

**Minutes of Sea Cucumber Management Advisory Committee (MAC) Meeting****Tuesday 30th September 2025 at 9000HRS****SFA Conference Room, J & S House, Perseverance 1****Present**

Vincent Lucas Chairman	MAC ¹ - (SFA ²)	Paul Morin Patrick Port- Louis	AMSSI ³ - Chairperson AMSSI
Marie- Antoinette Saminadin	SFA	Ramsamy Pillay	AMSSI
Tracey Pillay	SFA	Gaetan Payet	AMSSI
Dainise Quatre	SFA	Naron Payet	AMSSI
Isha Coopoosamy	SFA	Michael Hoareau	AMSSI
Alison Hoareau	SFA	Marty Smith	AMSSI
Stephanie Hollanda	SFA	Charlemagne Fontaine	AMSSI
Elisa Radegonde	SFA	Marcus Quatre	SCHA ⁴
Karyss Belle	SFA	Dean Pillay	SCHA
Teffy Jean	SFA		

AGENDA

1. Welcome and opening remarks
2. Adoption of Agenda
3. Presentation of Catch Results – 2024/2025 Season.
 - Seychelles EEZ Catch Summary.
 - Saya de Malha Bank Catch Summary.
4. Overview of the Seychelles Participatory Sea Cucumber Survey 2025.
5. Way forward for the fishery.
6. AOB
7. Next steps and closing remarks.

¹ MAC: Management Advisory Committee² SFA: Seychelles Fisheries Authority³AMSSI: Association of Member of Seychelles Sea Cucumber Industry⁴ SCHA: Sea Cucumber Harvesting Association



1. Opening Remarks and Agenda Adoption: The meeting opened with a welcome note by the Chairman, who reiterated the purpose of the meeting.	Action
2. Agenda Adoption: The agenda was unanimously adopted following amendment to include the status of the Management of the Advisory Committee (MAC) for the sea cucumber fishery. Chair proposed to be taken under AOB and a change of order of agenda item 3 and 4, so that the overview of the Seychelles Participatory Sea Cucumber Survey 2025 result to be presented first.	
3. Overview of the Seychelles Participatory Sea Cucumber Survey 2025 The SFA research department presented the results from the 2025 Participatory Sea Cucumber Survey, conducted in 2025, after a three-year interval. The survey employed the same methodology as the previous assessment to ensure consistency and comparability of data. Survey Results (2025 MAC Assessment) Purpose of the Survey The Seychelles Fisheries Authority (SFA) conducted the survey to evaluate the status and health of sea cucumber stocks on the Mahé Plateau. The findings will inform future management decisions, including potential revisions to Total Allowable Catches (TACs) as well as non-harvesting of some species. How the Survey Was Done • A total of 152 sites across the Mahé Plateau were surveyed between March and April 2025. • Researchers utilized scuba diving techniques in shallow areas and deployed drop cameras to collect data from deeper zones. • The results were compared with previous surveys conducted in 2004 and 2021 to evaluate trends in stock recovery or decline. Key Findings (by Species) • White Teatfish (Kokosye blan): Slight recovery since the closure in 2021; currently at ~19% of 2004 levels. Closure appears effective. • Flower Teatfish / Pentard: Continuing decline, now only ~23% of 2004 levels. Stricter limits required. • Prickly Redfish (Sanpye): Significant increase since 2021; stock levels now higher than in 2004 and appear healthy.	



- **Black Teatfish (Kokosye Nwar):** Slight recovery observed but still heavily depleted (~17% of 2004 levels). Closed since 2018 and should remain closed.
- **Golden Sandfish:** No individuals recorded since 2021; stock status highly uncertain.
- **Recommendation:**
 - SFA to conduct targeted survey for golden sandfish due to cryptic nature.
- **Other Species:**
 - *Elephant Trunkfish (safran):* Sharp decline, currently very low.
 - *Lollyfish:* Improvement since 2021, though still below 2004 levels.
 - *Spork (Actinopyga species):* Notable increase recorded in 2025.
 - *Lakol (brown/tiger/white belly types):* Some recovery since 2021, but far below 2004 baselines.
 - *Flowerfish & Curryfish:* Both showing sharp declines.
 - *Sandfish (kokonm):* Very low and uncertain stock status.

Overall Stock Assessment

The total estimated sea cucumber population in 2025 (~65 million) is slightly higher than in 2021 (~61 million) but remains well below the 2004 estimate (~106 million).

Management Recommendations

- Maintain closures for White and Black Teatfish for at least another five years.
- Reduce the Flower Teatfish TAC by 15%.
- Retain the current TAC for Prickly Redfish.
- Consider partial closures in deeper, non-reef fishing grounds.
- Undertake targeted studies on Golden Sandfish and Sandfish, with possible closure or special quota management.
- Allow very small catch limits (<2% of stock) for other lower-value species and explore new processing and market opportunities.

