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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE

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FAO WORK ON AQUATIC FOOD TRACEABILITY AND CATCH DOCUMENTATION SCHEMES (CDS)

Executive Summary

This document provides an overview of FAO's intersessional work on traceability and Catch Documentation Schemes (CDS) in response to recommendations of the 18th Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI:FT), including progress on normative work, capacity building, technical assistance, partnerships and collaboration with international initiatives and organizations. It also introduces the relationship between international instruments to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and traceability.

Suggested action by the Sub-Committee

- Review and comment on the intersessional work involving aquatic food traceability and CDS.
- Provide guidance on future priorities.
- Present advice on better engaging and collaborating more effectively with diverse business solutions to create meaningful public-private partnerships in the area of aquatic food traceability.

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BACKGROUND

1. Traceability in fisheries and aquaculture has been on the agenda of the COFI:FT for nine consecutive sessions, drawing particular attention to its benefits. The 18th Session of COFI:FT acknowledged FAO's expertise advantage, reiterating its global leadership role in traceability and CDS work.
2. In aquatic food value chains, end-to-end traceability is an increasingly vital tool for managing food safety risks, sustainable sourcing, trust, and transparency. With the incremental global recovery from COVID-19 and the resumption of international events and exhibitions, interest in these topics has increased in 2023.¹
3. The 18th Session of COFI:FT encouraged FAO to organize more events on traceability so that Members can share their experiences and replicate best practices. It was also suggested that an analysis of traceability and certification schemes for small-scale fisheries be conducted and that FAO provides Members with relevant guidance and technical support. Additionally, COFI:FT called on FAO to continue assisting Members in developing and implementing efficient and effective traceability systems and CDS by enhancing their technological capacity.²

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS TO COMBAT IUU FISHING AND TRACEABILITY

4. The traceability landscape continues to improve as a result of the expanding implementation of international instruments designed to combat IUU fishing. These instruments contain minimum standards that document legality at different points along the supply chain. This creates a more transparent environment that helps identify and eliminate the IUU-fishing-originated products from being traded and increases the availability and reliability of information for traceability purposes.
5. Defining what identifications are required (i.e. key data elements) is essential, but knowing where the data will originate from and how it can be verified is also important. The widespread adoption of minimum standards for documenting landing, transshipment, and cross-border trade is being constantly implemented and expanded due to a myriad of recent international instruments, such as the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA), which specifies minimum data requirements for authorizing port entry and use by foreign vessels,³ the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment (VGT) which articulates minimum data requirements to prevent transshipment operations from providing cover for IUU fishing,⁴ and the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on CDS which includes a list of elements for catch certificates and additional information along the supply chain.⁵ Their relationship to aquatic product trade, specific leverage points, and complementarity is also discussed in COFI:FT/XIX/2023/7.

¹ Two sessions during Seafood Expo Global, Barcelona 2023 entitled "Robust Traceability and Transparency in the Seafood Supply Chain: Key Tools and Benefits" and "Import Control Schemes: Importance and Benefits of Global Harmonisation". In addition, two sessions during Seafood Expo North America 2023, Boston, entitled "Harmonizing Traceability and Transparency in a Dynamic Regulator Landscape" and "Enabling Certification for Small Scale Producers: A Cost-Cutting Approach in Fully Traceable Seafood Supply Chains".

² <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc1513t>

³ <https://www.fao.org/port-state-measures/resources/detail/en/c/1111616/>

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc5602t>

⁵ <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/a6abc11e-414a-491b-888a-7819dabdac1d/>

NORMATIVE WORK

Advancing end-to-end traceability: Critical Tracking Events (CTEs) and Key Data Elements (KDEs) along capture fisheries and aquaculture value chains

6. Between 2020 and 2021, numerous online and regional consultations were conducted in order to develop the “Guidance document: Advancing end-to-end traceability along capture fisheries and aquaculture value chains”.⁶ The guidance responds to a critical need for consensus regarding the establishment of end-to-end traceability by providing a globally agreed and standardized understanding of the CTEs along the aquatic product value chain and the sources of KDEs related to production and product identification. The guidance identifies CTEs and KDEs at various value chain stages for the flag, port, coastal processing, and end-market States.
7. The overall recommendation of the guidance for countries is to: 1) identify and define standardized CTEs and KDEs for commercial and regulatory traceability; 2) conduct strict due diligence before committing to end-to-end traceability using a holistic and integrated approach involving all stakeholders at the legal, commercial and operational levels; and 3) give due consideration to small-scale producers supplying domestic markets and identifying potential gaps in national traceability systems where information is challenging to obtain.
8. The guidance is being translated into French thanks to a funding contribution from the Swiss Foundation for Technical Cooperation (Swisscontact) and Swiss Import Promotion Programme (SIPPO) and into Chinese as a complementary contribution from Ningbo University.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR MEMBERS

CDS-related work in Tuna Regional Fishery Management Organizations (t-RFMOs)

9. FAO is presently implementing the second phase of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded project “Sustainable management of tuna fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (2022-2027)”,⁷ which is a prolongation of an earlier project (2014-2019). Continued support for developing a CDS system within the context of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) is envisaged using FAO’s technical guidelines and documents. This cooperation will include providing input to the IOTC Ad Hoc Working Group on CDS, thereby assisting Members in making informed decisions.
10. Project activities also target small-scale tuna fisheries by applying innovative technology to improve fishing and value chain monitoring or traceability using at-sea applications such as vessel tracking systems, onboard cameras, and at-sea traceability technology, depending on the selected pilot sites. Considering harvest quality and access to premium export markets, the project will enhance the performance of these small-scale tuna fisheries. Complementary activities will include industry collaboration to investigate the potential use of electronic monitoring with traceability systems.

