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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Twenty-Sixth Session

Rome, Italy, 7-11 March 2005

SYNTHESIS OF THE REPORT OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES RESEARCH ROME, 12-15 OCTOBER 2004

INTRODUCTION

1. The Advisory Committee on Fisheries Research (ACFR), established on the recommendation of the Committee on Fisheries at its Twentieth Session and approved by the FAO Council at its One Hundred and Fourth Session in 1993, held its Fifth Session at FAO Headquarters, Rome, 12-15 October 2004.¹
2. The eight members of the Committee were selected by the Director-General on the basis of their specialized knowledge in fisheries and aquaculture research, and to include the widest possible subject matter and geographical representation. A special observer also attended the Fifth Session².
3. It may be recalled that the Committee's role is (a) to study and advise the Director-General on the formulation and execution of the Organization's Programme of Work in respect of all aspects of fisheries research, including conservation and management of marine and inland fishery resources, increasing fish productivity through enhancement of wild resources and through aquaculture, improving the means of converting fishery resources into human food, and the study of the dynamics of fishing communities and the socio-economic consequences of government fishery policies - special attention will be provided to the fisheries aspects of oceanographic

¹ The full report of the Fifth Session of ACFR has been published as FAO Fisheries Report No. 758, Report of the Fifth Session of the Advisory Committee on Fisheries Research (ACFR), Rome, 12-15 October 2004, 28 p.

² The other members are: Drs. M.J. Williams (Chairperson), Chair, Board of Management, Australian Center for International, Agricultural Research, and Executive Officer, Future Harvest Alliance Office, Penang, Malaysia; Kwame A. Koranteng (Vice-Chairperson), Acting Director, Marine Fisheries Research Division, Tema, Ghana; J. Kurien (Vice-Chairperson), Professor, Centre for Development Studies, Kerala, India; Thabit Zahran Al Abdessalaam, Director, Marine Environment Research Center, Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (special observer); Pedro Bueno, Director General, Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA), Bangkok, Thailand; R. Hannesson, Professor, Centre for Fisheries Economics, Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, Helleveien, Bergen-Sandviken, Norway; Miguel Petre, Professor of Fisheries, UNESP Department of Ecology, Rio Claro, Brazil; Gudrun Petursdottir, Director, Fisheries Research Institute, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland; Michael Sissenwine, Director of Scientific Programs and Chief Special Advisor, National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, Silver Springs, United States of America; Secretariat: Dr. B.P. Satia, Chief, International Institutions and Liaison Service, FAO Fisheries Department.

research and to the impacts of environmental change on the sustainability of fisheries; and (b) by agreement between the Director-General and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of Unesco, and in accordance with Resolution 15 adopted at the Second Session of the IOC, also to act as the advisory body to that Commission on the fishery aspects of oceanography.

4. The Advisory Committee on Fishery Research has so far held five sessions (1997, 1999, 2000, 2002, and 2004) all at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy. These sessions have enabled the Fisheries Department to present the scope and extent of its work and that related to fisheries research for scrutiny by an independent body that can report to the Director-General and, through him, to the international fishery community.

5. ACFR has instituted a continuing consideration of key topics and issues, both critical gaps and emerging policy-related issues that need further consideration. Examples include the Committee's work on status and trends reporting in capture fisheries which led to the general acceptance of a Strategy for Improving Information on Status and Trends of Capture Fisheries, adopted by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2003. Other examples include its emphasis on small-scale fisheries which, for the first time in twenty years, was discussed at the Twenty-fifth Session of COFI as a stand alone agenda item, ecosystem perspective in fisheries³, and the implications of globalization on fish trade and distribution of benefits⁴. The Committee has also laid emphasis on human capacity development and agreed on a Strategic Framework on Human Capacity Development at its Fifth Session in October 2004 (see COFI/2005/Inf.11)

MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE FIFTH SESSION

6. The Committee reviewed the FAO work programme in fisheries with a focus on aquaculture and inland fisheries as well as on fish utilization and trade. It examined the outcomes of its Working Parties on Small-Scale Fisheries and on Human Capacity Development in fisheries and elaborated a future work programme for 2005-2006.

7. As in the past, the Committee extended its deliberation to include the manner in which scientific research could contribute to the development of fisheries policies with particular emphasis on questions of resource management, food security and poverty reduction. In this regard:

8. The Committee stated that the people operating in the fisheries sector, whether they are small-scale fishers, fish workers, fish traders or fisheries scientists need to be in touch with events in the wider society. It recalled that two years ago, world leaders endorsed ambitious fisheries targets at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The Committee commended the strategic approach taken by FAO in the WSSD process and then reviewed how FAO could assist countries both meet the targets and balance the benefits and costs of globalization of the sector through new approaches.

