



COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Thirty-fourth Session

1–5 February 2021

FAO'S PROGRAMME OF WORK IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE UNDER THE FAO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Executive Summary

This document provides an overview of FAO's achievements in fisheries and aquaculture in the 2018–2019 biennium and a perspective on FAO's work in the fisheries and aquaculture sector during 2020–21, in the context of FAO's Strategic Framework currently under development. In addition, global developments and trends that are likely to influence FAO's work in fisheries and aquaculture are presented, in the context of the Strategic Framework and the Medium-Term Plan 2022–2025.

Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- comment on FAO's achievements in the field of fisheries and aquaculture and the sector's contribution to the FAO Strategic Objectives;
- advise on the global and sectoral developments and trends identified;
- provide guidance on the main priorities for FAO's work in fisheries and aquaculture; and
- recommend measures to strengthen FAO's fishery data collection, analysis and dissemination for the effective conservation and sustainable use of aquatic resources in the context of the new FAO Strategic Framework.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The FAO Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2018–21 (reviewed) and Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2020–21 were approved by the FAO Conference at its 41st Session in June 2019. The MTP sets out the Strategic Objectives and Outcomes for achievement by Members and the international community with support from FAO, in accordance with the reviewed Strategic Framework. The Conference appreciated the close alignment of the FAO Strategic Objectives with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. FAO is currently developing the new Strategic Framework (2022–31) and a Medium Term Plan 2022–2025 (regional and technical priorities), in the context of global developments, global and regional trends and major challenges and opportunities in the areas of FAO's mandate. The elaboration of the new Strategic Framework is guided by FAO's vision and three Global Goals, which are squarely centred around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and target in particular SDG 2 (no hunger), SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities). The final document is to be presented to the 42nd Session of the FAO Conference in 2021¹.

3. As inputs from Technical Committees represent an important step for Governing Body input and oversight, this Technical Committee is requested to provide guidance on areas of technical priority with the view to guide future work and in the context of developing the new Strategic Framework.

4. In this context, the present document first provides a brief overview of FAO's achievements in fisheries and aquaculture in the 2018–19 biennium, within the context of the Strategic Programmes and in response to requests from statutory bodies and individual Members. It also outlines key global and sector specific developments and trends, which will influence FAO's future work in fisheries and aquaculture. The last section lays out the priority areas of FAO's work in fisheries and aquaculture during 2020–21 and beyond, in the context of FAO's vision and Global Goals.

II. ACHIEVEMENTS IN FAO'S WORK IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN 2019-2020

5. Supporting the sustainable management of living aquatic resources, balancing their use and conservation in an economically, socially and environmentally responsible manner remains an overarching priority area of action for FAO. Over the last biennium this support has been translated into significant normative and field work, in collaboration with FAO's strategic programmes, Members and partner agencies, supported by significant resource mobilization and the development of common narratives, along a number of key areas:

A. Fisheries Sustainability

6. In the period of this review, FAO carried out an extensive study on the global status of assessed marine fish stocks, and published a major report on the status and management of assessed stocks². FAO is also developing a new assessment methodology for data-poor fish stocks in collaboration with the University of Washington (United States of America) with the aim to expand FAO's current global assessment to country level, to support the assessment and reporting of SDG Indicator 14.4.1. An online training course on the assessment and reporting of SDG 14.4.1, and a questionnaire on stock

¹ CL 163/4, Information Note 1, November 2019, provides detail on the process for consultation on the development of the new Strategic Framework.

² www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb1800en

status for the same indicator was developed and tested in 2019 to support Members in their reporting of the indicator. FAO also completed a review on the status and trends of inland fisheries catch and called attention to the importance of inland capture fisheries with respect to food security and nutrition and the SDGs³.

7. The techno-economic performance of the main global fishing fleets was reviewed by FAO in 2020. The review of 97 major fleet segments of the main fishing nations in Asia⁴, Europe⁵, North and South America⁶ and Africa, showed that the industrial and semi-industrial fishing fleets were profitable in recent years. Ninety-two percent of the fishing fleet segments demonstrated a positive net cash flow and 80 percent of the fleet segments presented a positive return on fixed tangible assets.

8. In order to advance knowledge on how the world's capture fisheries are accessed, used and managed, FAO held a Global Conference on Tenure and User Rights in Fisheries (UserRights 2018). The event provided a neutral platform to share views, information and concrete examples through case studies on how tenure and Rome-based agencies can harmonize the concepts of responsible fisheries, social and economic development, as well as ideas and concerns about the fair and equitable application of user rights in capture fisheries⁷.

9. Biodiversity is indispensable for fisheries sustainability as it forms the basis of many ecosystem services which support sustainable development. Area-based approaches are one of the management tools used to help maintain ecosystem functions and ultimately support fisheries sustainability. In order to support fisheries authorities in delivery of global area-based conservation targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (see COFI/2020/Inf.15.3) and SDG 14.5, FAO convened an expert meeting on the concept, guiding principles and common characteristics of "other effective area-based conservation measures" (hereafter, referred to as OECMs⁸. See COFI/2020/SBD.19). This recently defined class of area-based instruments came into the global policy lexicon through the CBD's Aichi Target 11, and provides fisheries and aquaculture sectors an opportunity to take a lead in delivery against area-based biodiversity and ecosystem function goals.

