



## COMMISSION OF SMALL-SCALE, ARTISANAL FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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## BLUE TRANSFORMATION. THE CONTRIBUTION OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE TO FAO'S NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

### Introduction

FAO is committed to the Blue Transformation, a visionary strategy that aims to enhance the role of aquatic food systems in feeding the world's growing population by providing the necessary legal, policy and technical frameworks to sustain growth and innovation. Blue transformation proposes a series of measures designed to support resilience in aquatic food systems and ensure that fisheries and aquaculture grow sustainably, leaving no one behind, especially the communities that depend on the sector. Climate and environmentally friendly policies and practices, as well as technological innovations, are key pillars of the blue transformation.

### Blue Transformation: Vision for transforming aquatic food systems.

The prevalence of moderate to severe food insecurity has increased since 2014 and has become even worse since the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). Currently, more than 800 million people are hungry and 2.4 billion have very limited access to adequate food. As we move into the Decade of Action to Deliver the Global Goals, the challenge of feeding a growing population without depleting our natural resources continues to grow. In this context, aquatic food systems are becoming increasingly important because of their potential to meet a greater share of humanity's nutritious food needs.

Aquatic foods are a highly accessible and affordable source of animal protein and micronutrients, in addition to playing a key role in the food and nutrition security of many people, especially vulnerable coastal populations. Their critical role as sources of highly nutritious foods essential for physical and cognitive development is on the rise (United Nations on Nutrition, 2021), despite the fact that their consumption is currently considered a key target in less than half of public health and nutrition policies (Koehn et al., 2021). In addition, fisheries and aquaculture already support 58.5 million primary sector jobs, including part-time and casual jobs, as well as 600 million livelihoods, while trade in aquatic products constitutes an important source of hard currency and income for exporting countries and regions.

Unfortunately, aquatic food production and distribution are not problem-free. Strategies aimed at providing healthy, sustainable and equitable food systems have generally not adequately

addressed the serious long-term impacts of overfishing, habitat degradation and unequal access to resources and markets. In 2021, the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) unanimously adopted the Statement of the Committee on Fisheries for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture (FAO, 2021), which recognizes the sector's contributions to the fight against poverty and hunger since the adoption of the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

Successful examples of restoring healthy fish stocks and securing livelihoods through proper management or expanded sustainable aquaculture operations continue to emerge. Greater understanding of the effects of climate change and other natural disasters and man-made crises can also serve to protect and expand the services provided by aquatic food systems. With this knowledge in mind, the 2021 Statement of the Committee on Fisheries identifies priority areas that will further transform fisheries and aquaculture and, in doing so, shape a 21<sup>st</sup> century vision for the sector that shares and expands on what has been achieved around the world, so that aquatic food systems move from being understood as a problem to providing a recognized solution for food and nutrition security, as well as environmental and social well-being.

Blue transformation is the vision and process by which FAO, its Members and partners can use current and new knowledge, tools and practices to ensure and maximize the contribution of aquatic food systems (both marine and inland) to food security, nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all.

### **Why do we need a blue transformation?**

In recent decades, policy development, public and private sector innovation and increased consumption have driven significant developments in aquatic food systems. In the 25 years following the adoption of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, capture fisheries production remained stable, but aquaculture production grew by 250%, enabling the sector to meet the increased demand and consumption of aquatic foods, which rose to 20.5 kg per person per year (a growth rate twice that of the world population). The integration of aquatic foods into global and regional supply chains means that the value of trade in fishery and aquaculture products is now 200% higher than it was in 1995 and that the net traded value (exports minus imports) of aquatic food products in non-high-income countries exceeds that of all other food products combined.

Blue transformation is an initiative aimed at promoting innovative approaches that scale up the contribution of aquatic food systems to food security and nutrition and affordable healthy diets. Delivering Blue Transformation objectives calls for using comprehensive and adaptive approaches that take into account the complex interaction between global and local components of food systems and that support multi-stakeholder interventions to secure and enhance livelihoods, promote equitable benefit sharing, and enable appropriate use of biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as their conservation.

Through blue transformation, aquatic food systems can:

- promote the supply of sufficient aquatic food for a growing population in an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable manner.
- ensure the availability and accessibility of safe and nutritious aquatic foods for all, especially for vulnerable populations, and reduce food loss and waste.
- ensure that aquatic food systems contribute to improving the rights and incomes of communities that depend on the sector to achieve equitable livelihoods.

- support the resilience of aquatic food systems, which are heavily influenced by dynamic human and environmental processes, including those resulting from climate change.

### **Blue transformation objectives**

The blue transformation pursues three basic objectives:

1. Sustainable expansion and intensification of aquaculture in order to support global food security goals and meet the world's demand for nutritious aquatic foods and equitable distribution of benefits.
2. Effective management of the entire fisheries sector in order to achieve healthy fish stocks and secure livelihoods.
3. Improving value chains to ensure the social, economic and environmental viability of aquatic food systems, and nutritional outcomes.

Over the next 10 years, aquaculture must expand sustainably to meet the booming global demand for aquatic food, especially in food-deficit regions, while generating new sources of income and employment or consolidating existing ones. This requires updating aquaculture governance by promoting improvements in policy, legal, institutional and planning frameworks. FAO and its partners must focus on the pressing demand for the development and transfer of innovative technologies and best practices to generate efficient, resilient and sustainable operations. The ongoing transformation of aquaculture is relevant in most regions, but it is particularly critical in food insecure regions; the goal is to increase global production by 35-40% by 2030, depending on the national and regional context.

Effective management of the entire fisheries sector is a non-negotiable objective of the blue transformation. Where management is effective, fisheries resources have rebuilt and are increasingly sustainable. To deliver on this goal, FAO and its partners must implement and share effective fisheries management systems that return ecosystems to a healthy and productive state, while managing exploited resources within ecosystem boundaries. Among the actions needed to achieve this goal is building global capacity to regularly collect, analyze and assess data to support decision making and consider trade-offs, especially in regions with limited data and low capacity. The objective is also to strengthen social outcomes through the implementation of measures and initiatives that promote equitable livelihoods and co-management systems, ensuring small-scale producers have access to resources and services.

By improving value chains, public and private actors, including consumers, can reduce food loss and waste, increase transparency, improve access to lucrative markets and adopt new digital tools. Players in the aquatic food value chain are increasingly adopting these practices, which have seen significant expansion and uptake due to the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Improving value chains also adds and creates value in extracting more wealth and food from the sector's productive capacity. Promoting healthy diets in an inclusive fashion is also essential and requires programs and initiatives that improve consumer awareness while boosting the availability of healthy, safe and nutritious aquatic foods, particularly in areas marked by poor food and nutrition security.

### **Blue transformation and stakeholder engagement**

Blue transformation requires a commitment by governments, the private sector and civil society to maximize the opportunities offered by fisheries and aquaculture. Blue transformation seeks

to promote the sustainable expansion and intensification of aquaculture, the effective management of all fisheries, and better aquatic food value chains. Proactive public-private partnerships are needed to improve production, reduce food loss and waste, and enhance equitable access to lucrative markets. In addition, aquatic foods need to be included in national food security and nutrition strategies, along with initiatives to expand consumer awareness of their benefits, so as to, in turn, increase availability and improve access.