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## COMMITTEE FOR INLAND FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE OF AFRICA

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## THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON SECURING SUSTAINABLE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY ERADICATION (THE SSF GUIDELINES) AND INLAND FISHERIES IN AFRICA

### Executive Summary

This information document presents an overview of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) and underlines the importance of supporting their implementation in inland fisheries in Africa.

The SSF Guidelines were developed through a consultative process and endorsed by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2014. The SSF Guidelines are unique in that they are the first international instrument entirely dedicated to small-scale fisheries. The scope of the SSF Guidelines is both marine and inland fisheries and covers the whole value chain. They are referred to in the small-scale fisheries section of the African Union Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa and are hence closely linked to the regional policy framework.

CIFAA and its members have an opportunity in promoting the implementation of the SSF Guidelines to increase the contribution of small-scale inland fisheries to food security and nutrition and sustainable livelihoods. Areas requiring attention include:

- Recognizing legitimate customary tenure rights and ensuring that small-scale fishing communities have secure access to the fishery resources and land they depend on for their livelihoods.
- Strengthening small-scale fisheries organizations, including the sub-regional NSA platforms, to give inland fishing communities a stronger voice in decision-making and policy processes, paying particular attention to women and their organizations.
- Supporting fish processing and trade activities and reducing postharvest losses, both in local markets and regional trade.
- Strengthening regional collaboration on shared water bodies as well as cross-sectoral coordination of water basins.

**The committee is requested to:** review the way forwards specific to small scale fisheries across the Africa region in relation to tenure rights, the Strengthening of small-scale fisheries organizations, particularly gender organizations, current fish processing and trade systems for the improved collaboration on water bodies and basins.

## I. Introduction

1. Small-scale fisheries are a dynamic and diverse sector, engaging both men and women along the value chain and providing food and employment for hundreds of millions of people around the world. Small-scale fisheries contribute about half of global fish catches and employ more than 90 percent of the world's capture fishers and fish workers, about half of whom are women. Over half of those employed in fisheries value chains in developing countries work in small-scale inland fisheries.<sup>1</sup> The important role of small-scale fisheries for human wellbeing and sustainable development seems to be increasingly recognised, especially in developing countries because of their contribution to food and nutrition security and the opportunity they represent for poverty eradication. Still, small-scale fisheries tend to be inadequately addressed, both with regard to resource management and from a broader social and economic development perspective. Fishing communities continue to be marginalised and are not always involved in decision-making influencing their lives and future.<sup>2</sup>
2. The *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines)<sup>3</sup> were developed to address this situation. The SSF Guidelines are unique in that they are the first international instrument entirely dedicated to small-scale fisheries. The scope of the SSF Guidelines is both marine and inland fisheries and covers the whole value chain.
3. Inland fisheries play an important part in supplying fish and providing livelihoods. In Africa, inland fisheries production was estimated at 2 860 131 tonnes in 2015. The subsector makes an important contribution to food supplies, food security and nutrition providing an estimated 2.56 kg/capita/year. Inland fisheries are predominately small-scale but some of the fisheries of the African Lakes region can be classified as large-scale fisheries.<sup>4</sup>
4. The contribution and value of small-scale fisheries, in particular of inland fisheries, is often underestimated. Implementing the SSF Guidelines at the national and local levels, with support from global and regional policy and strategic processes, will enhance the recognition and contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security, poverty eradication and sustainable livelihoods.

## I. The SSF Guidelines

5. The SSF Guidelines were developed through a participatory process and some 4 000 small-scale fisheries representatives and other stakeholders in over 120 countries were directly involved, sharing their views and giving inputs for the contents of the document. The text was reviewed by FAO members in an FAO Technical Consultation, which met in May 2013 and February 2014, and the document was endorsed by the Thirty-first Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in June 2014. The SSF Guidelines thus represent a global consensus on principles and guidance for small-scale fisheries governance and development.
6. The SSF Guidelines are based on international human rights standards with a view to achieve responsible fisheries governance and sustainable development. They apply to small-scale fisheries in both marine and inland waters, to all actors – men and women – throughout the value chain and are global in scope but with a specific focus on the needs of developing countries. The SSF Guidelines are directed at all those involved in the sector and intend to guide and encourage

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank. 2012. *Hidden Harvest: The Global Contribution of Capture Fisheries*. The World Bank. 92p.

<sup>2</sup> FAO. 2018. *Progress by FAO and partners concerning the implementation of the SSF Guidelines since the thirty-second session of COFI in 2016*. COFI/2018/Inf.17. Rome. 16p.

<sup>3</sup> FAO. 2015. *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication*. Rome. 34p.

<sup>4</sup> Funge-Smith, S.J. 2018. *Review of the state of world fishery resources: inland fisheries*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Circular No. C942 Rev.3, Rome. 397 pp.

governments, fishing communities and other stakeholders to work together and ensure secure and sustainable small-scale fisheries for the benefit of small-scale fishers, fish workers and their communities as well as for society at large.

