**Annex 3**

ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS AQUATIC WILD MEAT HARVESTS IN WEST AFRICA

*[The following first draft of the Action Plan has been developed by members of the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group to support CMS Party Range States through these action plan negotiations.]*

Background

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. Wild meat, including aquatic wild meat consumption is widespread, in some places some wild meat harvests have been sustained for millennia, serving as an important source of nutrition, income, and cultural identity to 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 to these harvests across the region, and where possible take steps towards sustainable management of the activities. In some cases, this will require significant changes in community behaviour. In other cases, communities can provide direction for forward management that both respect local traditions and sustains important aquatic species and their habitats.
3. The Action Plan is divided into four themes:
   1. Reflecting on known science and identifying scientific gaps
   2. Understanding drivers and pressures (distant water fleets, internal migrations, ecosystem decline) and forming solutions
   3. Understanding the intersection between fisheries and environment (domestic and international) and creating stronger linkages
   4. Fostering community-driven solutions and building laws and enforcement where needed
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.

### Vision

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

### Theme 1:

### Reflecting on known science and identifying scientific gaps

1. [insert summary of this theme, as one short paragraph, once the action plan is negotiated and finalised]
2. 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**

| 1. Action | 1. Activities | 1. Responsibility | 1. Time frame | 1. Resources needed |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. 1. Consolidate known science of aquatic wild meat harvest impact to CMS-listed species | 1. 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. | 1. [TBD] | 1. 2024 | 1. Research and writing time |
| 1. 1.2. Distribute the one-page scientific briefings available to all action plan range states. | 1. CMS Secretariat | 1. 2024 | 1. Secretariat staff time |
| 1. 2. Identify and address gaps in scientific knowledge | 1. 2.1. Assess the known science against known species distribution in each range state and identify scientific knowledge gaps. | 1. Governments | 1. 2024-2026 | 1. Staff time |
| 1. 2.2. Identify and approach key scientific institutions to promote their Action Plan support by conducting key research projects on pressing information gaps such as: 2. socio-cultural aspects of harvesting and consuming aquatic wild meat, including the role of taboo systems; 3. nutritional roles aquatic wild meat provides; 4. quantitative assessments of consumption and trade in aquatic wild meat to better understand demand and trade pathways; 5. ecological sustainability of current harvests, and the population parameters, processes, and science-based management strategies needed to overcome problems, especially in the face of climate change impacts on habitats; 6. the design and testing of fishing methods to minimise and ultimately eliminate bycatch mortality; 7. use of aquatic wild meat as bait for other commercial fisheries and the possibility of using alternative baits that can be derived sustainably; and 8. 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. | 1. CMS Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group (AWMWG) | 1. 2024 | 1. Internal AWMWG time |
| 1. 2.3. Encourage the establishment of a network of appropriate experts within the CMS Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group to support Range States with the delivery of the Action Plan. | 1. AWMWG | 1. 2024-2029 | 1. Internal AWMWG time |

### Theme 2:

### Understanding drivers and pressures for aquatic wild meat harvest

1. [insert summary of this theme, as one short paragraph, once the action plan is negotiated and finalised]
2. 5-year theme goal: **To develop a deeper understanding of the drivers and pressures for aquatic wild meat harvest to better inform solutions**

| 1. Action | 1. Activities | 1. Responsibility | 1. Time frame | 1. Resources needed |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. 3. Better understand the root causes for AWM over exploitation in the region | 1. 3.1. Create a one-page summary of the importance of aquatic wild meat as a local food source in the region with species preferences for some countries | 1. [TBD] | 1. 2025 | 1. Research and writing time |
| 1. 3.2. Research and publish on the relationship between supply, demand, and the benefit of aquatic illegal wild meat harvesting | AWMWG | 1. 2025 | 1. Research and writing time |
| 1. 3.3. Research and publish on a better understanding of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the region by distant water fleets in relation with food security | AWMWG | 1. 2025 | 1. Research and writing time |
| 1. 3.4. Create a one-page summary on the vulnerability of the region’s aquatic ecosystems to the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss | 1. [TBD] | 1. 2025 | 1. Research and writing time |
| 1. 4. Better understand the social, political and institutional drivers for illegal AWM harvesting in the region | 1. 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 | 1. [TBD] | 1. 2024 | 1. Research and writing time |
| 1. 4.2. Create a one-page summary of demographic trends as consequence of human population growth and internal human migrations | 1. [TBD] | 1. 2024 | 1. Research and writing time |
| 5. Disseminate core information to policy makers, fisheries agencies, and wildlife managers across the region | 1. 5.1 Gather the summary and published information generated as part of actions 1, 2, 3, and 4, and translate and distribute it across the region | 1. [TBD] | 1. 2025 | 1. Research and writing time |

