

Blue BioTrade in Saint Lucia: Developing value for the sustainable trade & production of queen conch in the Caribbean



State of Implementation by Saint Lucia of the Regional Recommendations for queen conch management and conservation. Mauro Gongora – Fisheries Consultant

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National consultation & validation meeting

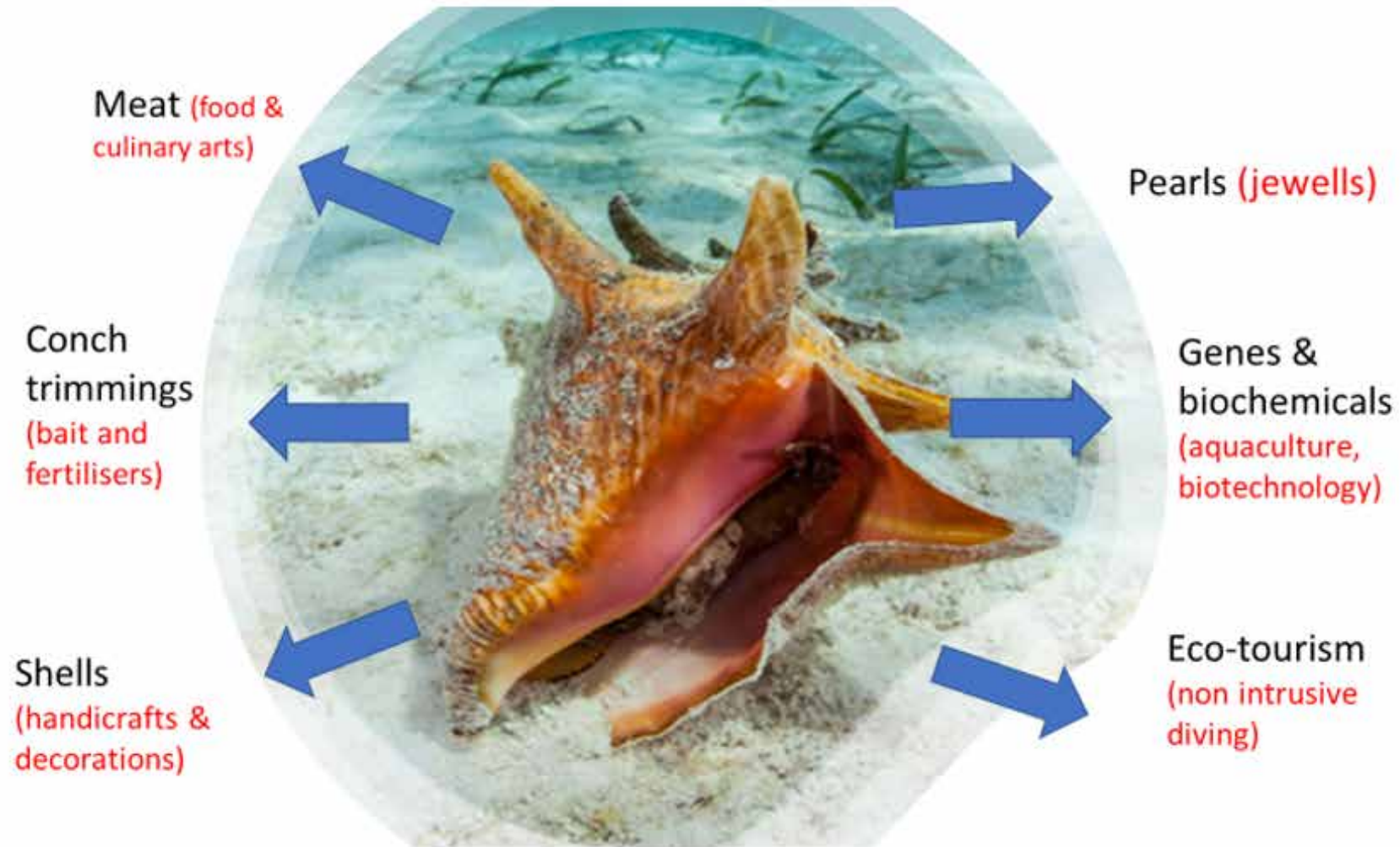


O E C S

Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States



Figure 5 Primary uses, and products derived from the queen conch. Source: David Vivas UNCTAD



Source: Vivas Eugui (2021). The potential of Blue BioTrade for Queen conch: A business case for the OECS. Presentation at Regional stakeholder webinar on Blue BioTrade and BioTrade principles and criteria including CITES requirements, UNCTAD, OECS & CITES (2021).

