



Workshop Press Release [re-draft]

Bridgetown, Barbados, 9 December 2024 (CRFM) — Leaders in the fisheries sectors of Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Panama have greatly sustainable fisheries livelihoods and development in their countries. They met in Barbados on 10-11 December to build capacity for implementing the globally adopted Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines) in their countries.

Through the regional Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO) and national fisherfolk groups, the women and men who work in fisheries will be better equipped to enhance the contributions of their fisheries to social and economic development in six countries. This is an outcome of a fisheries value chain workshop convened under the project on *Promoting National Blue Economy Priorities Through Marine Spatial Planning in the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Plus* (BE-CLME+ Project) being executed by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM).

In opening the workshop, Dr Shelly-Ann Cox, Chief Fisheries Officer of Barbados, highlighted the important role of well-informed fishing industry leaders and engaged fisherfolk organisations in forging the path towards regional fisheries sustainability through new and innovative public-private partnerships and entrepreneurship. Dr Cox applauded Caribbean creativity in crafting innovative seafood opportunities ranging from responsible fishing methods through commercial value-added products digitally marketed on a global scale. Such regional adaptation is critical in a changing climate with frequent economic shocks.

Dr Alicia Gallardo, representing the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations as a co-implementing project partner along with the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF), congratulated the CRFM on the initiative. She noted that the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines and Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy are two of the most important guides for achieving sustainable fisheries in the Member States of the CRFM. Workshop participants were encouraged to lead the way in the regional implementation of both fisheries instruments.

Participants addressed issues and opportunities such as responsible fisheries, gender, governance, decent work, infrastructure, climate and disasters, product development, and market dynamics. They see a strong seafood sector in their vision for the region, with the societal benefits of small-scale fisheries being increasingly recognised as an integral component of development and well-being, on par with other aspects of our growing and diverse blue economies.

Dr Dayne Buddo, Regional Project Coordinator of the BE-CLME+ project, acknowledged the funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and project co-financing partners. Along with the Chairman and Administrative Officer of the CNFO, Mr Devon Stephen and Ms Nadine Nembhard respectively, he noted that the workshop presented new opportunities for fisherfolk in regional fisheries management, including networking with Spanish-speaking colleagues such as those from Panama. CNFO representatives said that the workshop further strengthened the scope and capacity of their Leadership Institute's programme of work that serves fisherfolk futures in all CRFM Member States.

ABOUT THE CRFM:

The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) was officially inaugurated on 27 March 2003 in Belize City, Belize, where it is headquartered, following the signing of the Agreement Establishing the CRFM on 4 February 2002. It is an inter-governmental organization whose mission is to promote and facilitate the responsible utilization of the region's fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future population of the region.