

Doc 03, Rev2: Draft Action Plan to Address Aquatic Wild Meat Harvests in West Africa

1 (Prepared by the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group)

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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. Wild meat, including aquatic wild meat 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. Through the generous hosting by the Government of Benin, with funding from the Government of Germany, and expert Chairmanship of Professor Alfred Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana), this [Draft] 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 [Draft] Action Plan is segmented into four 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; and
 - d) Fostering community-driven solutions and building laws and enforcement where needed.

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 [Draft] Action Plan [will be/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 following straw-man of the Action Plan ~~has been~~ developed by members of the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group (~~AWM Working Group~~) to support CMS Party Range States through these ~~a~~ Action pPlan negotiations.

Vision

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

Theme 1: Reflecting on known science and identifying scientific gaps

4 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.

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6 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**

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8	Action	9	Activities	10	Respons	11	Time	12	Resour
				ibility		frame		ces	needed
13	1.	14	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.	15	<u>CMS Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group (AWM Working Group)</u>	16	2024	17	<u>Deskto p research and writing time</u>
	Consolidate known science of aquatic wild meat harvest impact to CMS-listed species	18	1.2. Create <u>Circulate the completed</u> one-page scientific briefings available to all Action Plan Range States.	19	CMS Secretariat	20	2024	21	Internal Secretariat time
22	2.	23	<u>2.1. Fund and secure a regional coordinator to support the CMS Focal Points with Action Plan delivery.</u>	24	<u>Donor agencies and West African CMS Focal Points</u>	25	<u>2024</u>	26	<u>Salary and support costs (office, travel etc)</u>
	Identify and address gaps in scientific knowledge	27	<u>2.2. Assess the known science against known species distribution in each Range State and identify scientific knowledge gaps.</u>	28	<u>CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points</u>	29	2024-2026	30	Internal agency time

<p>31 2.3. Identify and approach key scientific institutions <u>and conduct fundraising with them to promote their Action Plan support by conducting key research projects on pressing information gaps such as:</u></p> <p>32 a) socio-cultural aspects of harvesting and consuming aquatic wild meat, including the role of taboos systems;</p> <p>33 b) nutritional roles aquatic wild meat provides;</p> <p>34 c) quantitative assessments of consumption and trade in aquatic wild meat to better understand demand and trade pathways;</p> <p>35 d) 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;</p> <p>36 e) the design and testing of fishing methods to minimise and ultimately eliminate bycatch mortality;</p> <p>37 f) use of aquatic wild meat as bait for other commercial fisheries and the</p>	<p>39 <u>AWM Working Group</u></p>	<p>40</p>	<p>2024</p>	<p>41 Internal Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group (<u>AWM WG</u>) <u>time to both support fundraising efforts and secure scientific commitment to begin research activities</u></p>
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possibility of using alternative baits that can be derived sustainably; and
38 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.

42 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.

43 ~~CMS Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group AWM Working Group~~

44 2024-2029

45 Internal Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group AWM Working Grouptime

Theme 2: Understanding drivers and pressures for aquatic wild meat harvest

46 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.

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48 5 year theme goal: **To develop a deeper understand of the drivers and pressures for aquatic wild meat harvest to better inform solutions**

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50	Action	51	Activities	52	Responsibility	53	Time frame	54	Resources needed
55	3. Better understand the	56	3.1. Create one page <u>summary a fact sheet relevant to regions across West Africa</u>	57	<u>Research institutions, NGOs, and Gov</u>	58	2025	59	<u>Desktop research and</u>

root causes for AWM over exploitation in the region	of the importance of aquatic wild meat as a local food source in the region with species preferences for some countries, <u>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</u>	<u>agencies in charge, with the support of the AWM WG</u>			writing time
60	3.2. Research and publish the relationship between supply, demand, and the benefit of aquatic illegal wild meat harvesting	<u>AWM Working Group closely involving West African research institutions</u>	61	2025	62 <u>Desktop research and writing time, funding for field data collection and translation</u>
63	3.3. Research and publish <u>(in French and English)</u> a better understanding of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) <u>and small-scale fishing fleets</u> fishing in the region by distant water fleets in relation <u>with to</u> food security, <u>and where this information is not available to highlight the need to gather this data</u>	<u>AWM Working Group closely involving West African research institutions</u>	64	2025/ 2026	<u>Desktop research and writing time, funding for field data collection and translation</u>
65	3.4. Create a one-page summary on the vulnerability of the region aquatic ecosystems to the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss	66 [TBA] <u>AWM Working Group in collaboration with CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points in each country</u>	67	2025	68 <u>Desktop research and writing, and translation time</u> 69

			<u>(collating the entire body of knowledge)</u>							
70	4.	71	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	72	[TBA]	73	2024	74	<u>Funding for complimentary data collection</u>	
Better understand the social, political and institutional drivers for illegal AWM harvesting in the region						6			75	<u>Desktop research and writing, and translation time</u>
		76	4.2. Create a one-page summary of the demographic trends as consequence of human population growth and internal human migrations	77	[TBA]	78	2024	79	<u>Funding for complimentary data collection</u>	
						6			80	<u>Desktop research, and writing, and translation time</u>
5. Disseminate core information to policy makers, fisheries agencies, and wildlife managers across the region		81	<u>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)</u>	83	[TBA]	87	2024	89	<u>Funding for regional resourcing of the strategy (for both the AWM WG and also national Focal Points) Research, and writing, time</u>	
		82		84	AWM Working Group collaboration with CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points	88				
				85						
				86						
		90	<u>5.2 Develop a fundraising strategy to support the dissemination strategy, targeting and working with donors and funders (GEF, African Union Bank etc) and</u>	91	<u>CMS Secretariat in collaboration with the ECOWAS</u>	92	2024	93	<u>Funding for regional resourcing of the strategy (for both the AWM WG and</u>	

coordinate with relevant regional strategies (such as the ECOWAS West African Strategy for Wildlife Crime)

