

**Range State Meeting for the Action Plan to Address Aquatic Wild Meat
Harvests in West Africa**

Saly, Senegal, 7 September 2023

CMS/WA-AWM-AP/Doc.5/Rev.1

DRAFT ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS AQUATIC WILD MEAT HARVESTS IN WEST AFRICA

Background

A first draft of the Action Plan presented in this document was drafted by members of the CMS Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group as requested by COP13. The draft was then discussed in a [series of online meetings taking place over three months \(June to August 2023\)](#). The resulting revision of the draft currently contained in [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.30.1.2/Rev.1 Aquatic Wild Meat](#) is presented in this document.

A revision of the Action Plan, reflecting what was agreed at this in-person meeting, will be presented to CMS COP14 for adoption.

DRAFT ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS AQUATIC WILD MEAT HARVESTS IN WEST AFRICA

1. Across most of West Africa aquatic wild animals are hunted or taken opportunistically, and the meat, body parts, and/or eggs are consumed for local subsistence, used for traditional purposes, or traded for income. Aquatic species, including mammals, reptiles, elasmobranch fish, and aquatic birds, regularly taken in marine, coastal, and riverine ecosystems. Harvest and consumption from these ecosystems is widespread. In some places some aquatic wild meat harvests have been sustained for millennia, serving as an important source of nutrition, income, and cultural identity for some communities. Yet, food security pressure in some instances, and economic opportunities to exploit wildlife at higher levels in others, have led to unsustainable exploitation of some CMS-listed species.
2. This Action Plan to Address Aquatic Wild Meat in West Africa seeks to focus policy and science attention on these regional harvests, and where possible to take steps towards sustainable management of these activities. In some cases, this will require significant changes in community behaviour. In other cases, communities can provide direction for forward management that both respects local traditions and sustains important aquatic species and their habitats.
3. The Action Plan is segmented into five themes:
 - a) Reflecting on known science and identifying scientific gaps;
 - b) Understanding drivers and pressures (distant water fleets, internal migrations, ecosystem decline) and forming solutions;
 - c) Understanding the intersection between fisheries and environment (domestic and international) and creating stronger linkages;
 - d) Fostering community-driven solutions and building laws and enforcement where needed; and
 - e) [Name of fifth theme to be added after face-to-face workshop].

Each theme provides focused attention on necessary capacity building (local and regional), while also demonstrating clear pathways for funding and capacity support. This reflects the strong need for a bottom up, community-driven approach, that gives communities across the region the ability to harness information and address unsustainable aquatic wild meat takes.

4. The Action Plan has been developed through a series of four online workshops addressing each theme and a final face-to-face workshop to build consensus on the whole.
5. The process used a strawman of the Action Plan developed by members of the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group (AWM Working Group) to support CMS Party Range States through these Action Plan negotiations.

Vision

To make tangible progress towards the sustainable management of aquatic wild meat harvesting across West Africa and to secure a positive conservation status for all impacted CMS-listed species.

Theme 1: Reflecting on known science and identifying scientific gaps

Aquatic species, including mammals, reptiles, elasmobranch fish, and aquatic birds, are regularly taken in marine, coastal, and riverine ecosystems. Aquatic wild meat harvest and consumption from these ecosystems is widespread. Research and its accessibility should be directed to support both Range States and communities to address unsustainable aquatic wild meat takes.

5-year theme goal: **To make known science readily available to range states across West Africa and foster the collection of information to fill the scientific knowledge gaps**

| Action | Activities | Responsibility | Time frame | Resources needed |
|--|--|---|------------|--|
| 1. Consolidate known science of aquatic wild meat harvest impact to CMS-listed species | 1.1. Create one-page scientific briefings of known science, by country, with links to published material and in the appropriate language for each country. | CMS Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group (AWM Working Group) | 2024 | Desktop research and writing time |
| | 1.2. Circulate the completed one-page scientific briefings to all Action Plan Range States. | CMS Secretariat | 2024 | Internal Secretariat time |
| 2. Identify and address gaps in scientific knowledge | 2.1. Fund and secure a regional coordinator to support the CMS Focal Points with Action Plan delivery. | Donor agencies and West African CMS Focal Points | 2024 | Salary and support costs (office, travel etc) |
| | 2.2. Assess the known science against known species distribution in each Range State and identify scientific knowledge gaps. | West African Focal Points of CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO | 2024-2026 | Internal agency time |
| | 2.3. Identify and approach key scientific institutions and conduct fundraising with them to promote their Action Plan support by conducting key research projects on pressing information gaps such as: a) socio-cultural aspects of harvesting and consuming aquatic wild meat, including the role of taboos systems; b) nutritional roles aquatic wild meat provides; c) quantitative assessments of consumption and trade in aquatic wild meat to better understand demand and trade pathways; d) ecological sustainability of current harvests, and the population parameters, | AWM Working Group | 2024 | Internal Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group (AWM WG) time to both support fundraising efforts and secure scientific commitment to begin research activities |

processes, and science-based management strategies needed to overcome problems, especially in the face of climate change impacts on habitats;
 e) the design and testing of fishing methods to minimise and ultimately eliminate bycatch mortality;
 f) use of aquatic wild meat as bait for other commercial fisheries and the possibility of using alternative baits that can be derived sustainably; and
 g) migration routes for aquatic megafauna with a view to better understanding the role of immigration and emigration in populations being used for aquatic wild meat.

