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## NEWS RELEASE

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**Moored Fish Aggregating Devices (MFAD's) take center stage at upcoming WECAFC/CRFM/JICA Meeting hosted by The Fisheries Division of the Commonwealth of Dominica**



*Delegates to share industry knowledge and experience on the implementation of policy, legal, and operational aspects of the management of pelagic fisheries on FADs*

**12 April, 2023 – Bridgetown, Barbados** - The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) is pleased to announce the fifth upcoming meeting of the Joint Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and WECAFC Working Group on Fisheries Using moored Fish Aggregating Devices (MFADs). The hybrid meeting will be held in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Blue and Green Economy of the Commonwealth of Dominica, with support from a project funded by the European Union.

An estimated 60 delegates will attend the meeting, including country representatives and fisher-folks from the Caribbean region with FAD fisheries, as well as knowledgeable resource persons/selected experts in the topic, participants from partner organizations and institutions from other regions where FAD is sustainably managed, and the proven track governance. The delegates include officers of

national institutions, entities, and authorities responsible for the implementation of policy, legal, and operational aspects of the management of pelagic fisheries on FADs, who will share their knowledge and experience with the group.

The Moored Fish Aggregating Device (MFAD) is of particular importance to small-scale fishers in the Caribbean who rely primarily on fishing as a means to generate an income and to feed their own families. Since the device is a man-made object, consisting normally of buoys or floats tethered to the ocean floor with concrete blocks, the fisher-folks can control their level of financial investment to obtain it, which is an added advantage to them. This simple and relatively inexpensive device is effective in attracting pelagic fish or fish which can be found near the surface of the ocean, including marlin, tuna and mahi-mahi, some of the favorite fish among households, restaurants and hotels across the Caribbean.

In expressing the importance of MFAD's, The Honorable Jullan Defoe, Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Blue and Green Economy in the Commonwealth of Dominica stated, "In Dominica the significance of the MFAD fishery to the small scale artisanal fishing sector cannot be overstated where fisheries production is dominated by offshore pelagic species. Post the adverse impact of the category 5 Hurricane Maria in 2017 on the fisheries sector the resilience of fisheries production could be largely attributed to the MFAD fishery. Since the adoption of MFAD technology from the mid 90's the country had made tremendous efforts in MFAD technological improvement and most importantly experimenting with MFAD management specifically "co-management". Therefore, Dominica is proud to serve as convener of MFAD working group and look forward to the sharing of experiences and knowledge gained with fellow WECAFC members utilizing MFAD technology".

In outlining the objectives of the meeting, Yvette Diei Ouadi, FAO Caribbean Sub-regional Fishery and Aquaculture Officer and Secretary of WECAFC, indicated that the main ones include, identifying regional needs and priorities, highlighting areas for potential collaboration and the review of the interim moored FADs management plan and monitoring guide. She added that the draft governance manual, proposed updated work plan and the eventual recommendations related to the future work of the group are all tabled for discussion.

Diei Ouadi also stressed that, "With this year's high and diverse turnout, including the attendance by countries with over 90% of the MFADs deployed in the insular Caribbean, the Secretariat is extremely pleased with the strong interest that the meeting triggered; likewise, the subjects to be addressed suggest no doubt about the fruitful deliberations ahead, to advance the governance in and management of these critical fisheries for WECAFC region."

It is important to highlight that the scope of the Working Group is the development and management of moored FAD fishing in a manner that is consistent with the long-term sustainability of associated pelagic fish resources and through the application of international best practices consistent with the

precautionary and ecosystem approaches to fisheries management. This mandate will contribute to the long-lasting availability of fish catches for fishermen to meet the demands for locals and the tourism sector.

The outcome of the deliberations will be tabled for discussion at the 19<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission scheduled for 6-8 September 2023, to ensure that the actual benefits of these fisheries for food and nutrition security, income earning, livelihoods and healthy ecosystems are effectively secured and protected.

**For more information:**

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