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The FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment

An overview



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About the Voluntary Guidelines

The FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment, endorsed by the Thirty-fifth Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2022, set **minimum international standards** to regulate, monitor and control transshipments of fish, whether processed or not. The guidelines are intended to assist States and regional fisheries management organisations and arrangements (RFMO/As) when developing new transshipment regulations or revising existing ones.

For the first time in the international framework, the guidelines:

- provide **clear definitions** for what constitutes “transshipment” and “landing”;
- they establish **clear processes and responsibilities** for States in their different roles; and
- they eliminate ambiguous situations through **declarations** about transshipment and landing, which are included in two annexes.

All of this is key to close possible loopholes.

The guidelines are a voluntary instrument although, for these to be effective, it is expected that, as a minimum, States take action to transpose them into regional and national regulations.



Background

Transshipment is a widely practised fishing-related activity in all regions of the world and in various fisheries, in waters under national jurisdiction and on the high seas. Transshipments can significantly improve the efficiency of fishing activities by reducing operational and transport costs. However, transshipments can also create opportunities for illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) catches to reach port and market destinations.

Definitions

“Transshipment” means the direct transfer of any quantity of fish onboard from one vessel to another vessel regardless of the location of the event, without the fish being recorded as landed;

“Landing” means all transfers of any quantity of fish onboard from a vessel, other than transshipment, including transfers of fish to a port facility, transfers of fish from one vessel to another through a port facility or other means of transportation, and transfers of fish from a vessel to a container, truck, train, aircraft, or another means of transportation.



Requirements

The guidelines establish requirements that must be met before, during, and after the transshipment activity for vessels to engage in legal transshipment.



Before

- VMS/IMO
- Global Record / RFMO authorized lists
- Under an observer programme
- Flagged by a Party or Cooperating non-party of RFMO



During

- Prenotification to relevant actors
- Authorized by relevant actors
- Follow operational procedures



After

- Provide a transshipment declaration
- Deliver the declaration to relevant actors



If not a Transshipment

- Provide a landing declaration
- Deliver the declaration to relevant actors

ACTION REQUIRED	STATE RESPONSIBILITIES		
	FLAG STATE	COASTAL STATE	PORT STATE
Establish conditions for authorizing its flagged vessels to conduct transshipment operations	✓		
Establish conditions to authorize transshipment in areas under its jurisdiction		✓	✓
RFMO engagement	✓		
Effective control of the fishing trip	✓		
Receive prenotification	✓	✓	✓
Verify vessel compliance (VMS, observers coverage, regular catch and effort reporting)	✓		
If necessary, request confirmation of compliance from flag State		✓	✓
Acknowledge and confirm that the event can take place	✓		
Authorize the single transshipment event to take place in areas under its jurisdiction upon the fulfillment of the conditions		✓	✓
Request landing declaration if not defined as transshipment	✓		✓
Receive transshipment/landing declaration	✓	✓ (transshipment declaration)	✓
Establish reporting procedures to collect and cross-reference	✓	✓	✓
Confirm if requested by the port State or coastal State or RFMO/A, that the donated fish was taken in accordance with the rules and regulations	✓		
Port State measures consistent with PSMA for ports where receiving vessels land their transshipped fish, including donor vessels arriving from fishing grounds for direct landing or transshipment			✓

Information contained in the transshipment declaration and landing declaration can be found in annex 1 and annex 2, respectively, of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment.

Since the requirements of fishing vessels fall under flag, coastal and port State responsibilities, the guidelines recommend that regulations are established, procedures are defined, and control and inspection capacity is developed to enable a legal transshipment to take place.



Needs of developing States

The guidelines also consider the needs of developing States in establishing an adequate legal and regulatory framework for transshipments and landings of fishery resources. States and RFMO/As should support developing nations in strengthening their human capacity, institutions and infrastructure needed to ensure effective implementation of transshipment regulations.



In short:



The Voluntary Guidelines provide minimum international standards for transshipment operations;



They establish definitions, processes and responsibilities for transshipment activities to be regulated, monitored, and controlled;



They consider specific needs of developing States in view of transshipment activities;



States and RFMO/As can transpose the guidelines into national and regional regulations.

**Download the FAO Voluntary Guidelines
for Transshipment here**



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More information is available at:

<https://www.fao.org/iuu-fishing/tools-and-initiatives/transshipment/en/>

Support is available at: FAO-Transshipment@fao.org

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