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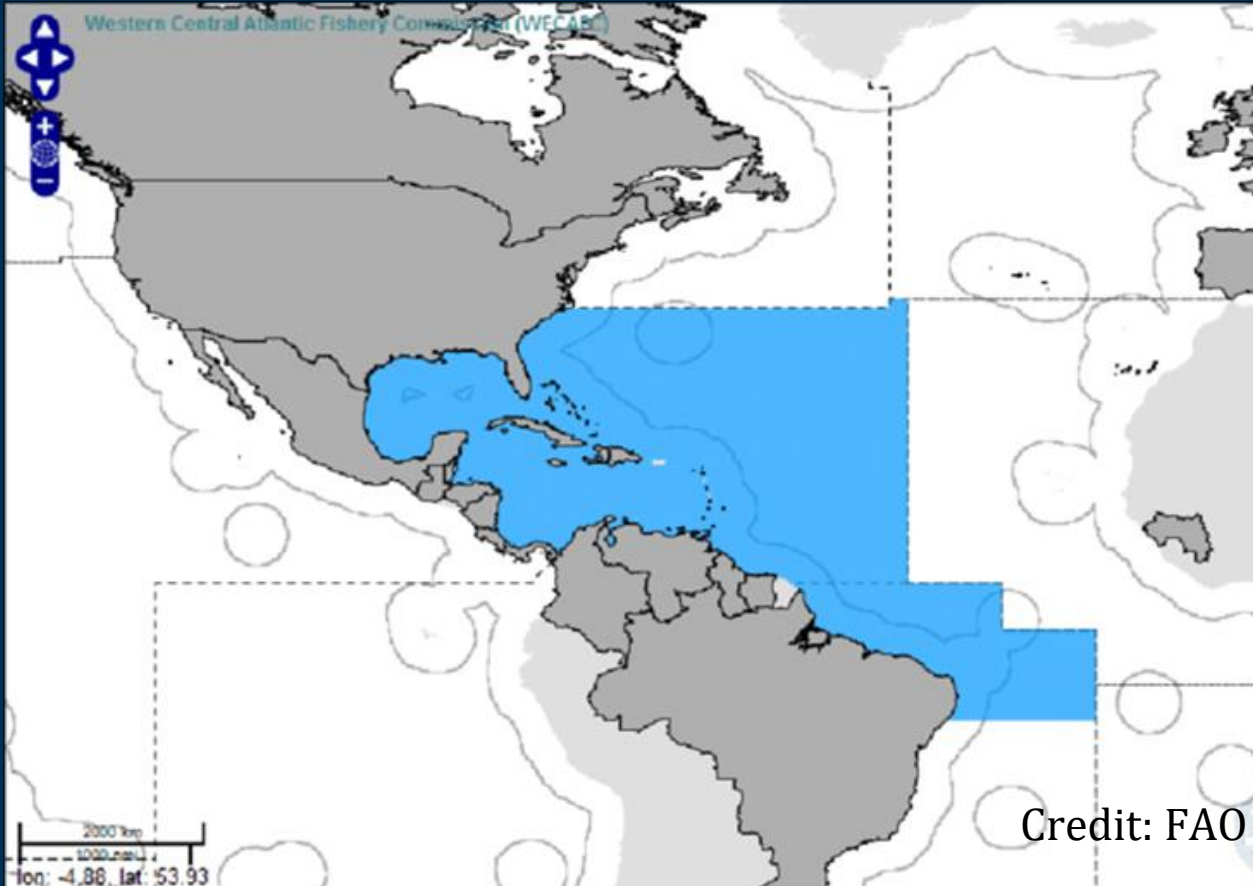
WECAFC Updates: Outcomes of the Flyingfish-Dolphinfish and Spawning Aggregations Working Group Meetings

**Caribbean Fishery Management Council Meeting
December 4-5, 2024**

Laura Cimo

NOAA Fisheries Office of International Affairs, Trade, and Commerce

Overview - WECAFC



- Regional fisheries body
- Acts in advisory capacity for conservation and management of all living marine resources in the Wider Caribbean
- Comprised of 34 Members, including USA

Overview: WECAFC Working Groups



- Anchored Fish Aggregating Device Fisheries
- Caribbean Spiny Lobster
- Deep-Sea Fisheries
- Flying fish-Dolphinfish
- IUU Fishing
- Queen Conch
- Recreational Fisheries
- Regional Fisheries Data and Statistics
- Shark Conservation and Management
- Shrimp and Ground Fish (Brazil-Guianas Shelf)
- Spawning Aggregations



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WECAFC Working Group Meetings



CFMC hosted two back-to-back meetings in San Juan, Puerto Rico:

- **June 4 -5, 2024: Flyingfish-Dolphinfish Working Group (hybrid)**
- **June 6-7, 2024: Spawning Aggregations Working Group (virtual)**



Flyingfish Dolphinfish Working Group



- Broad representation with more than 50 participants
- Presentations on fisheries, management approaches, and challenges
 - Influence of Sargassum influxes on dolphinfish availability noted
 - Called for increase in data collection and genetic studies to improve our understanding of stock dynamics, stock structure, and status of dolphinfish
- Agreed on step-wise approach towards a regional stock assessment on dolphinfish to identify data needs and work collaboratively to fill these gaps
- Recommended dolphinfish (and wahoo) be prioritized for data collection
- Supported development of an outline of a regional fishery management plan
- Developed Terms of Reference and Work Plan for 2024-2025

Spawning Aggregation Working Group



- **Member countries and subregional organizations provided updates on the status, management, challenges, and opportunities for spawning aggregations**
- **Received updates on pilot projects in Belize, Cuba, and Bahamas aimed at:**
 - 1. Compiling fishery-dependent, fishery independent, socio-economic and trade information related to fish spawning aggregations**
 - 2. Achieving regional harmonization of data collection protocols, and incorporating compiled information into long-term regional databases**
 - 3. Launching a digital communications hub as a multimedia repository for education and capacity building resources**



Mutton snapper. Credit: Christopher Parsons

Spawning Aggregation Working Group



- Received updates and expressed support for continuation of the “Big Fish” Regional Communications Strategy and its Digital Hub
- Discussed non-extractive uses of fish spawning aggregations
- Reviewed WECAFC members’ efforts to achieve the objectives of the *Regional Fish Spawning Aggregation Fishery Management Plan* focused on Nassau grouper and mutton snapper and agreed on actions to advance implementation
- Updated its Work Plan for 2024-2025
- Emphasized the need to engage fishers in monitoring of fish spawning aggregations and educate the public of the importance of these resources



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Other WECAFC Updates



- **Work Plans, Terms of Reference, and recommendations of the WECAFC Working Groups will be reviewed at the next biennial Commission meeting**
- **Next Commission meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place in summer 2025 in Jamaica**
- **Plans for next Preparatory Conference on WECAFC's strategic reorientation are still pending**
- **NOAA Fisheries will continue to share updates and developments**

Thank you for your attention!



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