10. In order to help define and quantify extinction risk to aquatic species, and assist FAO Members in their consideration of listing proposals of commercially exploited aquatic species at the 18th Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Conference of the Parties (COP 18) held in August 2019, FAO convened the 6th FAO Expert Advisory Panel for the Assessment of Proposals to Amend CITES Appendices. This expert meeting, convened in Rome, Italy, from 21 to 25 January 2019, informed Members on the scientific merits of proposals in relation to CITES biological listing criteria, and provided comments, in relation to biology, ecology, trade and management, on the likely effectiveness for conservation of a CITES listing.

11. Finally, the FAO Symposium on "*Fisheries Sustainability: Strengthening the science-policy nexus*" took place at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy, on 18-21 November 2019 and gathered around 1 000 participants from around 100 countries. The Symposium called for a new vision for capture fisheries, outlining how the sector needs to transform in response to the complex and rapidly changing challenges facing society. Key messages of the symposium are available in the proceedings⁹, and the recommendations provided technical inputs to the draft COFI Declaration on Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture (see COFI/2020/2.3).

³ www.fao.org/3/ca0388en/CA0388EN.pdf

⁴ www.fao.org/3/cb1577en/CB1577EN.pdf

⁵ www.fao.org/3/ca9188en/CA9188EN.pdf

⁶ www.fao.org/3/ca9543en/CA9543EN.pdf

⁷ www.fao.org/3/ca6967en/CA6967EN.pdf

⁸ www.fao.org/3/ca7194en/ca7194en.pdf

⁹ www.fao.org/3/ca9165en/ca9165en.pdf

B. Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU)

12. The 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) to Deter, Prevent and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing entered into force on 5 June 2016. Since COFI 33, 14 new parties have adhered to the agreement. An umbrella programme supporting the implementation of PSMA is in place, with funding in excess of USD 19 million from Iceland, Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, United States of America and the European Union, which has supported developing states in their implementation of the PSMA.

13. Under the umbrella programme, FAO has also focused on producing a number of capacity development materials and guidelines, including checklists of flag, coastal and port state responsibilities; legal measures and provisions to incorporate into national legislation; monitoring, control and surveillance systems and procedures to incorporate into national operations; as well as guidance documents for implementation of catch documentation schemes at national level. These materials are expected to be published by the second quarter of 2021.

14. FAO is the custodian for SDG indicator 14.6.1, which measures the progress of Members in their implementation of international instruments to combat IUU fishing. FAO has collected SDG indicator 14.6.1 scores in 2018 and 2020, with 70 and 75 percent of Members reporting a high level of implementation of relevant instruments, respectively. The indicator scores reflect that advancements have been made overall in combatting IUU fishing through the implementation of relevant international instruments.

15. Two products, a Global study on transshipment and the development of Technical Guidelines on the Estimation of IUU fishing (volume 3 - field guide) have been developed intersessionally and will be released prior to COFI34.

16. FAO has assumed the role of Secretariat for the meetings of the Parties to the PSMA, and has organized and delivered the 2nd meeting of the Parties to the PSMA and the 3rd meeting of the Part 6 Working Group, in Santiago, Chile, 3-7 June 2019, the 2nd meeting of the PSMA Technical Working Group on Information Exchange and the 5th meeting of the Global Record Working Group, in Seoul, Republic of Korea, 23-27 May 2019.

C. Aquaculture contribution to Food Security

17. The trends reported in the *State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) 2018*¹⁰ and 2020¹¹ reaffirm the key role that aquaculture plays in supporting food, nutrition, as well as livelihoods for a large number of people around the world. Aquaculture continues to grow faster than other major food production sectors, with an average annual growth of production (excluding aquatic plants) of 5.3 percent during the period 2000–2018. In 2016, for the first time aquaculture production for human consumption overtook capture fisheries production, and in 2018 aquaculture was responsible for 52 percent of the fish production dedicated to food.

18. In this period, FAO published the *State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*¹², which include all genetic stocks and communities of organisms of actual or potential value for food and agriculture. Follow up work includes a global information system on farmed types of AqGR with a prototype available in early 2021, and a Global Plan of Action, in preparation, for the promotion of enhanced and effective conservation, sustainable use and development of these resources, which include accelerating the development of AqGR for aquaculture.

19. In the same period, FAO supported aquaculture development on the ground through a report of 54 countries and 8 regional economic communities in Africa on the inclusion of fisheries and

¹⁰ FAO 2018. *State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture*. Rome, Italy.

¹¹ FAO 2020. *State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture*. Rome, Italy.

