

**SYMPOSIUM ON:
APPLYING THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN ABNJ**

11-13 March 2025
Sheikh Zayed Conference Centre, FAO HQ, Rome Italy

Concept Note

Introduction

The Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) concept was formally launched in Reykjavik in 2001 and consolidated in FAO EAF technical guidelines (FAO, 2001, 2003). The EAF recognises that fish and fisheries are part of, and dependent upon the entire marine ecosystem and that fisheries management must balance human and ecological considerations in a comprehensive way to achieve sustainable outcomes. The EAF goes under various names according to emphasis; the term Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) links it more closely to the management of fisheries as practised by the deep-sea Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (dsRFMOs). In line with the principal mandate of dsRFMOs, our emphasis is on the ecological dimension of EAFM, i.e., managing the effects of fisheries on retained species, discarded species and ecosystems. The essential elements of EAFM are contained within the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (FAO, 1995). Two recent publications highlight the challenges of implementing EAFM by RFMOs (Fletcher, 2020; RSN, 2022).

The Common Oceans Deep-sea Fisheries (DSF) Project¹ will be holding a symposium on “*Applying the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management in ABNJ*” to address the challenges related to, and develop guidance to support, the implementation of EAFM by dsRFMOs. The symposium will include a diversity of sessions and aim to present options for mitigating the effects of fisheries on retained species, discarded species and the ecosystem generally. The first day will be dedicated to the scientific aspects and the second to the management aspects of EAFM, while the third day will aim to develop global guidance for the implementation of EAFM in deep-sea RFMOs. The focus of the symposium will be on demersal fisheries, but experiences and lessons learnt from small pelagic and tuna fisheries will also be shared.

Organisers

The symposium will be organised by the DSF Project (FAO), NAFO² and ICES³ with the symposium website hosted by NAFO⁴. There will be no registration fee or page-charges for the proceedings. Support for travel will be available on a case-by-case basis with a preference given to early career scientists and invited speakers.

Conveners, organising committee and scientific committee

The various officers helping with the symposium are provided on the symposium’s website. The scientific committee will oversee the technical content of the symposium, the selection of presenters, and proceedings. It comprises of managers and scientists who work closely with the DSF Project.

¹ <https://www.fao.org/in-action/commonoceans/what-we-do/deepsea/en/>

² <https://www.nafo.int/>

³ <https://www.ices.dk>

⁴ www.eafm-symposium.nafo.int

Preparatory work

The DSF Project (FAO) will work with dsRFMOs to develop background material on the EAFM. A background document will be available to help define the scope of EAFM for the symposium.

Format

The symposium will be a meeting of 3 days with keynote addresses, followed by presentations and discussion in a panel-style format with session facilitators. Poster sessions will provide additional information. The proceedings will be published in the open-access *Journal of Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Science*. The draft programme is as follows:

- **Day 1** – Scientific aspects of EAFM: Retained species, discarded species and ecosystem effects.
- **Day 2** – Management aspects of EAFM - Retained, discarded, vulnerable species and ecosystem effects.
- **Day 3** –Developing guidance for implementation of EAFM: Scope, long-term objectives, gap analysis, guidance for implementation.

Follow-up work

The symposium output will generate and share knowledge on ecosystem-level fisheries management among dsRFMOs and national experts. This will be documented in the symposium proceedings. The DSF Project will also work with dsRFMOs to further develop a framework to support the implementation of EAFM.

Timing and venue

11–13 March 2025 at Sheik Zayed Conference Centre, FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy.

Contact

For further information, please see the symposium website or contact Anthony.Thompson@fao.org and copy apacey@nafo.int

References

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