Conclusion

- The sea cucumber fishery remains under considerable pressure.
- Certain species, such as White Teatfish, show recovery under full closure measures.
- Others, particularly Pentard and Black Teatfish, remain highly vulnerable and require continued strict protection.
- For the fishery to remain viable, new management strategies are necessary, focusing on reducing pressure on high-value species and enhancing utilisation of underused ones.

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4. Presentation of catch results- 2024/2025 Season

- Seychelles EEZ Catch Summary
- Saya de Malha Bank catch summary

Overview:

The presentation analyses sea cucumber landing data across three fishing seasons: **2022/2023**, **2023/2024**, and **2024/2025**, focusing on three key species:

- Flower Teatfish (Pentard)
- Prickly Redfish (Sanpye)
- Golden Sandfish (Kokonm)

Species-Specific Quota Utilization

Flower Teatfish

- Quota: 240,475 kg (constant across seasons).
- Landing dropped from **223,199 kg (92.8%)** in 2022/23 to **144,224 kg (60.0%)** in 2024/25.
- Significant decline in quota utilization.

Prickly Redfish

- Quota: 45,000 kg
- Landing remained relatively stable: **34,140 kg (75.9%)** in 2022/23 to **25,270 kg (56.2%)** in 2024/25
- Moderate decline, but more stable compared to other species

Golden Sandfish

- Quota: 100,000 kg
- Landing dropped sharply from **11,676 kg (11.7%)** in 2022/23 to **3,625 kg (3.6%)** in 2024/25
- **Very low utilization**, indicating possible stock depletion or reduced effort

Catch Trends & Operational Insights

- **Total catch** declined steadily over the three seasons
- **Fishing trips** reduced from **132 to 106**
- **Catch per trip** also decreased, suggesting:
 - Lower availability of target species
 - Reduced fishing efficiency
 - Continued pressure on sea cucumber stocks

**Operation in the Outer Islands**

- **Fishing Effort Comparison:** Activity levels were compared across the last two fishing seasons with one recording 5 trips by 5 vessels and another showing 6 trips by 6 vessels.

Joint Management Area (JMA) Observations

- **Catch Analysis:** Species-specific catch data within the JMA zone was reviewed and it showed heavy targeting of whiteteat fish compared with other species suggesting the targeting of higher value species by the participating vessels
- **Key Recommendation:** Increase the number of vessels engaging in the JMA sea cucumber fishery.
- **SFA:** Amend the research strategy to cover other species as well as other zones. To consider the use of GO-PRO cameras to record species and habitat during fishing activities.

Way forward for the Fishery

- **Expansion of Survey Efforts:**

Representatives from the industry proposed an increase the number of vessels operating in the Saya de Malha region to enhance coverage and data collection.

- **Foreign Skipper Proposal:**

The introduction of foreign skippers into the sea cucumber fishery was proposed by the industry representatives. However, it was noted that the practice of not employing foreign skippers in the fishery stemmed from a gentleman's agreement amongst the operators and that no formal policy currently exists. After deliberation, it was agreed that this is a policy matter which will be taken up with the Ministry responsible for fisheries.

- **Licensing Quota Management:**

Maintain the current fishing licence quota for the Mahé Plateau until the Saya de Malha region is formally established as a commercial fishery.

- **Mahé Plateau Quota Adjustments:**

From the allocated quota:

- Flower-teatfish: 10% reduction.
- Whitefish: Quota set at 1,500 pieces.



- Prickly redfish: Maintain current quota of 1,800 pieces.
- Golden sandfish: Maintain current quota of 4,000 pieces.

- **Outer Island Fishing Regulations:**

Limit vessels to undertake one fishing trip per season in the outer islands and keep this option open for an entire year.

Quota increases for outer islands:

- Whitefish: Increased from 1,750 to 2,500 pieces.
- Black teatfish: Increased from 250 to 1,000 pieces.
- Prickly redfish: Increased from 1,200 to 1,500 pieces.
- Flower-teatfish: Quota remains unchanged at 2,500 pieces.
- Golden sandfish: Removed from the active fishing list.

- **Mid-Term Closure for Review:**

All vessels are to be tied up from **2nd to 9th March 2026** for a seven-day closure to facilitate the mid-term review.

5. Any Other Business (A.O.B.)

- A query was raised regarding the decision taken at the last Joint Management Area (JMA) Committee meeting. It was agreed that this would be followed up with the JMA focal point for clarification.
- The status of the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) was discussed. Concerns were raised about the lack of transparency and the need to include broader stakeholder representation.
- The Seychelles Fisheries Authority (SFA) agreed to circulate a draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for the MAC for stakeholder review and comment.

6. Next Steps & Closing Remarks

The meeting concluded with consensus to draft a formal note to the Minister for Fisheries and the Blue Economy, recommending that the 2025/2026 fishing season be scheduled from **15th October 2025 to 14th July 2026**.

Conclusion

The meeting was adjourned at **11:40 a.m.**