**Governance and Sustainability of the GRSF**

**Discussion paper for EAB-TWG2, FAO, Rome**

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Governance and sustainability of the GRSF requires decisions on a wide range of issues, including content governance, system governance, data sharing policies, and a sustainable business model(s). This discussion paper does not go into every aspect within those areas, but instead focuses on some of the biggest outstanding questions. For governance, those questions are mainly about ‘who plays what roles?’ For sustainability, it’s about ‘what business model or models can be built around GRSF services?’ If there are other big questions that need to be resolved, please make note and raise them for discussion during the meeting in Rome.

**Governance**

Various roles need to be fulfilled for the long term to ensure proper governance of the GRSF. The roles are not necessarily mutually exclusive, meaning there may be some overlap. In some cases, who serves what role may have several different options. In addition, roles may be combined and housed within a single entity.

Owner of the GRSF

For now, the GRSF is ‘owned’ by the BlueBRIDGE project. But once the project ends, who will take responsibility for making decisions for its maintenance, governance, and sustainability? This entity or group of entities will also be responsible for holding a vision for the GRSF and implementing toward it.

Options include:

* FAO
* FAO + its data contributors (currently RAM Legacy and SFP)
* A yet-to-be-identified entity

Maintainer of standards

With the creation of the GRSF, we have created a new set of standards. It is critical continually review application of a standard and make improvements when/where necessary. Who will ensure processes are established and maintained to keep viable standards supporting the GRSF? Options include:

* FAO
* FAO + its data contributors (currently RAM Legacy and SFP)
* A technical advisory committee, including key stakeholders

Maintainer of technology

The GRSF is a VRE housed on the iMarine D4Science platform. The software/technology was developed through the BlueBRIDGE project by CNR and FORTH. CNR has committed to maintain the technology for two years. Do we need to explore other options for the future or make any decisions before the two years passes? Options include:

* Postpone exploration for alternatives and decision making for at least one year, while all parties learn from the experience
* Approach CNR about serving this roll for the longer term
* Start exploring other providers for this role soon

Maintainer of content

To date, this role has been served by the three content contributing entities (FAO/FIRMS, RAM Legacy, SFP/FishSource). Should this continue as is? Options include:

* The existing three entities share this role
* Additional stakeholders soon join the three entities (eg, to help with quality control, usability)
* Additional entities are only added if/when they too contribute content to the GRSF

GRSF Secretariat

To date, FAO has largely been serving this role. The Secretariat is needed to set the agendas for the groups above to hold discussions and make decisions. This entity is also responsible implementation of decisions made and monitoring progress. Who is best positioned to serve this role? Options include:

* The current team at FAO in this role
* A different/modified team at FAO
* FAO + its data contributors (currently RAM Legacy and SFP)
* A yet-to-be-identified entity

**Sustainability**

The GRSF could provide any number of services to a range of audiences (users). This discussion paper focuses on services directed at the seafood industry and service companies (e.g., traceability/technology). These services include validating that a stock/fishery exists and providing a unique ID code (e.g., machine readable) that results from a global standard.

To date, potential stakeholders of these services have confirmed their value and believe they will have a significant positive impact on the industry and seafood sustainability. Seafood supply chains (e.g., producers, suppliers, major buyers) can operate more efficiently by using the same globally-adopted standard/system for validating and identifying source fisheries. Traceability/technology companies will also benefit from the efficiency gain and can more easily layer other services on top (e.g., NGO environmental risk ratings). NGOs in the sustainable seafood movement see value in the services as they promote transparency in the industry.

To generate income from these services, it is suspected that a variety of business models/scenarios can be employed. Below are a few possibilities to stimulate discussion and for further exploration. The main users/audience is in orange, the for-profit company interfacing with the users is in green, and the providers of support to the for-profit company are in blue.

Depending on the services agreed and the model/scenario ultimately chosen, the additional company or companies (in green) will likely need to be part of the governance structure above.

Model/scenario #1

In this scenario, the same entity maintains the technology to administer the GRSF *and* generates income from services provided to the seafood industry and others. The entity would need to have an understanding of what the companies need and how to market the services. The technology and service provider company would be required to set aside a portion of the profits for the GRSF Owner to cover costs of the GRSF Secretariat, content maintainer, and standards maintainer.

The technology maintainer and service provider company would essentially be the exclusive service provider to industry. To finance the GRSF and support providers, the company would be asked to develop a business plan to cover up to all operating costs for GRSF maintenance. This can be phased in if additional support is identified (e.g., foundation/philanthropy) to seed establishment of this model.

Model/scenario #2

In this scenario, the yet-to-be-identified entity uses the GRSF unique ID code and provides validation services to generate income from the seafood industry and others. The entity would need to have an understanding of what the companies need and how to market the services. The service provider company would be required to set aside a portion of the profits for the GRSF Owner to cover costs of the GRSF Secretariat, content maintainer, and standards maintainer.

The service provider company would essentially be the exclusive connection to industry. A costing model would need to be developed and imposed to cover the costs of the GRSF. The company would then be the only entity interacting directly with the GRSF Owner and support providers.

Model/scenario #3

In this scenario, the yet-to-be-identified entities use the GRSF unique ID code and provide validation services to generate income from the seafood industry and others. The entities would need to have an understanding of what the companies need and how to market the services. The service provider companies would be required to set aside a portion of the profits for the GRSF Owner to cover at least some costs of the GRSF Secretariat, content maintainer, and standards maintainer.

This model allows multiple service provider companies to benefit from the GRSF services. A cost sharing model would need to be developed and imposed to cover the costs of the GRSF. Increased burden then falls on the GRSF Owner to set up arrangements with multiple service provider companies.

*Additional access*

The business models above are focused on for-profit entities covering the costs of maintaining the GRSF. However, other user groups will find value in having access to the unique ID code. Other potential users groups include:

* Non-profit/non-governmental organizations
* Academic institutions (private vs. public?)
* Governments

Should these other users also be charged for this access? Some but not others? How should they be charged (e.g., annual fees)?