Regulatory Framework for queen conch in Saint Lucia

- In 2001 the Fisheries Act Chapter 7.15 Revised Edition was introduced. This Act is a consolidation of the Fisheries Regulations – Section 39 (Statutory Instrument No. 9 of 1994) and the Fisheries (Snorkelling License) Regulations (Statutory Instrument 223/2000) (Government of Saint Lucia, 2001).
- This act is the main legislation managing fisheries in Saint Lucia and is still in effect today. Part 7 Section 35 Subsection 1 of this Act states that a person shall not take from the fishery waters, sell, purchase or at any time have in his or her possession any immature conch or during the closed season.
- Currently no closed season has been enacted in Saint Lucia. Subsection 2 defines an immature conch as a conch with a total weight less than one kilogram, meat weight of less than 280 grams after removal of the digestive gland, a shell that is smaller than 18 centimetres in length or which does not have a flared lip. The fisheries regulations do not define a closed season for the queen conch.
- Queen conch can potentially reproduce all year round, but high-water temperature (28-29 °C) is associated with peaks in queen conch reproduction and gametogenesis. In general, the warmest months in the Caribbean are July through September (FAO, 2017).

Is there a Management Plan for queen conch?

Currently no queen conch management plan. In 2006, a draft management plan was developed by Susanna Scott who was a Senior Fisheries Biologist in the Department of Fisheries.

It is unclear if it was officially endorsed or adopted by the Department of Fisheries – the plan has not been implemented in Saint Lucia.

The draft queen conch management plan included operational objectives, indicators and reference points.

The operational objectives for the queen conch fishery are as follows:

- i. To maintain conch stocks at or above an acceptable level [to be defined].
- ii. To maintain effort at current levels.
- iii. To maintain or increase current levels of income to fishers from this fishery.
- iv. To contribute to maintenance of conch habitat and nursery grounds in a productive state.

Indicators

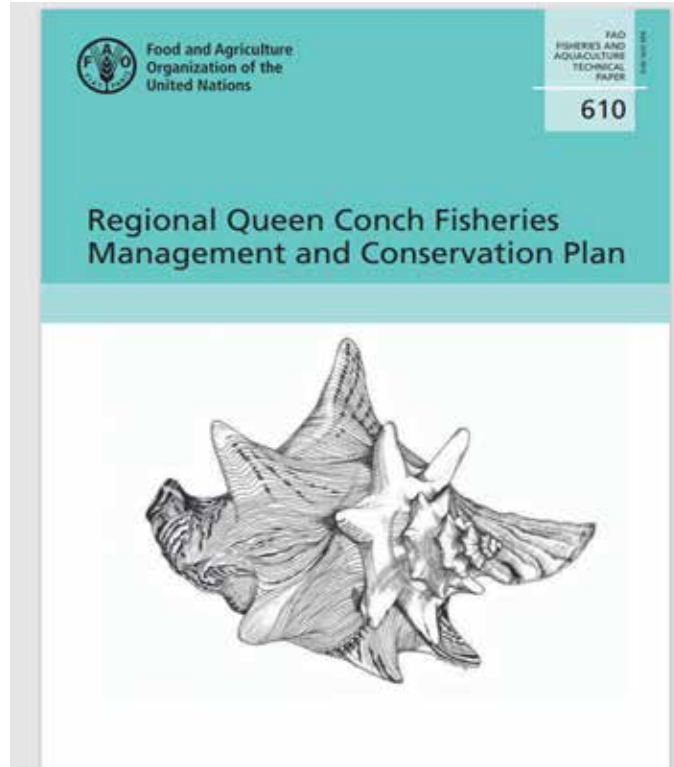
The indicators are or could be used to measure the performance of the fishery management relative to the objectives are as follows:

- Biomass (stock densities, abundance, distribution; catch/effort).
- Fishing effort (catch effort, fishermen's registration and licensing).
- Spawning stock status (catch composition (e.g. lip thickness), stock structure).
- Health of mangrove, coral and seagrass areas (e.g. detail indicators).

Reference Points

- i. Effort (number of fishers) at current levels (licensing or a permit system).
- ii. Lip thickness of all conch in catch at or above legal-size limit (flared lip thickness -size limit).
- iii. Conch stocks at or above an acceptable level [to be determined]. E.g. vessel value of fishery at or above current value per trip.
- iv. Area of all marine reserves at or above current levels.
- v. Marine reserves not specific to conch but may provide some support to this resource.
- vi. Level of cooperation with relevant agencies (re land management, agriculture, environmental management, physical development, etc) at or above current levels.

