



Outcomes of the fourth session of the sub-committee on aquaculture of the committee on fisheries

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The fourth session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) was held in Puerto Varas, Chile, from 6 to 10 October 2008 at the kind invitation of the Government of Chile. It was attended by 38 Members of FAO, by representatives from one specialized agency of the United Nations and by observers from 6 intergovernmental and 3 international non-governmental organizations. Ms Marisol Alvarez (Chile) was elected Chairperson of the Sub-Committee. Ms Supranee Chinabut (Thailand) was elected first Vice-Chairperson. Russia and Australia were elected second and third Vice-Chairs respectively. The Sub-Committee elected Ms Linda Chaves (United States of America) Chairperson of the Drafting Committee with the membership of Belgium, Canada, China, Ecuador, India, Mexico, Norway, Thailand, Uganda and the United States of America.

Important highlights are briefly described below. Technical documents, session report and other relevant information are available at www.fao.org/fi/

Coordinating Working Party on Aquaculture Statistics

The Secretary of the Coordinating Working Party on Fisheries Statistics (CWP) reported the progress towards establishing a CWP Aquaculture Group and highlighted the conclusions and recommendations of the recent meeting held in Puerto Varas. The meeting agreed that harmonization of terminology, concepts, methodologies and standards should be the priorities. In this regard, the Secretary requested assistance from members for participation and funding support.

Implementation of the recommendations from previous sessions

The Sub-Committee commended the Secretariat on the quality, integrity and comprehensiveness of the documents and reaffirmed its support for FAO activities. The Sub-Committee expressed its strong satisfaction on the progress made, especially considering limited financial resources.

Members acknowledged FAO's efforts in the development of African aquaculture, in particular the establishment of the Special Programme for Aquaculture Development in Africa (SPADA) and the Aquaculture Network for Africa (ANAF). A number of members recognized the relevance of creating aquaculture networks for the development of sustainable aquaculture and also stressed the importance of the establishment of the Aquaculture Network of the Americas (ANA).

Special Programme for Aquaculture Development in Africa (SPADA)

The powerpoint presentation made by the Secretariat on the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department's Special Programme for Aquaculture Development in Africa (SPADA) was well received by the Members. Two other presentations were also made by representatives from two African Members and NEPAD (New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development). The Sub-Committee, in particular all the African members and NEPAD, expressed its appreciation to FAO for the SPADA initiative, urged FAO to further promote and use SPADA as the coherent framework for aquaculture development in Africa, and called for participation of and funding support by development agencies.

Technical guidelines on aquaculture certification

Members commended the work and efforts of the Secretariat to advance the preparation of the technical guidelines on certification in aquaculture and in preparing a draft document which constitutes a good basis for continuing with the processes to finalise the guidelines. Members highlighted the importance of these guidelines for facilitating international trade in aquaculture products and the priority they attach to their finalisation so that guidelines can serve as a basis for the development of transparent and globally acceptable certification schemes in aquaculture. The Sub-Committee requested FAO to invite members to submit their comments on the present draft guidelines by 31 January 2009, and that these comments be consolidated by FAO into a new version of the draft guidelines to be sent to FAO members by 31 March 2009. It

was further recommended that the revised version will be discussed at a technical consultation to be held as soon as possible in 2009. During its 28th session in March 2009, COFI will be requested to consider delegating the technical consultation authority to finalise and adopt the guidelines.

Progress reporting on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF)

Many Members expressed their appreciation for the analysis provided and noted that some progress had been made in the last reporting period but at the same time recognized that further improvement was needed. The proposal for a revised reporting mechanism with an interactive questionnaire format was received positively by the Sub-Committee. With regard to the questionnaire for evaluating the progress being made in the implementation of the Code, most Members advised that further work on the proposed reporting template is required. The Sub-Committee recommended that a revised pilot version of the questionnaire format be tested in different regions reflecting different environmental conditions in order to ensure global applicability.

Towards better governance in aquaculture

The Secretariat presented the paper on opportunities and challenges for better governance in aquaculture. During the discussion on the agenda item, some Members described their national activities towards strengthening governance in aquaculture. These include risk management frameworks, aquatic animal health management programmes, aquaculture certification and assistance to small-scale aquaculture. Some Members described their collaborative

efforts with farmers and farmers' associations particularly using a participatory approach in providing extension and support services. Self-governance was considered to be an additional desirable approach, and the need for capacity building at farmers and farm organization levels was underscored. A few Members indicated that their countries do not have specific aquaculture policies or legislation since it is a relatively recent activity for them.

Building awareness on success stories and highlighting the positive impacts of aquaculture were considered important. Some Members suggested that practical country case studies of successful governance models could be discussed by the Sub-Committee and disseminated in order to improve the sectoral management by other members.

Upon the suggestion of several members, the Secretariat organized a Side Event to share good governance initiatives and experiences. Chile, China, India, Mozambique, Norway as well as NACA and OSPESCA presented their experiences in Aquaculture Governance.

Challenges in meeting the rising the global demand for food fish

The Sub-Committee appreciated the review made by the Secretariat of the current situation, issues and challenges for the sector including the demand for aquaculture products, continued growth of aquaculture, trends in species, consumption and trade, small-scale producers and market access, social responsibility, marine resources and aquafeed, environmental and social aspects, diversification and expansion, communication and networks, and aquaculture insurance.

African participants stressed that the challenges highlighted relate to governance especially supporting structured and responsible growth of the smallholder private sector and the need for supportive and appropriate policies and legislation. This requires access to high quality inputs such as improved fish seed and feed, credit, information and education. Members requested technical assistance for implementing their national aquaculture development plans and for dealing with the challenges at hand.

Many countries, supported by NEPAD, emphasized the need for a regional approach concerning disease outbreaks and the need to establish an aquatic biosecurity framework and requested FAO to provide technical assistance through a regional technical cooperation project under the umbrella of SPADA.

Several countries stressed that well-planned and well-managed aquaculture leads to social benefits, improving food security and helping towards progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The need to educate the public on achievements and positive developments of aquaculture were mentioned. Critical issues identified were i) improving the governance, and organization of farmers, ii) environmental issues including effluents, iii) continued availability of fish feeds, and iv) the integration of aquaculture into water resource management and agricultural sector management plans. Other challenges mentioned included capacity building and farmer training to become more competitive and meet trade requirements, benefits and risks of seafood, sharing of best practices and the need to publicize positive impacts of certain aquaculture practices. Aquaculture in offshore areas was mentioned as promising



but still requiring efforts in research as well as improvements in technology and regulatory framework. Climate change and possibilities for mitigation were mentioned by several members as issues of increasing importance that could be dealt with in collaboration with other specialized agencies.

Some countries mentioned the importance of food safety and the need for cost-effective certification and requested FAO to continue its work towards better market access including through the linkage particularly of small-scale farmers with fair trade organizations. A request was made for FAO technical assistance towards establishing and implementing an ASEAN regional aquaculture development strategy including certification implementation, traceability and cluster farm management. It was suggested that the Sub-Committee examine and report on the use of aquaculture technologies to enhance and rebuild depleted fisheries.

Aquaculture information products

The Secretariat made a presentation on Aquaculture Information Products of the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department.

Fifth Session of the Sub-Committee

The Fifth Session of the Sub-Committee will be held in Thailand in 2010. The Sub-Committee expressed its gratitude to the government of Thailand for its offer to host the session. The exact date and place of the Fifth Session will be decided in consultation with the Royal Thai Government and will be communicated to the Members accordingly.

More information is available on request by writing to Rohana.Subasinghe@fao.org, Technical Secretary of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture.