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et  
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Organización  
de las  
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Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
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## COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

### Twenty-seventh Session

Rome, Italy, 5 - 9 March 2007

## SYNTHESIS OF THE REPORT OF THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES RESEARCH Rome, Italy, 17-20 October 2006

### INTRODUCTION

1. The Advisory Committee on Fisheries Research (ACFR) was 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.
2. The Committee's role is 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.
3. During its Sixth Session, the Committee reviewed the work of the FAO Fisheries Department (FI) with a focus on fish trade, small-scale fisheries and aquaculture. The Committee discussed also other relevant work and activities undertaken by the Fisheries Department and related, among others, to human capacity development in fisheries, information on status and trends of capture fisheries, and FI's communication strategy.
4. The Committee addressed not only research aspects but also policy matters and provided recommendations to further guide the future work of the Department.

### MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE SIXTH SESSION

5. The Committee recognized that much of the **trade related work of FAO** was cross-cutting in its nature and that, in the FAO fisheries and aquaculture work program, care should be taken to integrate the trade and fish utilization work with other relevant fields, especially fisheries resource management, aquaculture production development and social areas such as food security and gender and development of standards and certification.

6. The Committee noted the emerging importance of retail chains in setting product standards and the proliferation of labels indicating the standards on their products. It questioned the costs, especially to small-scale producers and who was benefiting from such labelling schemes.

7. The Committee recommended the desegregation of aquaculture and capture fishery products in trade statistics. Among other benefits, such desegregated information would enable a better tracking of the impacts of improved fisheries management and better/best practice aquaculture production systems.

8. Given that many of the issues concerned with international trade in fish products, such as environmental, safety and quality, IUU and related issues would benefit from a consistent programme for documenting the origin of fish products, the Committee recommended that FAO evaluate suitable schemes and promote broadly the adoption of a system, at least for products that enter international trade.

9. The Committee stressed the importance of partnerships developed by FAO in its work on fish trade and utilization and the need to keep working with both the inter-governmental sector, the non governmental and the private sector including small businesses while bearing in mind that partnership platforms should be developed carefully in accordance with the policy of the Organization, including ensuring that no private party was accorded a competitive advantage.

10. The Committee reviewed an extensive agenda of **activities on small-scale fisheries** that FAO had undertaken. The main topics covered were: (i) Increasing the contribution of small-scale fisheries to poverty alleviation and food security; and (ii) Interdisciplinary assessment and management of small-scale fisheries and their role in food security and poverty alleviation.

11. The Committee recognized that there was a need for better assessment tools and methodology for small-scale fisheries but that this would be best developed in considering a number of case studies. The overall difficulties in improving the management of small-scale fisheries were also discussed and the importance of studies to gain a detailed understanding of both success and failures, especially with regards to building better partnerships between fishers and governments (co-management) were stressed.

12. The Committee appreciated the decision to keep small-scale fisheries as a stand-alone agenda item during COFI. It recommended that i) IUU issues in small-scale fisheries be included under the IUU agenda item and ii) more emphasis on inland fisheries, especially on issues related to socio-economics of small-scale fisheries and other relevant items.

13. The Committee recommended that the current high profile of deepwater fisheries not be allowed to distort priorities at the expense of other fisheries, especially small-scale fisheries in developing countries, which are much more important in terms of human welfare and ecological impact.

14. The Committee commended the **work of FAO in aquaculture** and welcomed the timely inclusion of Fish species in the Programme of Work of the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, as genetic resources were becoming increasingly important in view of their roles in improved aquaculture production and threats to biodiversity and genetic resource conservation.

15. In light of the COFI Sub Committee on Aquaculture giving priority to African aquaculture development, the Committee recommended FAO to bring a coordinated internal development approach including fish trade, policy and technical dimensions to its African aquaculture development support.

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16. The Committee was provided with **updated information on activities of the Fisheries Department** (FI) concerning (i) Information on Status and Trends of Capture Fisheries, (ii) Human Capacity Development, (iii) World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) follow up, (iv) Marine protected areas and deep seas fisheries, and (iv) FI's communication strategy. The Committee:

- recommended that more emphasis be placed on socio-economic information and the analysis that support policy advice for improved fishery management.
- complimented the progress that has been made in the Fisheries Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) initiative, noted linkages to the "Global Marine Assessment" and recommended that FAO gets more involved in a partnership with UNEP and the other UN agencies involved in its development.
- recommended that FAO use FIRMS to document progress, in a transparent manner, toward fulfilling the WSSD target of rebuilding fisheries by 2015.
- noted that many of FAO's Fishery Department Technical Program projects have a strong human capacity building component and are supporting human capacity development in both governments and fishing communities in many countries.
- recommended that all FAO documents become available in electronic format as these constituted a veritable goldmine of information for fisheries.
- It was noted that there was a large amount of FAO material to be digitized and there was a need for prioritization of what should be digitized first. It was also requested that these should all be available free of charge.
- appreciated the services of the FAO Fisheries library and its support of countries, regional bodies, and NGOs and recommended that the Organization recognize the centrality of the modern library and information functions being delivered by the FAO library.
- expressed concern that deepwater fisheries issues may be diverting attention from other important issues.
- appreciated receiving the update on the FAO communication strategy and the Department's work and recommended it to continue to take a more proactive stance.

17. The Committee discussed a number of **future priorities** for consideration at its next meeting and therefore **for work** in the interim by FAO/FI. These include:

- Implementation of the strategy for human capacity development;
- Measuring the implementation of the CCRF (indicators and standards);
- Climate change and its linkage to both distributional changes in fisheries and WSSD targets especially those related to rebuilding stocks under changing environment;
- Emergency preparedness, disaster prevention especially mainstreaming this into other FAO activities;
- Disease prevention in aquaculture, and capacity building such as in epidemiology, and other relevant disciplines;
- Raising the awareness of the importance of fisheries in integrated management in inland water sheds, particularly rehabilitation of rivers, lakes and reservoirs for fish; and,
- Land tenure, property rights and access to resources and its impact on fisheries.