¹² www.fao.org/3/ca5256en/CA5256EN.pdf

aquaculture in policy documents aimed at, poverty eradication, foreign currency generation, and gender mainstreaming, among other needs¹³. The first draft of this document served as a background paper for the Consultative Meeting on “Improving Policy Development in Aquaculture in Support of Food Security, Nutrition and Poverty Eradication”, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in December 2018.

D. Trade, markets and Sustainable value chains

FAO started implementing the EUR 40 million Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) project FISH4ACP¹⁴ in January 2020. FISH4ACP will work with ten selected value chains in ten OACPS countries to maximize economic returns and social benefits, while minimizing detrimental effects on natural habitats and aquatic resources.

20. One important output of the FISH4ACP is a practical guide for analysis, strategy and design of sustainable value chains for aquatic products, which has already been introduced and applied in several fish value chain development projects in Barbados, Kiribati, Uzbekistan, St. Lucia, Papua New Guinea, as well as some Mediterranean countries.

21. FAO has published a significant number of normative products in relation to fisheries value chains in this biennium. These include two studies on traceability (“*Blockchain application in seafood value chains*”¹⁵ and “*Beyond regulatory compliance – Seafood traceability benefits and success cases*”¹⁶), reviewing applications and opportunities of blockchain technology in addressing issues of traceability, transparency, fish fraud, food integrity and safety.

22. A specific report on “*Seafood certification and developing countries: Focus on Asia*”¹⁷ was also produced, analyzing selected third party certification schemes, and identifying key requirements that may act as barriers for small-scale producers in developing countries to obtain certification. In 2020, FAO published the technical paper on “*Securing sustainable small-scale fisheries: showcasing applied practices in value chains, post-harvest operations and trade*”¹⁸, which includes nine case studies that demonstrate applied practices and successful initiatives to enhance small-scale fisheries value chains, post-harvest operations and trade.

23. FAO continued to provide technical assistance to the Global Seafood Sustainability Initiative (GSSI) to revise their Global Benchmark Tool. FAO organized an “*Expert Consultative Workshop on Non-Certified Seafood*” held on 10-11 October 2019 in Rome, to discuss how to measure and accelerate sustainability improvements in non-certified seafood.

24. Regarding cooperation with other international agencies, FAO continued to support the World Trade Organization (WTO) and countries on the ongoing negotiations on fisheries subsidies, by providing technical inputs in the area of fisheries, in particular involving the three basic pillars of the negotiations – overfishing, IUU fishing and overcapacity. In addition, FAO, together with UNCTAD and UNEP, continued its efforts to disseminate the Inter-Agency Joint Plan of Action (IAPoA) to accelerate achievements of the trade-related targets of SDG 14 to receive voluntary contributions. The IAPoA aims to accelerate the achievement of trade-related targets of SDG 14 through improved trade and trade-related policies safeguarding food security and contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, living marine resources and livelihoods.

25. In the area of social responsibility, FAO continued to carry out activities to get inputs in drafting the future guidance on social responsibility along the fish value chains, in close cooperation with relevant UN agencies and stakeholders, as recommended by the last Session of COFI. In this regard,

¹³ www.fao.org/3/ca9322en/CA9322EN.pdf

¹⁴ www.fao.org/in-action/fish-4-acp/en/

¹⁵ www.fao.org/3/ca8751en/ca8751en.pdf

¹⁶ www.fao.org/3/ca9550en/CA9550EN.pdf

¹⁷ www.fao.org/3/i8018en/I8018EN.pdf

¹⁸ www.fao.org/3/ca8402en/CA8402EN.pdf

the 2020 edition of the *Vigo Dialogue 19* focused on social problems faced by fish workers and the industry, particularly small and medium enterprises, associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

26. FAO continues to promote climate-smart and gender sensitive fish processing technology such as the FAO-Thiaroye processing technique (FTT), originally developed in West Africa. In 2017, this technique was introduced in Asia (Sri Lanka) and in 2019 it was extended to the Pacific (Federated States of Micronesia). Regional capacity building workshops to empower women and youth on the use of the FTT were held in 2019.

E. Food safety and Health

27. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a public health crisis followed by an on-going economic crisis due to the measures taken by countries to contain the rate of infection, such as home confinement, travel bans and business closures. Even though COVID-19 does not affect fish, nor is it caused by the consumption of fish, the fish sector is still subject to indirect impacts of the pandemic. To assist in addressing impacts, FAO established a COVID-19 Task Team to coordinate initiatives in response to the pandemic and provide coordinated support to measures and interventions addressing the impact of COVID-19 on fisheries and aquaculture.

28. FAO produced a number of policy briefs, bulletins and information papers on how COVID-19 is affecting the fisheries and aquaculture food systems²⁰, on legal considerations in responses to COVID-19 to mitigate the risk of disruption to fisheries and aquaculture food systems²¹, on the role of finance in mitigating COVID-19 impacts in fisheries²², on the effect of COVID-19 on fisheries and aquaculture in Asia²³, preliminary analyses of the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis in the Mediterranean and Black Seas²⁴, and a global assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on fisheries and aquaculture from the perspective of regional fishery bodies²⁵.