Secretariat

also national Focal Points) Research, and writing, time

94 5.3 Gather the summary and published information generated as part of actions 1, 2, 3, and 4, ~~and translate it and 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

95 AWM Working Group in collaboration with CMS Focal Points and other institutions and actors (NGOs etc) to be determined in the strategy itself

96 20252 6 aiming for CMS COP probably in 2026

97 Funding for regional resourcing of the strategy (for both the AWM WG and also national Focal Points) Research, and writing, time

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

98 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.

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100 **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**

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102	Action	103	Activities	104	Responsibility	105	Time frame	106	Resources needed
107	6. Assess the regional potential to address global aquatic faunal	108	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 <u>aquatic faunal</u> biodiversity and fish	109	<u>[TBA] and regional research and academic institutions, as well as technical</u>	110	<u>2026 2025</u>	111	<u>Desktop research and writing time</u>

biodiversity loss	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, <u>while also making important linkages to international conventions (CITES, CBD, etc)</u>	<u>institutions in charge of management of aquatic faunal biodiversity and fisheries</u>			
	112 6.2. Create a one-page summary of different <u>international, regional and domestic agencies, and relevant NGOs,</u> with focus on environment (ECOWAS, AU, ADB, FAO etc), and identify inconsistencies	113 [TBA] <u>AWM Working Group in collaboration with CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points</u>	114	20264	115 <u>Desktop research and writing time</u>
	116 6.3. Create a one-page summary of the <u>international, regional, and domestic agency opportunities to better address illegal AWM harvesting</u>	117 [TBA] <u>AWM Working Group collaboration with CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points</u>	118 119	20264	120 <u>Desktop research and writing time</u>
121 7. Understand the capacity of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) to combat illegal AWM harvesting	122 7.1. Create a one-page <u>summary fact-sheet</u> of the mandates of CITES, CMS, and the Abidjan Conventions, and the roles of Parties and observers <u>to create a strong signal with effective details for agency action</u>	123 [TBA] <u>AWM Working Group and CMS, CITES, ABC Focal Points</u>	124	20264	125 <u>Desktop research and writing time</u>
8. Expand the action plan to reflect the intersections	126 8.1. Meet as a region, <u>electronically, as an online meeting,</u> to explore opportunities for synergies	127 West African Focal Points <u>CMS, CITES, ABC,</u>	128	20276	129 Internal agency time + internal access

and opportunities between agencies and expand the action plan accordingly Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points

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

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

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132 5 year theme goal: **To foster community-driven solutions, while also building laws and enforcement capacity where needed**

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134	Action	135	Activities	136	Responsibility	137	Time frame	138	Resources needed
139	8. Foster community-driven solutions	140	8.1. Seek examples of community-driven species conservation and appropriate aquatic wild meat management from across the region	141	West African <u>CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points</u>	142	2027	143	Internal agency time + internal access
144		145	8.2. Meet with these communities to find common learnings and solutions that can be applied elsewhere	146	West African <u>CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points</u>	147	2027	148	Internal agency time + internal access
149		150	8.3. Repackage the information generated in actions 1, 5, and 6, and translate into appropriate local languages	151	West African <u>CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points</u>	152	2027	153	Internal agency time + internal access
154		155	8.4. Develop an intentional programme to disseminate these common learnings to other communities, fostering the wider uptake of	156	West African <u>CMS, CITES, ABC, Ramsar, IUCN, and FAO Focal Points</u>	157	2027	158	Internal agency time + internal access

community-driven solutions

159	9.	160	9.1. Establish and carry out a comprehensive AWM anti-poaching strategy within each country and as a region	161	West African <u>CMS</u> , <u>CITES</u> , <u>ABC</u> , <u>Ramsar</u> , <u>IUCN</u> , and <u>FAO</u> Focal Points	162	2027	163	Internal agency time + internal access
		164	9.2. develop a regional plan and strengthen national institutional capacity for efficient and effective enforcement and monitoring of illegal AWM harvesting	165	West African <u>CMS</u> , <u>CITES</u> , <u>ABC</u> , <u>Ramsar</u> , <u>IUCN</u> , and <u>FAO</u> Focal Points	166	2027	167	Internal agency time + internal access
		168	9.3. Increase protected areas in the region with involvement of local communities	169	West African <u>CMS</u> , <u>CITES</u> , <u>ABC</u> , <u>Ramsar</u> , <u>IUCN</u> , and <u>FAO</u> Focal Points	170	2027	171	Internal agency time + internal access
172	10.	173	10.1. Increase capacity, information, advocacy and public awareness of different community groups at local level	174	West African <u>CMS</u> , <u>CITES</u> , <u>ABC</u> , <u>Ramsar</u> , <u>IUCN</u> , and <u>FAO</u> Focal Points	175	2027	176	Internal agency time + internal access
		177	10.2. [insert]	178		179		180	
		181	10.3. [insert]	182		183		184	
		185		186		187		188	