9. The Advisory Committee emphasized that human capacity development in the fisheries sector is at the heart of responsible fisheries management. The Committee recommended a new

³ This was one of eight critical gaps that the Committee identified at its First Session in 1997. The Committee on Fisheries, at its Twenty-fourth Session in 2001, welcomed the opportunity to address the issue of ecosystem approaches to fisheries in the planned Reykjavik Conference on Responsible Fisheries. The Reykjavik Conference was held in October 2001 and culminated in the adoption of the Reykjavik Declaration on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) 2002, encouraged the application by 2010 of the ecosystem approach. FAO has produced Technical Guidelines on the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries.

⁴ The study on responsible fish trade and food security examines international trade in fishery products and the impact it has on food security in two ways: (a) indirectly, as a source of livelihood through employment and income generated by the fisheries sector, and (b) directly, in the form of fish as food. The study's findings are based on an assessment at the global level as well as evidence from 11 national case studies. The study's main finding is that international trade in fishery products has had a positive effect on food security. The study, however, cautions that sustainable resource management practices are a necessary condition for sustainable international trade. The study also highlights the need for free and transparent trade and market policies to ensure that the benefits from international fish trade are enjoyed by all segments of society.

Strategic Framework (See COFI/2005/Inf. 11), in which capacity development is internally driven at multiple levels – individuals, within organizations, the sector and in the broader society. The Strategic Framework is strongly linked to the outcomes of the WSSD and to the Millennium Development Goals.

10. The Committee recommended that the Strategic Framework on Human Capacity Development should be widely disseminated as the basis upon which work plans can be built. It also advocated for the application of the Strategic Framework in the context of the FAO Field Programme and urged the Fisheries Department to present it to this session of COFI to create greater awareness of the subject among FAO Members and the international Community and encourage the use of the Strategic Framework.

11. The Committee discussed the major transformations being wrought in the sector of fish trade, the development of aquaculture and the dynamic but little understood role of small-scale fisheries in both coastal and freshwaters. The outlook for fisheries is that world supply will outstrip demand over the next twenty years, and appropriate and sustainable solutions to fish supply are urgently needed.

12. Given the importance of aquaculture development in the future supply of fish, the Committee recommended that FAO produce an authoritative and balanced review of the aquaculture sector including commercial aquaculture, and the role of aquaculture in poverty reduction. It also suggested that FAO needs to monitor and, in some circumstances, be involved in research that will address environmental and social impacts of aquaculture. In looking ahead at aquaculture development, the Committee recommended that FAO should study the issue of choice of species for aquaculture and the prospects for domestication to develop more suitable farm breeds.

13. The Committee noted that fish is the most heavily traded commodity and reviewed recent studies at FAO that addressed fish trade and food security. The results indicated that trade in fish is not harmful to food security but highlighted the negative impacts of increasing trade in aquatic products on resources due to poor resource management. The Committee recommended further research on trade in fish to address the importance of resource management on trade. In addition, for developing countries, trade access was a critical issue and the Committee suggested that further trade studies should look into the effects of trade barriers on trade flows and prices.

14. The Committee reviewed an extensive agenda of studies on small-scale fisheries that FAO had undertaken and supported the new approaches being promoted by FAO. The Committee expressed satisfaction that small-scale fisheries are now being seen with a development and ecosystem perspective rather than a sectoral focus. It pointed out that this shift opened up different ways to understand the realms and transition occurring in the sector, such as through livelihoods and ecosystem approach to fisheries management. The Committee advised that new and sustainable programmes were needed to assess small-scale fisheries. These assessments need to address production from them and the distribution of benefits.

15. Given the diversity of small-scale fisheries sector, the Committee felt that case studies of selected small-scale fisheries would help provide unique insights into the changes brought about by drivers such as globalization, climate and technology. In the case studies, the questions of rights and collective action would be central themes. Noting that fisheries and in particular small-scale fisheries continue to be the most dangerous occupation of all, with far reaching social consequences, the Committee urged FAO and the international community to devote more attention to issues of safety at sea.

16. In addition, the Committee:

- agreed on a future work programme and elaborated terms of reference on four key issues: trade in aquatic products, small-scale fisheries, aquaculture, sustainability of

livelihoods and environmental fluctuations. The Committee encouraged the Fisheries Department to facilitate the implementation of these studies;

- concluded that the planned activities over the period 2006-2011 as regards Major Programme 2.3 Fisheries covered some of the activities referred to in its report and, there were no inconsistencies in the planned activities and those the Committee had made during the session;

17. The Committee expressed appreciation to Dr Jacques Diouf, Director-General, for personally welcoming and interacting with members of the Committee. Members of the Committee were encouraged by the positive remarks made by the Director-General about the importance of the work of the Advisory Committee on Fisheries Research.