29. FAO also regularly updates a live information paper on “How is COVID-19 outbreak impacting the fisheries and aquaculture food systems and what can FAO do”²⁶, in response to the dynamic nature of the pandemic.

30. FAO published a Joint FAO-WHO Report of the Expert Meeting on Ciguatera Poisoning²⁷ to enable the development of appropriate risk management options, with an evaluation of known ciguatoxins, including geographic distribution, rate of illness, methods of detection, and guidance for the development of risk management options. FAO also developed an e-learning course to support the implementation of the guidance at a national level.

F. Statistics and Digital innovation

31. FAO continues to be responsible for the collection, validation, dissemination and analysis of the only source of global fisheries and aquaculture statistics, which represent a unique global asset for sector analysis and monitoring. These data supported the analysis of global trends in SOFIA and other flagship publications. This responsibility is delivered through the SOFIA report, as well as, among others, the regular Fisheries and Aquaculture Statistics reports²⁸.

¹⁹ www.fao.org/in-action/globefish/news-events/details-events/en/c/1311051/

²⁰ www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8637en

²¹ www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9421en

²² www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb0687en

²³ www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9545en

²⁴ www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9090en

²⁵ www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9279en

²⁶ www.fao.org/3/cb1436en/cb1436en.pdf

²⁷ www.fao.org/3/ca8817en/CA8817EN.pdf

²⁸ www.fao.org/3/cb1213t/cb1213t.pdf

32. Under the general umbrella of FAO's corporate statistics programme, FAO continued to give support to Members in their collection of fishery and aquaculture statistics through different trainings and capacity building activities, such as the online advanced course on Fisheries statistics systems held in November 2020 in collaboration with IAMZ-CIHEAM²⁹.

33. FAO has also been engaged for the last 10 years in leveraging digital innovation through various partnerships (e.g. FIRMS, iMarine, Google Earth Engine) to improve science-based decision making in global fisheries and aquaculture, and has released various products, including the Global Record of Stocks and Fisheries³⁰, the Global Tuna Atlas³¹, the Global Atlas of AIS-based fishing activity³², and digital tools that enhance national integrated statistics and information management systems.

G. EAF Nansen Programme

34. FAO, in collaboration with its Norwegian partners, Norad and IMR, is implementing the current phase of the EAF-Nansen Programme (2017–2022)³³, supporting the application of the ecosystem approach to marine fisheries management while considering climate and pollution impacts. The Programme collaborates with 32 countries in Africa and the Bay of Bengal, and with regional organizations.

35. Surveys with the "*Dr Fridtjof Nansen*" have provided countries in Africa and Asia with key data and knowledge on the state of marine resources and ecosystems. Important data and information are being collected on marine resources, marine environment, habitats and marine pollution in the EEZ of partner countries, as well as in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. About 750 days of research surveys with almost 700 participants (approximately 25 percent women) have been carried out. In these, 16 species new to science have been discovered, around 30 survey reports, 23 scientific papers and two taxonomic guides have been published.

36. The EAF Implementation Monitoring Tool (EAF IMT) was launched in 2019. The tool is intended to support each partner country's work towards improving their fisheries management systems and operational planning, by helping the countries identify potential progress and gaps/difficulties. It can also help determine where training and other support can be needed. Several awareness raising and capacity building sessions have been organized on the use of the tool with partner countries.

H. Climate change

37. There is a growing interest in the nexus between climate change and aquatic ecosystems as well as the food production systems they sustain. During the intersessional period, based on COFI requests and in line with the corporate Strategy on Climate Change endorsed by the 156th Session of the Council, FAO implemented a range of activities aimed at supporting Members and partners to effectively mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. These include a comprehensive review of the impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture and guidance on mitigation and adaptation³⁴, as well as a number of programmes and projects on the ground (consisting of eight new climate change project proposals approved in the past biennium) implemented in collaboration with governments and with the full involvement of local communities.

²⁹ <http://edu.iamz.ciheam.org/FisheriesStatistics/en/>

³⁰ <https://i-marine.d4science.org/web/grsf/data-catalogue>

³¹ www.fao.org/fishery/statistics/tuna-atlas/en

³² www.fao.org/3/ca7012en/CA7012EN.pdf

³³ www.fao.org/in-action/eaf-nansen/en/

³⁴ See FAO, Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Papers No. 627, 638, 650, and 660.

38. The importance of improving fisheries management practices to build sustainability of the fisheries and aquaculture sector as an adequate response to climate change was reiterated during the Fisheries Sustainability Symposium held in November 2019.³⁵ FAO also conducted a preliminary study and identified top twenty countries most at risk from the impacts of climate change on fisheries (mainly in tropical coastal regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, in addition to several small island states in the Pacific), to fast track resource mobilization exercises from FAO and policy interventions.

III. GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SECTORS

39. Biodiversity mainstreaming across fisheries and aquaculture, has gained substantially in profile since the 1992 adoption of the CBD and reinforced with the 2016 'Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-being' at CBD COP13³⁶. The adoption of the Aichi Targets by the Parties to CBD in 2010, and in particular Aichi target 6 (fisheries) and Aichi target 11 (area-based management of biodiversity) outlines fisheries' accountability for the full footprint of its activities and facilitates the measurement of action by countries in mainstreaming biodiversity into their policies and management measures.

40. The CBD Secretariat, FAO and UNEP continue to collaborate within the "Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on Accelerating Progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets" to strengthen collaboration on issues of common interest, taking into account their different mandates and roles.

41. In recent years, FAO has participated regularly in the CBD Secretariat's processes and activities related to helping countries improve their Target 11 reporting and the development of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, including the Aichi Target 11 Partnership, a platform created by the CBD Secretariat for countries and organizations to commit to Target 11 and work together to stimulate regional support for achievement of their Target 11 commitments.

42. Marine areas beyond national jurisdiction represent 64 percent of the total surface area of the oceans. Pursuant to UNGA resolution 69/292 of 19 June 2015, negotiations are under way for a new international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). Given the potential implications that this process might have on the fisheries sector, and as instructed by COFI in 2018, FAO attended and contributed to all three Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) Sessions to provide technical information on fisheries and other relevant issues related to FAO's mandate. FAO contributed through statements during plenary sessions, and organizing or directly contributing to 10 side events held in the IGC context. FAO facilitated information exchange among regional fishery management organizations attending IGC to discuss elements of common concern, establishing network and coordination around fisheries related issues in BBNJ. Moreover, FAO facilitated the contacts and exchange of views among Member delegations concerning provisions of the draft text.

43. The FAO *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines) and the *Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security* (VGGT) both serve as references for the responsible governance of tenure. In November 2017, the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 2022 the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture, highlighting the importance of this

³⁵ FAO. 2020. *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Fisheries Sustainability: strengthening the science-policy nexus. FAO headquarters, 18–21 November 2019, Rome, Italy*. Fisheries and Aquaculture Proceedings No. 65. Rome. 116 pp. (also available at www.fao.org/3/ca9165en/ca9165en.pdf)

³⁶ www.cbd.int/cop/cop-13/hls/cancun%20declaration-en.pdf

subsector for food and livelihood security. FAO leads the planning for the International Year (see COFI/2020/Inf.12.2).

44. The UN Global Compact *Ocean Stewardship 2030 Report*³⁷ identified 10 critical ambitions that can guide global policy-making and responsible stewardship of the Ocean. The report flags ensuring fully traceable seafood as one of the critical ambitions contributing to food security, addressing seafood fraud and IUU fishing. The UN Global Compact calls for all seafood traded internationally in 2030 to be required by law to be accompanied by standardized traceability data that consumers can trust.

45. Ocean issues are growing in importance in the Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC, in recognition of its climate and carbon regulatory role, and for being a crucial source of our planet's biodiversity and ecosystem services. FAO has remained active in this sphere, including participating in the virtual *Oceans Action Day 2020* (November 2020), the *Ocean and Climate Change Conference* (December 2020), and others. The Global Climate Action Agenda is expected to continue in coming years, highlighting the importance of adaptation measures to ensure sustainable contributions of fisheries to food and livelihood security.

46. Finally, at its 72nd session the UNGA decided to proclaim the United Nations *Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development* for the 10-year period beginning on 1 January 2021, to boost international coordination and cooperation in research and scientific programmes for better management of ocean and coastal zone resources and reducing maritime risks. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO has launched an implementation plan, and FAO has committed its support to the implementation of the Decade.

IV. AREAS OF PRIORITY IN 2020–2021 AND BEYOND

47. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aims to tackle the complex challenges facing the planet today, including food security and poverty alleviation, in an indivisible, multi-sectoral approach. While progress is being made in many places, action to meet the Goals is not yet advancing at the speed or scale required. As a result, the UN Secretary General called on all sectors of society to mobilize for a decade of action³⁸.

48. As custodian UN agency for 21 SDG indicators, including four SDG14 indicators, FAO is expected to develop methodologies, assist countries in the collection of relevant data, validating and harmonizing them, estimating regional and global aggregates and making them available for international reporting. With regard to fisheries, particular attention will need to be given in this biennium to the implementation of the areas and indicators for which FAO is custodian: fisheries sustainability (14.4.1), fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing (14.6.1), contribution of fisheries to the gross domestic product (GDP) in SIDS (14.7.1), and protection of Small-Scale fisheries (14.b.1).

49. It is envisaged that this priority area of work will require additional funding to support the statistics and data collection systems in many countries and regions. These capacity building activities will be essential to allow countries to better monitor their fishery and aquaculture sector and their progress towards achieving the related SDG targets. At the same time efforts will be made to better connect fisheries and aquaculture to other relevant SDGs, in particular in relation to food security and nutrition, livelihoods, employment, gender and climate change.

