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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **The conservation of Queen Conch is the focus of the upcoming meeting of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC)**



*Queen Conch*

**December 7, 2021 - San Juan, Puerto Rico** – Conch lovers and fishers in the Caribbean can be assured that the preservation of their popular delicacy gets the full attention of the several international organizations.

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC), The Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC), Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization (OSPESCA), Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will convene from December 13 – 14 in San Juan, Puerto Rico with Queen Conch as the main agenda item.

The meeting, which will be led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is set to discuss important matters such as the improvement

of queen conch catch and monitoring programs, licensing of all queen conch fishers, processors and exporters and the adoption of stricter regulations on autonomous diving techniques. It is anticipated that fifty stakeholders will attend and participate in the deliberations from countries including Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Colombia, France (Guadeloupe and Martinique), Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States of America.

With education being a critical aspect of the success of the queen conch initiatives, stakeholders are set to benefit from the continuous education and outreach programs. This education along with the Blue BiTrade project implemented by CITES, and some resources from a member organization-the European Union, will improve the livelihoods of fishers and contribute to the national economies through improving the working conditions/occupational, safety and health issues in diving for conch harvesting.

Yvette Diei Ouadi, Chief Fisheries Officer at FAO and Secretary of WECAFC indicated that, "The global COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant disruptions, with shift in members' priorities to address the direct health and social safety needs. Despite this unpredictable period, WECAFC continued to work collaboratively with its partners to progress in the implementation of the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan. The extent of the turnout in this meeting, demonstrates the understanding of the high social and economic importance of the queen conch fisheries to the wider Caribbean region and the need to ensure its sustainability".

Meanwhile, Maren Headley, CRFM Representative and Convener of the Working Group stressed that, "This meeting is occurring at an opportune time as countries are seeking to develop their blue economies and transform traditional ocean based sectors such as fisheries by enhancing their value. Queen conch is an extremely valuable resource in the Caribbean; supporting livelihoods, export markets and national food security. Our Member States are committed to the sustainable use and management of the queen conch resource, promoting safe diving practices and working with regional and international partners to achieve this."

Therefore, whether you like your conch meat eaten raw in salads, or with a squeeze of fresh lime-juice, in chowders or fritters, FAO and its partner agencies are working diligently to ensure that conch finds its way on your dinner table for many harvest seasons.

**For more information:**

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