7. The SSF Guidelines complement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, supporting its overall principles and provisions. They are closely linked to the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (the Tenure Guidelines), endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security in 2012, and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security (the Right to Food Guidelines, 2004). They contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 14 and its target 14b (Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets)<sup>5</sup> but also SDGs 1 No poverty, 2 Zero hunger, 5 Gender equality, 12 Responsible consumption and production, 13 Climate action, and 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions.
8. The SSF Guidelines are structured in three part:
  - Part 1 (chapters 1-4) specifies the objectives, the nature and scope and the guiding principles of the guidelines as well as their relationship with other international instruments.
  - Part 2 (chapters 5-9) addresses key thematic areas including responsible fisheries and governance of tenure but also other crucial inter-sectoral topics.
  - Part 3 (chapters 10-13) provides implementation guidance and recommendations for how to create an enabling environment.
9. The SSF Guidelines thematic areas cover fisheries-specific topics such as responsible governance of tenure and sustainable resource management but also social development, employment and decent work, value chain, post-harvest and trade, gender equality, and disaster risks and climate change. Recognising the complexity of small-scale fisheries livelihoods, the SSF Guidelines promote holistic approaches to governance and development, integrating the need for both sustainable resource utilisation and social and economic development.
10. The SSF Guidelines stress that secure, equitable, socially and culturally appropriate tenure rights to fishery resources and to land in the coastal/waterfront area are critical for ensuring and facilitating access to the fishery, related activities (including processing and marketing), housing and other livelihood support activities of small-scale fishery dependent communities. They call for the responsible management of aquatic ecosystems and fishery resources through participatory approaches such as co-management.
11. The SSF Guidelines go beyond strictly fisheries-related issues and also provide guidance to address the socio-economic conditions of small-scale fishers, fish workers and their communities. The SSF Guidelines hence address issues such as education, health services, financial services, social protection, public infrastructure and other public services.
12. The SSF Guidelines recognise postharvest subsector as a critical link between harvesting and consumers. A well-functioning postharvest sector is a fundamental part of a sustainable food system. In most low-income countries, women predominate the postharvest sector and play a fundamental role in ensuring that their families and consumers more broadly have access to food, but they face many obstacles and frequently do not have the same rights and opportunities as men. In inland fisheries, more women are involved in the harvesting than in marine fisheries. Empowerment of women is key to sustainable small-scale fisheries and the SSF Guidelines specifically address the need to improve gender equality in the entire fisheries value chain. Based on the SSF Guidelines, guidance has been developed on improving gender equality in the small-scale fisheries sector: Towards gender-equitable small-scale fisheries governance and

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<sup>5</sup> SDG 14 – Life below water – refers to marine waters but the aspirations and goals are generally also relevant to inland fisheries.

development - A handbook<sup>6</sup>.

13. The SSF Guidelines also recognize the vulnerability of small-scale fisheries (throughout the value chain) to the impacts of climate change and disasters. They promote the development of specific policies, strategies and plans for climate change adaptation and mitigation, and emergency response and disaster preparedness, as well as direct support to small-scale fisheries communities that are affected.
14. The SSF Guidelines provide guidance on how to realize the principles and recommendations they contain through policy coherence, institutional and supporting implementation; information, research and communication; capacity development; and implementation support and monitoring. FAO supports the implementation of the SSF Guidelines through awareness raising (communication products and outreach), strengthening the science-policy interface (knowledge generation and support to policy reform), empowering stakeholders (capacity development and institutional strengthening), and catalyzing implementation efforts by partners and promoting collaboration.
15. As part of awareness raising and SSF Guidelines implementation planning support, a number of regional workshops have been carried out. Those covering African countries include the workshops held in Oman (Near East and North Africa<sup>7</sup>), Ethiopia (Eastern Africa<sup>8</sup>), Mauritius (Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region<sup>9</sup>), and Senegal (West and Central Africa<sup>10</sup>). Several of these workshops noted the particular importance of inland small-scale fisheries for food security and nutrition.

## II. Way forward for African small-scale inland fisheries

16. Information and statistics on small-scale inland fisheries are often deficient and the sector is typically ignored or overlooked in policy and global debates on food security. Small-scale inland fisheries face challenges in the form of competition from other economic sectors, climate change impacts and demographic changes. It should also be noted that there are many inland aquatic resources that are shared by two or several countries and consequently the regional aspects of small-scale inland fisheries are important. Existing regional fishery bodies, such as the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) and the Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA), have important roles to play.
17. A fundamental principle of the SSF Guidelines is the participation of small-scale fisheries actors themselves in governance and development processes. The African Union recognizes the need for stakeholder representation, in particular small-scale fisheries, in decision-making and policy processes within the framework of the African Union Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa, which has a specific section on small-scale fisheries.

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<sup>6</sup> FAO. 2017. Towards gender-equitable small-scale fisheries governance and development - A handbook. In support of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, by Nilanjana Biswas. Rome. 174p.

<sup>7</sup> FAO. 2016. Towards the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in the Near East and North Africa Region. Proceedings of the Near East and North Africa Regional Consultation Towards the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, Muscat, The Sultanate of Oman, 7-10 December 2015. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Proceedings No. 48. 138p.

<sup>8</sup> FAO. 2017. Towards the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in Eastern Africa. Proceedings of the East Africa Consultation Workshop on Improving Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication. 15–18 September 2015. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Proceedings No 49. Rome. 102p.

<sup>9</sup> Indian Ocean Commission. 2017. Proceedings of the Regional Consultation Workshop on Implementing the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication. 12-15 December 2016 - Plaine Magnien, Mauritius. Indian Ocean Commission, Food and Agriculture Organization Of The United Nations, Southern Africa Development Community. 111p.

<sup>10</sup> Franz, N., Smith, H. & Westlund, L. eds. 2019. Towards the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in West and Central Africa. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Proceedings No. 62. Rome. 86p.

Through its institutions, the AU Inter-African Bureau of Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) and the AU Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), the AU has supported the establishment of non-state actor (NSA) platforms for this purpose. These platforms are fairly recent and would still require institutional development and support to become fully functional. It is important to ensure that small-scale inland fisheries are appropriately represented on these platforms.

18. CIFAA and its members have an opportunity in promoting the implementation of the SSF Guidelines to increase the contribution of small-scale inland fisheries to food security and nutrition and sustainable livelihoods. Areas requiring attention include:

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