

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE WORKING GROUP ON
AQUATIC WILD MEAT**

(as approved by COP15)

Background

CMS COP12 (2017) first adopted [Resolution 12.15 Aquatic Wild Meat](#), which established the thematic Working Group on Aquatic Wild Meat to provide expert advice to CMS Parties, to collaborate with relevant organizations such as the International Whaling Commission (IWC), and to coordinate science and policy participation with the relevant Memoranda of Understanding and Agreements concluded under CMS. COP14 (2024) adopted [Resolution 14.15 Action Plan to Address Aquatic Wild Meat Harvests in West Africa](#), the implementation of which is also supported by the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group.

Purpose

- A. The primary objective of the Working Group is to support the delivery of relevant tasks contained in the Programme of Work of the Sessional Committee.
- B. In addition, the Working Group will support the implementation of relevant Resolutions and Decisions directed to the Scientific Council.
- C. The Working Group will support the implementation of take-related goals and targets within the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024–2032, as well as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the further development of its monitoring framework.
- D. The Working Group will provide a platform to discuss and exchange information and scientific findings on aquatic wild meat-related matters. Mandates will be given through Decisions at each COP.
- E. The Working Group will also support Parties that are Range States to the Action Plan to Address Aquatic Wild Meat Harvests in West Africa with implementation and reporting.
- F. The Working Group will make efforts to coordinate with the Working Group on Illegal and Unsustainable Taking of Wildlife, and provide input to their work, as appropriate and necessary.
- G. The Working Group will also, as capacity allows:
 - a. support studies of the human dimensions of aquatic wild meat use, which are critical for designing effective conservation and management programmes that favour sustainable over unsustainable uses, including:
 - i. contemporary and historical socio-cultural aspects of harvesting and consuming aquatic wild meat, including the role of taboo systems, to provide insights or management measures that can be respectful of the cultural practices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities;
 - ii. the drivers of the harvest and consumption of aquatic wild meat;

- iii. the nutritional roles aquatic wild meat provides, the strengths and weaknesses of alternatives, and the health risks from both;
- iv. food security and safety of aquatic wild meat use;
- v. increased quantitative assessments of consumption and trade in aquatic wild meat to better understand demand and trade pathways;
- vi. increased efforts to assess the efficacy of existing legislation with regard to specific aquatic wild meat uses, and the degree to which enforcement capacity alone can address unsustainable aquatic wild meat harvests;
- vii. implementation of environmental education programmes to raise awareness of the importance and benefits of migratory megafauna and laws concerning them;
- viii. analysis of the extent of discard cases and their impact on the availability of aquatic wild meat;
- b. review, compile and, if necessary, help refine methods to evaluate the impact of trade in aquatic wild meat on wildlife populations;
- c. encourage the establishment of networks of appropriate experts to foster collaborative efforts to develop regional action plans for reducing unsustainable aquatic wild meat harvests;
- d. seek to improve consideration of community-led conservation, traditional knowledge complementing modern approaches, and strengthening the leadership of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in its work, including through collaboration with IPBES and IUCN; and
- e. ensure dissemination of information on its work on aquatic wild meat and the resulting recommendations by:
 - i. sharing information with the IWC and participating in future Small Cetacean Subcommittee meetings with a focus on aquatic wild meat;
 - ii. continuing to provide advice to the CMS Secretariat to input to the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management;
 - iii. extending collaboration to include COMFAUNA, CIMFAUNA, the Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme, and the WILDMEAT Project;
 - iv. supporting efforts for coordination between CMS and CITES for improved regulation and sustainable management of trade in aquatic wild meat species;
 - v. drawing relevant scientific publications about aquatic wild meat harvests to the attention of the Scientific Council.

Membership

- A. Membership of the Working Group is open to members of the Scientific Council and external experts, including from observer organizations.
- B. The Working Group strives to maintain a balance of gender, regional representation and areas of expertise.
- C. The involvement of Working Group members is entirely on a voluntarily basis.
- D. If and when needed, experts external to the Working Group and interested in contributing to its objectives may occasionally be invited to join meetings or to support specific tasks.

Organization of Work

- A. The Working Group will elect a Chair from among its members and will operate by seeking consensus among the Group. If not a member of the Scientific Council, the Chair will be supported by the COP-appointed Councillor for Bycatch to ensure close alignment with the Scientific Council's work and procedures. If the Chair has to leave her/his position, a new Chair will be appointed from among its members.
- B. The Working Group will predominantly operate electronically by communicating via a dedicated workspace in MS Teams, and email if needed. Meetings (in-person or virtual) will be held as required, depending on funding.
- C. The Chair of the Working Group will report on progress to the Sessional Committee.
- D. The CMS Secretariat will support and facilitate the coordination of the activities and the organization of meetings of the Working Group.

Duration

The Working Group will remain in place until the Sessional Committee decides that its work is complete or an alternative arrangement is made.