### Theme 3:

### Understanding the intersection between fisheries and environment (domestic and international) and creating stronger linkages

1. [insert summary of this theme, as one short paragraph, once the action plan is negotiated and finalised]
2. 5-year theme goal: **To develop a deeper understand of the global importance of the region’s fisheries, address the inconsistencies of management, and the opportunities for synergies and better management**

| 1. Action | 1. Activities | 1. Responsibility | 1. Time frame | 1. Resources needed |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. 6. Assess the region potential to address global biodiversity loss | 1. 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 region’s biodiversity and fish stocks, the importance of both elements for food security and economic stability, and the role West Africa’s aquatic ecosystems play in a broader ecological context | 1. [TBD] | 1. 2026 | 1. Research and writing time |
| 1. 6.2. Create a one-page summary of different regional agencies with focus on environment (ECOWAS, AU, ADB, FAO etc) and identify inconsistencies | 1. [TBD] | 1. 2026 | 1. Research and writing time |
| 1. 6.3. Create a one-page summary of the regional and domestic agencies opportunity to better address illegal AWM harvesting | 1. [TBD] | 1. 2026 | 1. Research and writing time |
| 1. 7. Understand the capacity of Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) to combat illegal AWM harvesting | 1. 7.1. Create a one-page summary of the mandates of CITES, CMS and the AbC and the roles of Parties and observers | 1. [TBD] | 1. 2026 | 1. Research and writing time |
| 8. Expand the action plan to reflect the intersections and opportunities | 1. 8.1. Meet as a region, to explore opportunities for synergies between agencies and expand the action plan accordingly | 1. Governments | 1. 2027 | 1. Staff time + internal access |

### Theme 4:

### Fostering community-driven solutions and building laws and enforcement where needed

1. [insert summary of this theme, as one short paragraph, once the action plan is negotiated and finalised]
2. 5-year theme goal: **To foster community-driven solutions, while also building laws and enforcement capacity where needed**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Action | 1. Activities | 1. Responsibility | 1. Time frame | 1. Resources needed |
| 1. 8. Foster community-driven solutions | 1. 8.1. Seek examples of community-driven species conservation and appropriate aquatic wild meat management from across the region | 1. Governments | 1. 2027 | 1. Staff time + internal access |
|  | 1. 8.2. Meet with these communities to find lessons-learnt and solutions that can be applied elsewhere | 1. Governments | 1. 2027 | 1. Staff time + internal access |
|  | 1. 8.3. Repackage the information generated in actions 1, 5, and 6, and translate into appropriate local languages | 1. Governments | 1. 2027 | 1. Staff time + internal access |
|  | 1. 8.4. Develop an intentional programme to disseminate these lessons-learnt to other communities, fostering the wider uptake of community-driven solutions | 1. Governments | 1. 2027 | 1. Staff time + internal access |
| 1. 9. Increase the level of political commitment to prevent, combat, and eradicate illegal AWM harvesting | 1. 9.1. Establish and carry out a comprehensive AWM anti-poaching strategy within each country and as a region | 1. Governments | 1. 2027 | 1. Staff time + internal access |
| 1. 9.2. Develop a regional plan and strengthen national institutional capacity for efficient and effective enforcement and monitoring of illegal AWM harvesting | 1. Governments | 1. 2027 | 1. Staff time + internal access |
| 1. 9.3. Increase protected areas in the region with involvement of local communities | 1. Governments | 1. 2027 | 1. Staff time + internal access |
| 1. 10. Launch a comprehensive education and communication programme to effectively engage communities in anti-poaching efforts at local and regional levels | 1. 10.1. Increase capacity, information, advocacy and public awareness of different community groups at local level | 1. Governments | 1. 2027 | 1. Staff time + internal access |
| 1. 10.2. [insert] |  |  |  |
| 1. 10.3. [insert] |  |  |  |