50. The development of the new FAO Strategic Framework³⁹ emphasizes that the Organization will work in support of the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the three Global Goals of Members,

³⁷ www.unglobalcompact.org/take-action/ocean

³⁸ www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/decade-of-action/

³⁹ FAO CL165/3

leaving no one behind through sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems, based on FAO's four aspirations: *Better production, Better nutrition, a Better environment and a Better life*.

A. Better Production

51. The 2020 FAO *State of Food Security and Nutrition Report*⁴⁰ states that agricultural demand may increase by 50 percent by 2050 compared to 2013, as a result of population growth and income growth in low and middle-income countries, growth which would hasten a dietary transition towards higher consumption of animal protein.

52. The 2020 FAO *State of Fisheries and Aquaculture Report*⁴¹ (SOFIA) projects that on the basis of the assumptions used, total fish production (excluding aquatic plants) is expected to expand to 204 million tonnes in 2030, with an overall increase, in absolute terms, of 15 percent over 2018. Aquaculture will continue to be the driving force behind the growth in global fish production and is projected to reach 109 million tonnes in 2030, an increase of 32 percent over 2018.

53. Noting that the contribution of the fisheries and aquaculture sector to food security, nutrition and livelihoods can and must further increase, while addressing the environmental challenges and leveraging the solutions that natural systems have to offer, FAO will work on the development of a Blue Transformation programme, in the context of the "*Better Production*" aspiration in the Strategic Framework, through the use of budgetary as well as extra budgetary resources. The Blue Transformation Program represents an evolution of the Blue Growth Initiative and will be anchored in the following high-level objectives:

- a. Support the sustainable intensification of aquaculture production, scaling up and transferring knowledge through aquaculture development initiatives and South-South Cooperation, through innovative practices which support environmental stewardship,
- b. Facilitate transformative and innovative management efforts to support resilient fisheries in regions where fisheries sustainability is under significant pressure, by addressing growing overfishing rates, environmental degradation, climate change impacts, equity, IUU fishing, and strengthening the scientific basis in support of management decisions, including through the use of new technology,
- c. Transform and upgrade fish value chains, including reducing loss and waste, focusing on underutilized and emerging resources, responding to changing climates and markets, and re-activating chains affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- d. Make fish products an indispensable component of food security and nutrition strategies for all, encourage the consumption of fish, aquatic plants and their products derived from sustainable fisheries and aquaculture and supporting communities with few affordable animal protein alternatives to achieve healthy diets, and tackling malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.

54. The Blue Transformation programme is designed to help translate efforts to on the ground action, through co-designed and co-delivered initiatives with FAO Members and partners, including the private sector. These targeted initiatives will include improving data collection systems, institutional support, capacity building and technological development, as also called for in the draft COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture (see COFI/2020/2.3).

55. In relation to sustainable aquaculture intensification, FAO will work towards the development of Integrated Sustainable Aquaculture Programmes, in coordination with the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI-SCA) and implement budgetary and extra-budgetary projects such as the

⁴⁰ www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9692en

⁴¹ www.fao.org/3/ca9229en/ca9229en.pdf

Smart/digital aquaculture development project funded by the Republic of Korea, the FAO/AfDB Zambia Aquaculture Enterprise Development Project, the FAO/EU TrueFish Project in Lake Victoria, the FAO Mozambique Chilembene project, or the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) Zanzibar Hatchery Project, among others.

56. FAO will progress in the development of a Global Sustainable Aquaculture Advancement Partnership (GSAAP) to promote sustainable aquaculture through modern technology, innovations and management. This partnership, developed in collaboration with the Chinese Academy of Fisheries Sciences (CAFS), will be reported to the COFI-SCA forthcoming meeting in 2021.

57. The Global Conference of Aquaculture (GCA) Millenium+20 had to be postponed to September 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and will be held in Shanghai, China, possibly with a dual mode (physical/virtual). The Conference is considered strategically essential to highlight challenges and opportunities for aquaculture intensification. FAO will continue completing and validating the global and regional reviews of aquaculture, through webinars that have attracted 1,600 participants, and which will be published in coming months ahead of the GCA.

58. In response to requests for additional technical support and training in relation to the assessment and reporting of SDG indicator 14.4.1, FAO will first provide a Technical Paper on Data Preparation for Assessment and Management of Data Limited Fisheries, to be finalized by 2021. The expected result is to provide support to Members in their assessment of the sustainability of data limited stocks, including making efficient and effective use of the data that is being collected.

59. As part of the EAF Nansen programme 10 countries are being supported to either develop and implement management plans consistent with the Ecosystem Approach for Fisheries, or for advancing the management of shared stocks. In 2021, work will focus on consolidating scientific results, science-management activities, supporting implementation of EAF in additional countries and implementing the capacity development plan. The programme is expected to resume survey work in June 2021, after a long lay-off due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has impacted many deliverables in relation to the science, management and capacity development of the programme.