Technical assistance projects to develop traceability systems

11. FAO continues to assist Mauritania in developing an action and improvement plan to meet import markets’ requirements. A desk review and virtual meetings with relevant ministerial directorates and agencies have been completed, and a field mission is scheduled for 2023.

⁶ <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc5484en>

⁷ <https://www.fao.org/in-action/commonoceans/what-we-do/tuna/en/>

12. As part of the BLUEWaves- Spearheading Blue Transformation, one of three value-added impact areas under FAO Strategic Framework better production, FAO is also expanding a 2022 initiative to improve end-to-end traceability in Barbados, including digital solutions.
13. FAO is assisting the Republic of Tanzania's Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries in implementing the comprehensive electronic catch documentation and traceability (e-CDT) Strategy of the Kilwa District octopus fishery. Specific interventions aim to establish a cost-benefit analysis as well as an economic impact assessment of e-CDT adoption. The Regular Programme funds these initiatives.

Continued technical capacity building on traceability

14. As requested by the 18th Session of COFI:FT, FAO has commissioned a study on traceability analysis for small-scale fisheries and aquaculture funded by the Regular Programme.
15. FAO provided training sessions on traceability and certification to officials from relevant ministries from Albania, Algeria, Egypt, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Senegal, Tunisia and Uganda for the fourth consecutive year in close collaboration with the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (CIHEAM-Bari). These sessions were organized as part of the advanced specialized "Sustainable Development of Coastal Communities" course conducted in May-July 2023.

CDS workshop in Trinidad & Tobago

16. FAO organized an online workshop on CDS in September 2022 in Trinidad and Tobago to assist in combating IUU fishing through port State measures and effective implementation of international fisheries instruments, guidelines, mechanisms and tools. This was the fifth in a series of country-specific workshops entitled "Understanding and implementing catch documentation schemes (CDS) to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing".
17. The workshop assisted the country in determining the categories of held information relevant to the CDS in which it participates, identifying the sources and quality of that information to evaluate the country's ability to validate CDS documents and recommend improvements. The workshop brought together 28 participants from fisheries, customs, animal production, and health authorities to conduct a joint analysis of their national systems' capacity to respond effectively and efficiently to CDS information demands.

FAO PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION WITH INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Presentation of FAO's work on traceability and CDS in selected workshops

18. FAO has been invited to participate in a number of events pertaining to traceability and CDS, including:
 - SeafoodSource webinar panel:
FishSource and new FAO ID codes will revolutionize the seafood industry
Virtual, 28 September 2023
 - The Regional Workshop to Exchange Information on Catch Documentation Scheme and Traceability of Fish and Fishery Products⁸
Hybrid, Samut Prakan, Thailand, 29-30 November 2022

⁸ <http://www.seafdec.or.th/traceability/traceability-workshop-2022/index.html>

- Side events organized for the 70th Session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Commission.
Session on “Facilitating Circularity Through Transparency and Traceability of Value Chains”⁹
Virtual, 3 April 2023
- INFOFISH training workshop on “Facilitating Market Access of Fisheries and Aquaculture Products” for the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
Hybrid, Manila, the Philippines, 15 June 2023
- World Maritime University - Summer School Programme
Malmö, Sweden, 21-25 August 2023

Swiss Import Promotion Programme (SIPPO)

19. Since 2020, FAO, Swisscontact and SIPPO have collaborated to assist Business Support Organizations (BSOs) in Indonesia, Morocco and Tunisia with sustainable exports and advanced export services. In early 2023, BSOs from these countries expressed a strong interest in traceability capacity-building activities for market access. In this regard, two webinars are planned for the fourth quarter of 2023, with the possibility of additional events and activities in 2024.

Seafood Alliance on Legality and Traceability (SALT)

20. In 2022 and 2023, FAO continued its close collaboration with SALT and served as an observer on its advisory committee. In June 2023, in Manta, Ecuador, the primary collaborative activity will be a training workshop on traceability and blue ports for Latin America (COFI:FT/XIX/2023/Inf.7). This workshop intends to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge and connections regarding the current practice of traceability systems and fishing ports of coastal countries in the region, as well as the role of fishing ports in enhancing traceability.

Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability (GDST)

21. Since 2019, FAO and GDST have collaborated and shared expertise and knowledge. Both organizations recognise the need to strengthen their collaboration for the public and private sectors’ mutual benefit. Coordination across policy, strategy, messaging, and technical assistance initiatives, as well as co-organization of regional dialogues, are areas of cooperation. These efforts expand upon the FAO’s list of KDEs and CTEs’ complementarity and congruence with the GDST’s Standards and Guidelines for Interoperable Seafood Traceability Systems.

⁹ <https://unece.org/info/events/event/371506>