This report summarizes the outcomes of the “Expert Consultation on Fish Trade and Food Security”, Casablanca, Morocco, 27-30 January 2003. The expert consultation highlighted: the need to prepare technical guidelines for the Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries focussing on fish trade and food security; and for an examination of the options to bridge the projected gap between supply and demand for fishery products in the decades ahead taking into consideration food security concerns. With regard to regional, national and sub-national level initiatives, two types of action were recommended: (a): capacity building to adequately equip policy makers and technical personnel to deal with issues of international fish trade and food security (e.g. WTO, EU/ACP agreements, etc.) and (b) to assist governments evaluate the variety of options and opportunities and further assist governments reconcile the conflicts that may arise between trade in fishery products and its direct and indirect adverse impacts on food security. The full “Report of the Expert Consultation on Fish Trade and Food Security” is available at the meeting (in English only).
Session 1: Presentation and analysis of country/regional papers from selected fish exporting developing countries

1. Seven country presentations on Egypt, India, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal and Thailand and one regional presentation on Latin America gave a broad idea about the variety of situations regarding international fish trade and its implications for food security. The presentations revealed that, despite the demographic growth the average yearly per capita supply of seafood has increased as a result of increased catches, aquaculture developments or imports.

Session 2: Considerations related to the political environment of fish trade and food security

2. Fish must be considered not only for its commodity value (as a tradeable item) but also for its use value (as a food). Viewed in this manner, the right to fish as food is a part of the larger human right to food. This is not mere rhetoric but an integral part of a set of international obligations affirmed by nation states. The principle of ‘subsidiarity’ is relevant here as it points to the priority of addressing food security issues primarily at the national or local levels. Consequently, global generalisations about food security should be given less prominence.

3. Governments have three broad policy options to ensure food security through fishery products: (1) production for domestic consumption (2) production or trade and use its revenues to acquire other types of food, or (3) distribution through social aid programmes. To meet these policy options emphasis might be placed on: promoting small scale fisheries that are generally oriented to supply the domestic market or to industrial fisheries that are normally oriented to trade. Governments may also stress at the international level, such as at WTO, the need for technical guidelines with respect to trade and food security.

4. It was recalled that the Rome Declaration on World Food Security after the World Food Summit Plan of Action (1996) endorsed by Heads of States, agreed that “trade is a key element in food security”. The Summit’s Programme of Action included a set of voluntary guidelines. The progress in the reduction of undernourished population has been dismal, and the extent to which trade contributed positively or negatively to reduce hunger is not known. This issue needs to be assessed carefully.

Session 3: Discussion of ongoing work pertinent to trade and food security undertaken by FAO and other agencies

5. Various initiatives were presented during this session, among them the FAO/MFA (Norway) project. This project is studying the impact of fish trade on food security through case studies to be undertaken in 11 countries. The project will study the pathways toward possible food security enhancement and reduction resulting from international trade in fishery products. The approach to be used by project is given in Annex 1.

Session 4: Elements of a methodological framework for the analysis of the effects of international trade on food security in developing countries

6. The first important methodological point was that two conceptual frames are needed: one to assess the impact of trade liberalization on food security at the national level and another to assess the same at the household level. There is a need to examine the causal factors driving change, notably whether these are policy reforms or shocks or both. Shocks are indeed inevitable in the context of international trade. The impact of shocks should be analysed in order to develop response and safety measures to safeguard food security. The vital issue is whether the poor are disproportionately affected. Studies on trade and food security should aim at generating statistics that clearly show the extent to which fisheries production and trade contribute to the income of the poor and food-insecure households.
7. In analysing the effect of international fish trade on food security in fish exporting and importing developing countries, models of fish marketing and industrial behaviour at the value chain level should also be adopted. A proposed methodology and criteria were presented for this which included examination of the following hypothesis:

- International trade of fish improves economic development, but not necessarily for all;
- Trade might improve food security, but not necessarily for all low income groups and
- Food security measures should be integrated into international trade.

8. There was a suggestion that a measure that could improve both economic development and food security would be the implementation of “export quotas” for high value fish. Traders would have to import food equivalent to the value of these exports. Several questions were raised as to the feasibility of the proposal.

**Session 5: Identification and discussion of specific positive and negative contributions of fish trade to food security**

9. This session was in the format of a plenary discussion. An assessment of the positive and negative impacts of fish trade on food security was made using the schematic framework developed for the FAO/MFA (Norway) study. (See Annex 1). The framework was sketched out keeping capture fisheries in mind. There was broad agreement about the usefulness of the framework to help follow the various likely food security enhancing and reducing consequences of international fish trade.

10. It was suggested that the framework could be more comprehensive if it included: (a) the impact of international trade on women involved in traditional forms of fish processing; (b) in addition to income, the employment generated through trade and (c) the impact on the aquatic environment with reference to aquaculture. It was also stressed that the various conflicts engendered by trade as well as the distributional implications of trade within the fish economy should be examined.

11. As regards compensatory mechanisms to alleviate food security reduction, participants agreed that the focus should be both on possible income transfers and appropriate policy measures. Whether the lowering of fish prices in the importing country will lead to fish producers over-fishing their local fish stocks could not be generalized and requires further investigation. The structure of international trade has a bearing on the share that the producers will get from the export value realization. The impact that this has on food security needs to be examined.

12. There was consensus that the negative and positive impacts varied over time and were country specific. The need for a historical analysis of international trade was stressed. It was also pointed out that it would be useful to tailor the framework to deal with the specific context of aquaculture also – in particular the use of fishmeal for aquaculture of high value species and the environmental impact of aquaculture. Some negative impacts identified were:

- Displacement of traditional fish workers;
- Wastage of resources due to discards and by-catch and
- Inter-sectoral conflicts, e.g. industrial versus artisanal fisheries.
Session 6: Elaboration of an FAO led work programme in the area of international fish trade and food security

13. Under the overarching commitment to the deliberations and the spirit of the World Food Summit (WFS), the EC made the following recommendations, which were accepted by the Consultation:

- With regard to international coordination, the two key types of action would relate to: the need to prepare technical guidelines for the Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries focusing on fish trade and food security and the examination of the options for bridging the projected gap between supply and demand for fishery products in the decades ahead keeping food security concerns in mind.

- With regard to regional, national and sub-national level initiatives the two types of action would relate to: (a) equipping policy makers and technical personnel to deal at the international level with issues of fish trade and food security (e.g. WTO, EU/ACP agreements, etc.) and (b) to help governments to evaluate the variety of options and opportunities before them in the realm of international market opportunities and help them to reconcile the conflicts that may arise between trade in fishery products and its direct and indirect adverse impacts on food security.

14. The Consultation requested the FAO Fisheries Department to seek further synergies through collaboration with other FAO departments and other competent international agencies to disseminate widely the results of the work programme, taking the collaboration of the private sector where necessary and appropriate. It also urged governments and organizations to ensure gender aspects and the interests of marginalized groups are always taken into account; and that greater emphasis be placed on the promotion of regional fish trade for food security.

ANNEX 1