60. FAO will also continue to provide support to countries in their endeavour to combat IUU fishing. This will involve delivering the existing Global Programme to support the implementation of the PSMA and complementary international instruments through (i) upscaling innovative approaches, (ii) strengthening global information exchanges, (iii) launch and promotion of the Global Capacity Development Portal, (iv) develop Guidelines for the Regulation, Monitoring and Control of Transshipment following COFI34 guidance, and (v) provide guidance on establishing baselines for initiatives addressing IUU fishing through the IUU estimation work.

61. Furthermore, and through its role as Secretariat to the meetings of the Parties to the PSMA, FAO will prioritise the launching of the questionnaire for the purpose of monitoring implementation of the PSMA, delivering the 3rd meeting of the Parties to the PSMA (virtually, 31 May to 4 June 2021), as well as the working groups of the meetings of the Parties, and launch the PSMA Global Information Exchange System.

62. FAO will continue to foster ongoing cooperation and exchange of information for the approximately 50 RFBs worldwide through the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN). The RSN, supported by FAO, hosts and provides secretariat services and the venue for meetings, maintains a dedicated website and publishes a magazine that includes the updated information provided by member organizations, as well as technical publications. The work of RSN is becoming progressively relevant in many international fora such as the framework of the international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, or at the WTO on an international legally binding instrument on the prohibition of certain fishery subsidies related to overfishing, overcapacity, and IUU fishing.

63. Lessons learned from the global pandemic can be incorporated into fish supply chains to build back better and improve resilience to future crisis by ensuring food security and nutrition. This is especially relevant for land-locked food insecure countries and small-island developing states that depend on fish as a source of protein and micronutrients that form a healthy diet to combat the triple burden of malnutrition that can have severe consequences on over-stretched healthcare resources.

64. Existing collaborations regarding digital innovation will be furthered and strengthened under the Hand-in-Hand Initiative with the goal to offer FAO Members a multidisciplinary platform with relevant fisheries and aquaculture data for analysis of key unlocking factors for the realization of national objectives in this sector. These efforts will also be driven by the contributions to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030). As part of these activities, countries will be supported through digital innovation, open data and multidisciplinary approaches to enable countries to achieve all of their ocean-related Agenda 2030 priorities.

B. Better Nutrition

65. The 2020 *FAO State of Food Security and Nutrition report*⁴² indicates that nearly 690 million people are hungry, up by 10 million people in one year and by nearly 60 million in five years. The report notes that the world is not on track to achieve Zero Hunger by 2030, and that if recent trends continue, the number of people affected by hunger will surpass 840 million by 2030.

66. The 2020 *FAO State of Fisheries and Aquaculture Report (SOFIA)* notes that in 2018 the fisheries sector produced a record volume of 156 Mt of fish products for direct human consumption, allowing per capita consumption to reach 20.5 kg per year, more than twice the per capita consumption rate in 1961. This demonstrates the net contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to improving food security and nutrition in the world. Production of aquatic foods now occurs in all countries of the world and thanks to trade and technological improvements all consumers have now access to fish and fish products.

67. In 2020, FAO contributed to a UN Standing Committee on Nutrition discussion paper on Aquatic Foods (to be published in the first quarter of 2021) highlighting the role of Aquatic Foods in Sustainable Healthy Diets. This paper was developed in collaboration with experts from various international organizations, including WorldFish and the Global Action Network for Sustainable Food from our Oceans and Inland Water Bodies.

68. FAO will also continue to be engaged with partners from various action tracks of the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), as well as the upcoming session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to ensure that fisheries and aquaculture are well-represented in the food systems dialogues.

69. FAO will continue to implement the Norad project “Empowering Women in Small Scale Fisheries for Sustainable Food Systems”. The work will continue focusing on empowering women in the small-scale fisheries post-harvest sector for improved food security and nutrition, which was carried out in five countries during its inception year: Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda, and included baseline assessments to understand the country specific context, the socioeconomic impacts of the fishmeal industry and to review good practices in the post-harvest sector.

C. Better Environment

70. FAO will support the use of selective fishing gear and responsible fishing practices within the context of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and will be particularly focused on: a) supporting the development of practices to reduce unwanted bycatch, discards, pollution, marine

⁴² www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9692en

plastic litter, Abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) and associated “ghost fishing”; and b) developing and implementing a global capacity development programme to support these actions. These will be carried out in collaboration with RFMOs, relevant NGOs, global alliances, academia and other UN agencies (ref COFI/2020/Inf.15.4).

71. FAO’s work on climate change in fisheries and aquaculture to be undertaken in the next biennium will give specific focus to promoting low-carbon, consumer-led and local solutions, developing and articulating a future strategic vision for climate-resilient fisheries and aquaculture, raising awareness of transforming agri-food systems as a priority climate solution. This will include ecosystem-based adaptation, promoting strategies for synergistic actions and increasing assistance to countries to mainstream fisheries and aquaculture in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and national adaptation plans.