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| <p>2.3. Encourage the establishment and expansion of a networks of appropriate experts and local actors with important information, specifically but not limited to within the CMS Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group and the Abidjan Aquatic Wildlife Network (working closely with other important networks in West Africa) to support Range States with the delivery of the Action Plan.</p> | <p>AWM Working Group</p> | <p>2024-2029</p> | <p>Internal AWM Working Group time</p> |
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Theme 2: Understanding drivers and pressures for aquatic wild meat harvest

Understanding the drivers and pressures for aquatic wild meat takes across the region and within communities is crucial for designing mitigation programmes. Information to deepen that information should be gathered and circulated.

5-year theme goal: **To develop a deeper understand of the drivers and pressures for aquatic wild meat harvest to better inform solutions**

| Action | Activities | Responsibility | Time frame | Resources needed |
|--|---|---|------------|-----------------------------------|
| 3. Better understand the root causes for | 3.1. Create a fact sheet relevant to regions across West Africa of the importance of aquatic wild meat as a local food with species | Research institutions, NGOs, and Gov agencies in charge, with the | 2025 | Desktop research and writing time |

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| AWM over exploitation in the region | <p>preferences for some countries, with an emphasis on protected species and species most affected, establishing the situation on the ground to support and enable relevant authorities to take action</p> | support of the AWM WG | | |
| | 3.2. Research and publish the relationship between supply, demand, and the benefit of aquatic illegal wild meat harvesting | AWM Working Group closely involving West African research institutions | 2025 | Desktop research and writing time, funding for field data collection and translation |
| | 3.3. Research and publish (in French and English) a better understanding of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) and small-scale fishing fleets fishing in the region by distant water fleets in relation with to food security, and where this information is not available to highlight the need to gather this data | AWM Working Group closely involving West African research institutions | 2025/2026 | Desktop research and writing time, funding for field data collection and translation |
| | 3.4. Create a one-page summary on the vulnerability of the region aquatic ecosystems to the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss | AWM Working Group in collaboration with CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points in each country (collating the entire body of knowledge) | 2025 | Desktop research writing, and translation time |
| 4. Better understand the social, political and institutional drivers for illegal AWM harvesting in the region | 4.1. Create a one-page summary, per country, of the socio-ecological systems across the region with focus on traditional wildlife management and governance | CMS Focal Points with the support of civil society and research institutions | 2026 | Funding for complimentary data collection Desktop research, writing, and translation time |
| | 4.2. Create a one-page summary of the demographic trends as consequence of human population growth and internal human migrations | CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points with the support of civil society and research institutions | 2026 | Funding for complimentary data collection Desktop research, writing, and translation time |

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| 5. Disseminate core information to policy makers, fisheries agencies, and wildlife managers across the region | 5.1 Develop a strategy for the dissemination of the information generated as part of actions 1, 2, 3, and 4 (local, regional, national etc) | AWM Working Group collaboration with CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points | 2024 | Funding for regional resourcing of the strategy (for both the AWM WG and also national Focal Points) |
| | 5.2 Develop a fundraising strategy to support the dissemination strategy, targeting and working with donors and funders (GEF, African Union Bank etc) and coordinate with relevant regional strategies (such as the ECOWAS West African Strategy for Wildlife Crime) | CMS Secretariat in collaboration with the ECOWAS Secretariat | 2024 | Funding for regional resourcing of the strategy (for both the AWM WG and also national Focal Points) |
| | 5.3 Gather the summary and published information generated as part of actions 1, 2, 3, and 4, summarise into appropriate formats for different audiences and distribute to national fisheries and wildlife institutions across the region (as defined in the strategy @5.1). Generate funding proposals to support the Focal Points to increase regional capacity | AWM Working Group in collaboration with CMS Focal Points and other institutions and actors (NGOs etc) to be determined in the strategy itself | 2025-26 | Funding for regional resourcing of the strategy (for both the AWM WG and also national Focal Points) |

Theme 3: Understanding the intersection between fisheries and environment (domestic and international) and creating stronger linkages

Aquatic wild meat has often been overlooked because it has not been understood to be either the mandate of fisheries or environment, yet it is both. The complexities of fisheries drivers in particular make it critical that deeper understanding of both the region’s aquatic faunal biodiversity as well as the inconsistencies of management are developed across agencies.

