provide further follow-up to finalize the assessments started during the workshop,” Dr. Willems added.

Ms. Lara Ferreira, Fisheries Officer, Fisheries Division, Trinidad and Tobago, expressed appreciation, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, through the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, for the technical support received through the CRFM CSWG, with the support of the EAF4SG project.

“Such opportunities for capacity building in R and data-limited stock assessment methodologies are much needed in the region,” Ferreira added.

During the final day of the workshop, the Suriname Seabob Working Group, which has private sector participation, joined the session, during which presentations were made on the ongoing seabob assessment. They discussed the way forward, including the upcoming Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) audit.

“We thank our partners—the EAF4SG and FISH4ACP projects funded by GEF and the EU and both implemented by the FAO—for their technical and financial support for this workshop,” Dr. Grant concluded.

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ABOUT THE CRFM:

The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) was officially inaugurated on 27 March 2003 in Belize City, Belize, where it is headquartered, following the signing of the Agreement Establishing the CRFM on 4 February 2002. It is an inter-governmental organization whose mission is to promote and facilitate the responsible utilization of the region's fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future population of the region.



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