MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC) MEETING

Date: 21st October 2025
Time: 1:30 p.m.
Venue: Seychelles Fisheries Authority (SFA) Conference Room

1. Purpose of the Meeting

The meeting was convened to review the key recommendations raised by industry representatives during the MAC meeting held on 30th September 2025, alongside the Seychelles Fisheries Authority's (SFA) corresponding responses. Additional discussions were held on issues requiring Ministerial consideration before the opening of the 2025/2026 sea cucumber fishing season.

2. Matters for Discussion with the Ministry

Ongoing Research Activities in the JMA: Based on logbook and landing data, white teatfish (Kokosye blan) is the dominant species being harvested under the ongoing research programme within the Joint Management Area (JMA). This clearly indicates high grading, whereby divers are selecting high value species. The methodology used for the research was also discussed, highlighting some inadequacies with the current framework, including a lack of coordination with Mauritian counterparts. The MAC recommended enhanced collaboration and data sharing with Mauritian counterparts to ensure consistent research coverage.

Introduce Foreign Skippers in the Sea Cucumber Fishery: There was general agreement from the parties present that foreign skippers should not be allowed to participate in the sea cucumber fishery. Members emphasized the importance of ensuring opportunities for Seychellois participation, particularly for young Seychellois students from the Seychelles Maritime Academy (SMA), to promote local capacity building and sustainable livelihoods.

Quota for the Mahe Plateau: It was agreed that the quota on the number of licenses for Mahe Plateau should be maintained for all operators, until commercial fishing starts in the JMA.

Vessel Operations in Saya de Malha Region: It was explained that for the upcoming fishing season (2025/26), it is the turn of the Mauritian counterparts to fish in the area, as Seychellois fishers had reached the pre-agreed quota (except for 1 vessel). It was highlighted that resources on the seafloor falls under joint jurisdiction between Seychelles and Mauritius, and it is important that both parties are given equitable opportunities to benefit from those resources. Any decision regarding future operations in the area must be discussed and agreed upon by both parties through the JMA Committee.

Quota allocation for the Mahé Plateau:

Pentard (Flower Teatfish): The survey results were presented once again, reiterating the continued decline in the stock of flower teatfish, which has declined further since the 2001 survey and is now only slightly above 20% relative to the 2004 reference level, meaning that the stock is close to the biological limit in the fishery. In this case, SFA proposed that 2025-2026 should be the last season for the harvesting of Pentard, given the current rate of decline with a high risk for the stock to go below 20% of the 2004 reference level if the fishery remains open for more than one fishing season. Following some initial resistance, there was finally general agreement for the quota of flower teatfish to remain status quo for the 2025/26 fishing season and that a closure be introduced for 2026-2027 fishing season.

Transition following the closure on Pentard: Recognizing that the closure of the flower teatfish fishery for the 2026–2027 fishing season would effectively mean a total closure of the sea cucumber fishery, as the flower teatfish remains the most economically viable species, the MAC further agreed that if a total closure is to be implemented next year, the Authority should communicate this decision well in advance to allow licensees and operators time for possible transition to alternative livelihood. The CEO assured members that further discussions would be held with the industry to explore how the government could assist the sector if a transition is necessary.

Opening of harvesting of White Teatfish (Kokosye blan):

There were suggestions from the industry for the Authority to consider the re-opening of the white teatfish fishery as an alternative, considering the implications that the closure of Pentard will have on the industry. In spite of the survey providing evidence of rebuilding of the stock, the CEO clarified that the stock level of white teatfish is currently below 20% of the 2004 reference level and that fishing for this species should only be considered

once the stock has rebuilt to 40% of the 2004 reference level. It was therefore agreed that the closure on white teatfish will remain for the Mahe Plateau for the 2025/2026 fishing season.

Concerns about Illegal Fishing: The MAC expressed serious concern regarding reports of illegal fishing activities in the outer Island and in the Saya de Malha region. It was recommended that this issue be taken up at Ministerial and at the JMA Committee.

3. Additional Management Measures and Recommendations

One trip per licensed vessel will be allowed for the outer islands; however, the quota will remain the same as the previous season.

4. Opening of the Fishing Season and training of skippers.

The sea cucumber fishing season will open on Saturday, 1st November 2025. Training for licensed skippers is scheduled for Thursday and Friday (23rd–24th October 2025) at the SFA Conference Room. The MAC stressed the importance of early communication to the industry regarding potential fishery closures or restrictions for the following season.

5. Issuance of licenses and cards renewal

For the divers requiring renewal of diving cards, the hours were confirmed as 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. daily during the week. Fishers without valid fishing licenses are not permitted to participate in the fishery. The MAC emphasized that all operators must be reminded of these conditions before the season opens.

6. Actions and Follow-Up

Action Item	Responsible Party	Deadline
Prepare an information note to the Minister highlighting the Saya de Malha operations, Flower Teatfish restriction, and illegal fishing issues.	SFA Fisheries Management Division	By Thursday, 23 October 2025
Draft formal letter for CEO'S review and endorsement.	SFA Licensing Division	By Friday, 24 October 2025
Conduct skipper training sessions.	SFA Research Department	23–24 October 2025

Issue notice to all licensees regarding diving schedule and license requirements.	SFA Licensing Division	Before 1 November 2025

7. Conclusion

The MAC agreed that the identified matters should be urgently addressed with the Minister prior to the season opening. Members acknowledged the importance of precautionary measures to safeguard depleted species such as the flower teatfish and prevent overexploitation in sensitive regions like Saya de Malha. The meeting adjourned at 02:25 p.m.