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Policy brief on

“Other effective area-based conservation measures” (OECMs)

The SIOFA Secretariat

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Abstract	<p>This paper presents a policy brief on Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). The OECM concept is in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (target 3) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in June 2023 (SDG 14.5).</p> <p>This document, written by Dr Amber Himes Cornel, explains what are OECMs, why they are important, and offer some steps to identify, assess and report OECMs fisheries.</p>

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OECM Policy brief

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Area-based management measures of all sectors can deliver outcomes that collectively align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the CBD 2050 Vision for Biodiversity and FAO's Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors. "Other effective area-based conservation measures" (OECMs) offer a novel opportunity for productive sectors to demonstrate their efforts in the mainstreaming of biodiversity.

Fisheries OECMs: An opportunity

Highlights

- Areas actively managed by fisheries authorities – but that provide net positive benefits for biodiversity – can potentially be aligned with national and international area-based biodiversity conservation targets.
- The OECM concept formally links spatial efforts by productive sector authorities to deliverables in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Target 3) and related efforts to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (SDG 14.5).
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supports the strengthening of this vital link between biodiversity and livelihoods, food security, and ecosystem services that underpin human well-being.
- FAO has produced a user-friendly Fisheries OECM Handbook providing straightforward steps for the evaluation of area-based fisheries management measures to determine whether areas meet the OECM criteria.

What are OECMs and why are they important?

In 2010, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) set a numerical target for protected area coverage across the planet as part of the Aichi Targets (Target 11). As part of this, the text of the target formally recognized that some area-based management tools (ABMTs) implemented outside of protected areas deliver important biodiversity outcomes. These areas were given the name "other effective area-based conservation measures" (OECMs) and it was agreed that such spatial conservation efforts should also be part of what is recognized in national and international area-based conservation targets.

In 2018, the CBD Conference of Parties (CBD COP) adopted the following definition of OECMs (CBD COP Decision 14/8):

a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained, long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and, where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values. (CBD, 2018b, para. 2)

Creating this additional category of area-based management beyond protected areas offers national governments, other stakeholders and rights holders (including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, IPLCs) a novel form of recognition, and responsibility, to account for sectoral management approaches that lead to positive biodiversity outcomes.

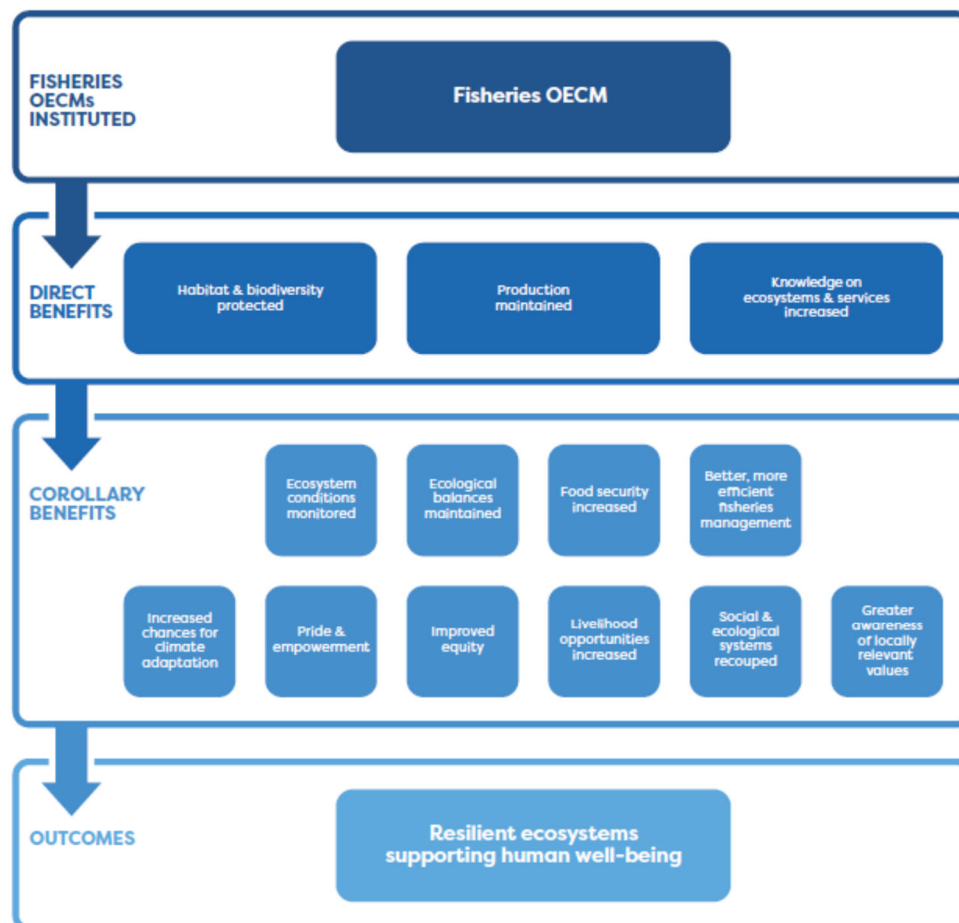
Fisheries OECMs: A sector-specific opportunity

