

SIDE EVENT

Advancing Blue Growth in fisheries: Social and human rights issues and access to trade

Tuesday, 5 September 2017 – 17:30 to 18:30

Moderated by: Audun Lem & Uwe Barg, FAO

Objective of this side event

This side event will provide the opportunity for dialogue among participants to share their experiences, current actions and future activities to advance human and labour rights in fisheries and promote access to trade especially for small-scale fisheries.

Background

The 2030 Agendaⁱ demands that “no one is left behind”. It offers a vision for a fairer, more prosperous, peaceful and sustainable world that is just, rights-based, equitable and socially inclusive. The human rights-based vision of the 2030 Agenda reinforces the call for social sustainability in fisheries, aquaculture and fish processing and associated fish value chains.

Small-scale fishers and other fish workers are often poor and vulnerable, and generally tend to have little recognized access to resources, credit and loans, productive services and markets; they often lack access to social protection, institutional support and education. Relative to other players in the value chain, small-scale fish producers are receiving the least economic benefits in terms of amount of money earned for their products, usually carry a disproportionate share of the risks, and often suffer from few or no opportunities to access major seafood markets. In addition, fish workers are exposed to human rights violations and labour abuses, including instances of human trafficking, fraudulent and deceptive recruitment, modern-day-slavery, physical, mental and sexual abuse, homicide, child labour, debt bondage, refusal of fair and promised pay, abandonment, discrimination, excessive working hours, poor occupational safety and health, and denial of rights to association and collective bargaining negotiations and labour agreements.

However, national and international initiatives supported by governments, civil society organizations, private sector, auditing and certification schemes, media, consumers, international organizations, among others, are increasingly addressing critical social and labour issues in fisheries^{ii, iii}. For example, numerous initiatives are advancing the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines^{iv} for Securing Small-Scale Fisheries, which call on governments and other actors to promote social development, employment and decent work. FAO is also providing capacity development assistance^v for the implementation of target 14.b (access for small-scale fisheries to resources and markets) of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (oceans and marine resources).

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To ensure no one is left behind, the Blue Growth Initiative^{vi} is also focused on communities, especially small-scale fish producers and fish workers to ensure they can participate and benefit from Blue Growth policies and actions.

ⁱ The 2030 Agenda presents the most recent global intergovernmental commitment of heads of state who declared (Our Vision, paragraph 8): “We envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity, and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity”.

^{UN}. 2015. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

ⁱⁱ FAO – COFI:FT. 2017. Social sustainability fish value chains and the link to trade. Working Document. COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade. Sixteenth Session, Busan, the Republic of Korea. September 2017. http://www.fao.org/fi/static-media/MeetingDocuments/COFI_FT/COFI_FT16/5e.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ FAO & Holy See, 2016. World Fisheries Day: The violation of human rights within the fishing sector. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6861b.pdf> ; <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/453811/icode/>;

^{iv} FAO. 2014. Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication. www.fao.org/3/a-i4356e.pdf

^v FAO. 2017. FAO working for SDG 14. Healthy oceans for food security, nutrition and resilient communities. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7298e.pdf>

^{vi} FAO. 2016. FAO’s input to the Secretary-General’s background note to the preparatory Meeting of the UN Conference to support the implementation of SDG14. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/12522FAO%20input%20to%20the%20SG%20Background%20note.pdf>