

11th Session of FAO's COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, Bremen, Germany, 2-6 June 2008

The 11th session of FAO's COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade held from 2-6 June 2008 in Bremen, Germany endorsed a set of technical guidelines aimed at promoting responsible international trade in fish and fishery products.

The voluntary guidelines will help countries ensure that international trade in fish and fishery products do not compromise the sustainable development of fisheries and responsible utilization of living aquatic resources.

They call on governments to take a number of steps, including:

- adopting conservation and management measures for long-term conservation and sustainable use of aquatic resources, as a necessary foundation for sustainable fish trade;
- developing indicators for measuring the biological, economic and social sustainability of fisheries;
- establishing catch documentation and certification schemes to track seafood and fish products from point of capture or production to final destination;
- targeting financial and technical assistance to developing countries to strengthen their capacity for fisheries management and responsible trade practices;
- conducting periodic reviews of laws and regulations related to the international trade in fish products to determine if the reasons for their original creation continue to exist; and

- collecting and disseminating accurate statistical information on international trade in fish.

The value of world exports of fish and fish products climbed to a record high of US\$92 billion in 2007. The proportion of world fish production (145 million tonnes) that is traded internationally now represents 38 percent of the total, or 55 million tonnes. This can involve significant benefits for poor countries – their net export revenues from fish trade currently run around US\$25 billion, translating into more jobs, better incomes, and increased government revenues.

However, fish trade can also pose some risks. Increased demand for fish to supply international markets can sometimes result in excessive fishing pressure, potentially leading to the over-exploitation and wasteful use of some fish stocks and thereby exacerbating the consequences of ineffective fisheries management regimes. This can in turn affect food security, especially where there is a high dependence on fish in the diet.

The guidelines offer advice on how to implement the trade-related provisions in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, will help countries maximize the poverty reduction, food security and nutrition benefits of fish trade while minimizing potential negative aspects.

More information can be obtained from William Emerson, Technical Secretary, Sub-Committee on Fish Trade at William.Emerson@fao.org

Fourth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture

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They requested FAO to develop guidelines which could be considered as a benchmark when national and regional aquaculture certification schemes and standards are developed. Under this agenda item, the supporting working document describes the transparent and exhaustive consultation process which FAO used to develop the draft *Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification*, and presented to the COFI/SCA for review, advice and approval.

5. The last technical agenda item is on "Opportunities for addressing the challenges in meeting the rising global demand for food fish from aquaculture" aimed at examining the status of aquaculture production and markets, with the view to identifying the most compelling issues that require attention by the aquaculture sector, in order to provide an enabling environment for the sector that will meet projected global demand for aquatic food. The secretariat seeks advice from the COFI/SCA to conduct priority activities as required.

A special event on the Department's Special Programme for Aquaculture Development in Africa (SPADA) will also be held. A presentation and a discussion (outside plenary) of the participating members will be undertaken aimed at raising awareness about SPADA to a wider audience as well as to gather ideas on future needs and assistance requirements.

As most of us believe that the aquaculture sector can grow responsibly to meet the future demand for aquatic food while preserving the natural resource base it needs to thrive, the decisions and recommendations of this fourth session of the COFI/SCA are vital.

Dates: 06-10 October 2008

Venue: Hotel Sol-Meliá Patagonia, Klenner 349, Puerto Varas, Lakes Region, CHILE

Information: www.fao.org/fi/body/cofi/cofiaq/cofiaq.asp

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