Many fisheries ABMTs conform to the definition, criteria and guidance on OECMs developed by the CBD COP. In a fisheries context, OECMs are established, spatially defined management and/or conservation measures other than protected areas that produce positive, long-term and biodiversity outcomes *in situ*, in addition to the intended fishery outcomes. These sector-specific OECMs can be referred to as "Fisheries OECMs."

In addition to biodiversity outcomes, the very process of identifying and reporting Fisheries OECMs can result in benefits for the fisheries sector and for the broader mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation, including:

- achieving and recognizing contributions toward sustainability and environmental targets;
- opportunities to highlight and replicate fisheries management successes;
- opportunities to improve monitoring and management effectiveness;
- cooperation between sectors and between the fisheries and conservation communities; and,
- greater inclusion of fisheries sector perspectives in marine planning.

Furthermore, identifying and reporting Fisheries OECMs offers associated benefits for the resilience of socioecological systems and human well-being at the site level, in a country or region. These may include, for example, improved knowledge, adaptive capacity, management effectiveness, empowerment, and equity.



FAO Guidance Supports Identification, Assessment, and Reporting of Fisheries OECMs

Confusion over the type of fisheries ABMTs that may qualify as OECMs can be overcome with guidance and local consultation. FAO’s Fisheries and Aquaculture Division has produced initial guidance in the form of an OECM Handbook for marine fisheries (www.fao.org/3/cc3307en/cc3307en.pdf). The handbook provides guidance for OECM evaluation in marine fisheries. Additional products are forthcoming and will address more specific topics.

The Fisheries OECM Handbook highlights why fisheries agencies should take the time to recognize OECMs, and how the fisheries sector will benefit from the Fisheries OECM identification process. It describes key characteristics of Fisheries OECMs and outlines straightforward steps for the identification, evaluation, and reporting that fisheries management agencies and other government agencies and stakeholders can undertake, in four phases:

- **Launching:** Establish a simple evaluation pathway that suits the area’s governing authority.
- **Initial screening:** Fisheries management areas can initially be screened to determine whether they meet certain basic characteristics and identified as candidate Fisheries OECMs.

- **Full evaluation:** For those sites that emerge as candidate **Fisheries OECMs**, a subsequent full evaluation can support countries to determine which areas can be recognized and reported as **Fisheries OECMs**.
- **Reporting:** Fisheries ABMTs that align with the CBD definition and criteria can be reported to the CBD and World Database on OECMs as **Fisheries OECMs**, and counted toward global spatial targets.

Conclusions

The identification of OECMs is an opportunity to recognize sectoral, area-based management that results in positive biodiversity outcomes. In addition, the OECM identification process offers the potential to mainstream biodiversity conservation in sectoral management further. To support countries seeking to pursue OECMs in fisheries, FAO's Fisheries OECM Handbook describes a practical and efficient identification process that fisheries management agencies and other relevant agencies, stakeholders or rights holders can readily undertake.