Regional queen conch Management and Conservation Plan



- FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
- Rome. 2017

Implementation of Queen conch RPOA recommendations by Saint Lucia.

Recommended Management Measure	Level of implementation by Division of Fisheries	Recommendations made by this study
Establish harmonised and simplified categories of queen conch	Processing categories for queen conch meat has not been established.	There is need to establish queen conch processing categories that will align catch data reporting to FAO requirements.
Establish meat conversion factors	Queen conch meat conversion factors have not been established.	There is need to establish queen conch meat conversion factors to ensure that catch landings and number of animals harvested are accurately reported to FAO
Improvement of catch and effort monitoring programmes	Catch landings and fishing effort data is being collected in some locations where queen conch meat landings occur	Monitoring of catch per unit effort data collection should continue and strengthened so as to determine trends in catches and effort over time which could serve as a proxy for conch abundance in the sea.

<p>A synchronised regional closed season (1 June to 30 September)</p>	<p>There is no closed fishing season for queen conch</p>	<p>While regulations enable the enactment of a closed season by the minister provided publication of close season dates in the national gazette, there is need to establish a closed season for queen conch.</p>
<p>Develop Non-Detriment Finding (NDF) for export of queen conch meat and its by-products</p>	<p>No Non-Detrimental Finding has been prepared for the export of queen conch meat</p>	<p>The development of a NDF for queen conch should be developed as soon as possible if export of conch meat is to be realized.</p>
<p>Licensing of all queen conch fishers, processors and exporters</p>	<p>Fishers and processors of queen conch meat are not licensed by the Division of Fisheries</p>	<p>The licensing of all fishers, processors and exporters should be done as soon as possible. The Laws of Saint Lucia Cap 7.15 Fisheries Regulations – Section 39 Subsection 19 requires the licensing of a fishing vessel and the registration of fishers only.</p>

<p>Adoption of stricter regulations on autonomous diving techniques</p>	<p>The use of autonomous diving is used for harvesting of queen conch but there is no mandatory requirement that fishers should undergo professional training for use of this equipment to conduct fishing for queen conch</p>	<p>Training on proper use of SCUBA gear should be done by every diver to avoid accidents and deaths.</p>
<p>Organised patrolling</p>	<p>No patrolling for enforcement of queen conch regulations is done.</p>	<p>Costal patrolling to monitor seaworthiness of vessels, imports of queen conch are active. However, sub-regional (OECS) patrolling to reduce IUU fishing should be done in collaboration with neighbouring countries.</p>
<p>Extended use of satellite-based VMS systems for boats with a length exceeding 10 metres</p>	<p>There is no legal requirement for use of satellite-based VMS systems in fishing vessels.</p>	<p>The installation of VMS systems on fishing boats larger than 10 meters should be made mandatory by law.</p>

<p>Continuous education and outreach programmes for stakeholders.</p>	<p>Queen conch educational and outreach programmes for fishers and other stakeholders are limited and sporadic.</p>	<p>Queen conch education and outreach should be done continuously in primary schools and fishers' organizations.</p>
<p>National level queen conch conservation and management plans</p>	<p>No queen conch management plan exists at present.</p>	<p>A queen conch management plan should be developed as soon as possible. A draft management plan was prepared in 2006 by Susanna Scott, Senior Fisheries Biologist, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Castries, Saint Lucia published in 2007 through FAO Fisheries Report No. 832, but has not been officially endorsed nor adopted by the Fisheries Division</p>
<p>Traceability of queen conch throughout the value chain</p>	<p>No traceability program is in place for queen conch .</p>	<p>Traceability of the queen conch value chain should be done as soon as possible.</p>

<p>Develop collaborative arrangements needed to generate habitat maps at the scale needed for better fisheries management</p>	<p>There is no queen conch habitat maps developed for the fishery.</p>	<p>The development of habitat maps should be done to assist in the implementation of queen conch surveys.</p>
<p>Adoption of sub-regional mechanisms to evaluate the fishery potential of queen conch using fishery dependent and independent factors</p>	<p>No sub-regional mechanism in place to assess the status of queen conch .</p>	<p>The development of a sub-regional arrangement to conduct scientific conch queen conch assessments is very important for the sustainable use and conservation of queen conch and therefore should be pursued as a regional priority.</p>

Progressive inclusion of co-management strategies

No co-management agreements with non-governmental organizations developed yet for the management of queen conch.

Co-management arrangements with non-governmental organizations can potentially identify and secure resources to assist in the management efforts for queen conch and therefore should be encouraged and supported by countries

Thank you