5-year theme goal: **To develop a deeper understand of the region’s importance in the world, address the inconsistencies of management, and the opportunities for synergies and better management**

| Action | Activities | Responsibility | Time frame | Resources needed |
|---|--|---|------------|--|
| 6. Assess the regional potential to address global aquatic faunal biodiversity loss | 6.1. Drawing on the information provided in actions 1 and 5, research further and create a three-page summary of the richness of the aquatic faunal biodiversity and fish stocks, the importance of both elements for food security and economic stability, and the role West African's aquatic ecosystems play in a broader ecological context, while also making important linkages to international conventions (CITES, CBD, etc) | AWM Working Group and regional research and academic institutions, as well as technical institutions in charge of management of aquatic faunal biodiversity and fisheries | 2025 | Desktop research and writing time |
| | 6.2. Create a one-page summary of different international, regional and domestic agencies, and relevant NGOs, with focus on environment (ECOWAS, AU, ADB, FAO etc), and identify inconsistencies | AWM Working Group in collaboration with CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points | 2024 | Desktop research and writing time |
| | 6.3. Create a one-page summary of the international, regional, and domestic agency opportunities to better address illegal AWM harvesting | AWM Working Group collaboration with CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points | 2024 | Desktop research and writing time |
| 7. Understand the capacity of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) to combat illegal AWM harvesting | 7.1. Create a one-page fact sheet of the mandates of CITES, CMS, and the Abidjan Conventions, and the roles of Parties and observers to create a strong signal with effective details for agency action | AWM Working Group and CMS, CITES, ABC Focal Points | 2024 | Desktop research and writing time |
| 8. Expand the action plan to reflect the intersections and opportunities | 8.1. Meet as a region, as an online meeting, to explore opportunities for synergies between agencies and expand the action plan accordingly | West African Focal Points of CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN and FAO | 2026 | Internal agency time + internal access |

Theme 4: Fostering community-driven solutions and building laws and enforcement where needed

[insert summary of this theme, as one short paragraph, once the action plan is negotiated and finalised]

5-year theme goal: **To foster community-driven solutions, while also building laws and enforcement capacity where needed**

| Action | Activities | Responsibility | Time frame | Resources needed |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|------------|---|
| 9. Foster community-driven solutions | 9.1. Identify, document and publish good practice examples of community-driven led species conservation and appropriate aquatic wild meat management from across the region to use as a tool for awareness raising (policy makers and community) | AWM Working Group in collaboration with West African Focal Points of CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO | 2025 | Internal agency time + internal access |
| | 9.2. Meet with these communities to find common learnings and solutions that can be applied elsewhere | AWM Working Group in collaboration with West African Focal Points of CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO | 2026 | Field costs (travel and workshops) Internal agency time + internal access |
| | 9.3. Repackage the information generated in actions 1, 5, and 6, and translate into appropriate local languages | AWM Working Group in collaboration with West African Focal Points of CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO, local NGOs, civil society, and universities | 2026 | Internal agency time + internal access Translation costs |
| | 9.4. Develop and implement a dedicated programme to disseminate these common learnings to other communities, fostering the wider uptake of community-driven solutions (including through community radios, brochures etc) and facilitating exchange trips between communities | AWM Working Group in collaboration with West African Focal Points of CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO, local NGOs, civil society | 2027 | Ground costs associated with disseminating the information to communities Internal agency time + internal access |
| 10. Increase the level of political | 10.1. Drawing on existing international and regional | West African Focal Points of CMS, | 2027 | Ground costs, consultants, |

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| commitment to prevent, combat, and eradicate illegal AWM harvesting | strategies, establish and carry out a comprehensive AWM anti-poaching strategy within each country, focused on engagement with communities | CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO, supported by the AWM Working Group | | workshops etc Internal agency time + internal access |
| | 10.2. Develop a regional plan and tools that strengthen and support national institutional capacity for efficient and effective enforcement and monitoring of illegal AWM harvesting | West African Focal Points of CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO, supported by the AWM Working Group | 2027 | Ground costs, workshops etc Internal agency time + internal access |
| | 10.3. Create a synergy of action to support the states to achieve the CBD 30x30 objectives of protected areas and appropriate community conservation governance in the region with involvement of local communities, taking into account socioeconomic and ecological aspects as well as participatory governance | West African Focal Points of CMS, CBD, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO and associated national committees | 2027 | Ground costs, workshops etc Internal agency time + internal access |

Theme 5: [TBD]

[insert summary of this theme, as one short paragraph, once the action plan is negotiated and finalised]

5 year theme goal: [TBD]

[NOTE: Actions 11 and 12 to be discussed in detail at the face-to-face meeting]

| Action | Activities | Responsibility | Time frame | Resources needed |
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| 11. [TBD] | 11.1. Increase capacity, information, advocacy and public awareness of different community groups at local level | West African Focal Points of CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO | 2027 | Internal agency time + internal access |
| | 11.2 Develop an environmental education and communication (EEC) programme to promote positive changes in attitudes and behaviour to reduce aquatic wild meat harvesting | [TBD] | [TBD] | [TBD] |
| 12. [TBD] | 12.1 Map donors with convergent geographic and thematic interests for | [TBD] | [TBD] | [TBD] |

| Action | Activities | Responsibility | Time frame | Resources needed |
|--------|--|----------------|------------|------------------|
| | conservation of aquatic wild meat species | | | |
| | 12.2 Create fundraising database | [TBD] | [TBD] | [TBD] |
| | 12.3 Establish institutional mechanisms for sustainable fundraising and management of acquired funds | [TBD] | [TBD] | [TBD] |
| | 12.4 Engage donors to promote the strategy and seek funds | [TBD] | [TBD] | [TBD] |