72. Climate change interventions need to operate in a broader context of climate resilience building. FAO is working to build large partnerships with financial institutions, governments and civil society organizations to develop comprehensive and coordinated responses to climate change. As a result, FAO is expecting to invest efforts in resource mobilization, in particular access to climate finance (e.g. Green Climate Fund) to implement cross-sectoral projects.

73. In line with the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across agricultural sectors, mainstreaming biodiversity across fisheries and aquaculture will include activities across three thematic areas: (i) species (including intra-specific diversity); (ii) ecosystems; (iii) institutions and international agreements. (COFI/2021/9.1), including support for the implementation of fisheries and aquaculture priority actions set out in the in Action Plan.

74. Targeted focus will be given to supporting the finalization of and delivery by Members of the fisheries and aquaculture related goals and targets outlined in the CBD administered Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. FAO is working with governments, and a diverse set of partners to ensure ‘reciprocal mainstreaming of biodiversity’, so that needs and priorities of both conservation and sustainable use sectors are realized. It will be essential to move away from a ‘reduction of impacts’ driven narrative, to one where biodiversity is seen as an integral part of sustainable development, and the fisheries and aquaculture sectors are viewed as important stewards of biodiversity.

75. The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 (the Decade) positions restoration as a major solution towards meeting a wide range of global development goals and national priorities pertaining to all terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. The Decade, led by FAO and UNEP, builds on existing commitments such as the Paris Agreement and the Bonn Challenge and will be implemented in collaboration with Rio Conventions and other partners. FAO’s position on ecosystem restoration is outlined in COFI/2020/Inf.15.2. FAO will continue working to help ensure proper aquatic (freshwater, coastal and marine) focus and representation of fisheries and aquaculture sector needs in the Decade.

76. FAO will continue to work on the impact of harmful algal blooms on fisheries production. In October 2020, FAO hosted the Virtual Expert Meeting on Early Warning Systems for Harmful Algal Blooms, focusing on data sources and promoting data reporting. FAO will also develop a technical guidance for the implementation of early warning systems for harmful algal blooms, and will take the lead of this joint FAO-IOC-UNESCO-IAEA exercise.

77. In December 2020, FAO hosted the Virtual Workshop on Bivalve Sanitation, jointly with the Centre for Aquaculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), to share information and to identify where FAO can assist in capability building to support Responsible Authorities and Official laboratories in the production of microbiologically safe bivalve shellfish.

78. FAO will develop a background document on dietary exposure of microplastics that will highlight the exposure contribution through food and support exercises carried out by other organizations on overall exposure (airborne exposure or skin contact).

D. Better Life

79. Fishing continues to be one of the most dangerous occupations in the world, which is shown also by the high accident and fatality rates in most countries. As highlighted by COFI, there are clear linkages between IUU fishing, safety at sea and poor working conditions. Over the years three key instruments have been developed: the PSMA covering IUU fishing, the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188) covering working conditions of fishers on-board fishing vessels, and the IMO Cape Town Agreement (CTA) covering safety on-board fishing vessels over 24 meters long operating on the high seas. FAO will work with partners to implement these instruments, to form the basis for jointly tackling IUU fishing, safety at sea and poor working conditions.

80. Innovation towards more sustainable and safer fishing operations will be promoted through development of sector specific micro-finance, credit, investment and insurance programmes together with finance and insurance institutions, UN agencies and regional partners, such as the Asia Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA). The targeted technical and financial assistance will facilitate innovation in fisheries towards sustainability and contribute to implementation of nationally and regionally adopted fisheries management measures.

81. The fisheries and aquaculture sector is still heavily underserved by social protection programmes hence the importance of FAO to continue to support Members in achieving SDG 1.3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable) in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

82. In order to include the needs and challenges of small-scale fisheries in decision-making, their contribution needs to be properly quantified. FAO is about to release a revision of the 2012 World Bank, FAO, WorldFish report 'Hidden Harvest: The Global Contribution of Capture Fisheries', with a focus on estimating the contribution of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development. This work, building on 58 country case studies and the engagement of over 300 contributors is expected to be a major contribution to SDG14.b.

83. In November 2017, the 72nd session of the UNGA declared 2022 the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture, highlighting the importance of this subsector for food and livelihood security - which came also out very clearly in the current COVID-19 crisis. This will provide an important opportunity to further highlight the contributions of these sub-sectors, and to draw attention to issues such as how secure tenure rights can support the poor and vulnerable and can help achieve the SDCs, in particular SDG14.b.

84. FAO will continue its actions to manage risks across the fishery and aquaculture sector with a focus on the most vulnerable in least developed countries and small island developing states. This includes supporting disaster affected fishers with new fishing gears and safety equipment, implementing various capacity development programmes on safety at sea, developing guidance for the implementation of early warning systems for Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB) events, mobilizing finance to strengthen local communities' adaptive capacities, protecting biodiversity and aquatic ecosystems to ensure continued access to nutritious food in disaster prone countries.