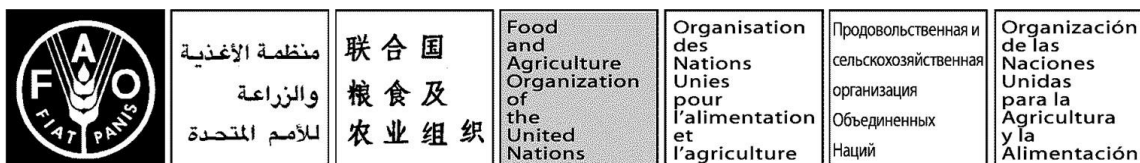


September 2023

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WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)

NINETEENTH (HYBRID) SESSION

Bridgetown, Barbados, September 6-8, 2023

Report on the implementation of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (2022) in the context of the Commission-recommended Roadmap for the celebratory year in the WECAFC region and next steps

This document provides information on the intersessional activities of the Commission and FAO under Resolution as part of WECAFC/17/2019/20 related to the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), with a focus on the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (2022).

Suggested action by the Commission

The Commission is invited to:

1. Acknowledge the invaluable work of the committee in mobilizing financial support, and leading on the national, regional, and international awareness on the importance of artisanal fisheries and aquaculture in the region.
2. Commend the European Union Directorate for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries for providing a decisive grant specifically dedicated to the activities in the WECAFC region and for being an active IYAFSA supporter.
3. Note the activities undertaken by the national and regional partners to celebrate the international year.
4. Review, and consider for endorsement, the proposed institutionalization and formalization of the coordination committee to guide activities in support of the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Guidelines (SSF Guidelines)* and provide guidance to officially have it recognized in the region.
5. Beseech members to strengthen their support to the intersessional activities, by considering tangible in-kind and/or financial contribution to specific activities related to the SSF Guidelines, and other activities under the draft Work Programme 2023-2025 or to other activities that the Commission wishes to include in the Work Programme related to this topic.

BACKGROUND

1. The *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication* (SSF Guidelines) were approved and endorsed at the Thirty-first session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI). The SSF Guidelines aim to enhance the contribution of small-scale fisheries to global food security and nutrition, contribute to equitable development and poverty eradication, achieve sustainable utilization of fishery resources, and promote an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and its people. It proposes guidance to States and stakeholders to enhance sustainable small-scale fisheries governance and development. It also promotes awareness-raising and the advancement of knowledge on small-scale fisheries. The SSF Guidelines, endorsed by consensus, complement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and other international fisheries instruments.
2. At its 15th Session, WECAFC endorsed Resolution WECAFC/15/2014/8 that encouraged the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in all Member States.
3. At its thirty-third session in 2016, the COFI formally proposed the International Year. COFI considered that the purpose of the International Year is to sensitize public opinion and governments about the importance of adopting specific public policies and programmes to promote these activities, especially those in the most vulnerable rural areas constrained by poor governance and low capacity for sustainable use of aquatic resources.
4. The 154th Session of the FAO Council endorsed the COFI proposal, forwarding it to the UN General Assembly. As a result, the Seventy-second session of the United Nations General Assembly (December 2017) proclaimed 2022 as the "International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture" and invited FAO to serve as the lead agency for the Year, in collaboration with other relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system.
5. At its 17th Session, WECAFC endorsed Resolution as part of WECAFC/17/2019/20 that encouraged the continued implementation of the SSF Guidelines in all Member States and the development of a roadmap for the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture. It recommended that the International Year of Small-Scale Fisheries and Aquaculture in 2022 (IYAFA) be used as an opportunity to consolidate the activities with partners. The purpose would be to take advantage of IYAFA to link the highly distributed activities in order to showcase the progress made in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in a coordinated way and gain more visibility for WECAFC area SSF and fisherfolk stakeholders at global scale.
6. In acknowledging the significant work of the regional coordination committee, the Commission encouraged the committee to: (1) consolidate efforts with partners and demonstrate progress in implementing the SSF Guidelines, (2) support the regional IYAFA roadmap, (3) promote the development of national roadmaps, (4) offer guidance on institutionalizing collaboration, and (5) explore possibilities of providing support for activities related to the SSF Guidelines and the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture, and (6) explore possibilities of providing support for activities related to the SSF Guidelines and the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture.

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WECAFC IYAFA 2022 REGIONAL ROADMAP

1. Upon recommendation of the 17th Session of WECAFC, the Secretariat facilitated the establishment in July 2020 of a regional coordination committee comprised of representatives from the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations (CNFO), the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), the University of the West Indies – Centre for Resource

Management and Environment Studies (UWI-CERMES), Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI), Central America Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization (OSPESCA), and the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute.

2. The main theme of the regional celebration is recovery and resilience, with gender and youth as cross-cutting themes. There are three sub-themes: innovation, intersectoral linkage, and social resilience.
3. The WECAFC Secretariat with support from the IYAFAs regional coordination committee successfully mobilized USD 185,000 from the European Union Division for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries to support IYAFAs activities in the region. The resources supported activities at the national and regional level. The funding also supported in part activities related to regional Queen Conch management.

I. Regional and sub-regional IYAFAs initiatives

4. On November 19, 2021, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) launched the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFAs) 2022 during the week of World Fisheries Day. Shortly after, the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean organized a ceremony to contextualize the goals and objectives of IYAFAs 2022 for the region, aiming to inspire action-oriented celebrations throughout 2022. The event featured opening remarks by Julio Berdegué, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative, followed by presentations from diverse stakeholders engaged in celebrating IYAFAs 2022 in the region. During the event, Hon. Saboto Caesar, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural Transformation, Industry, and Labor of St. Vincent and The Grenadines and an IYAFAs champion, provided the concluding remarks and the regional call to action for IYAFAs (Appendix 1). With virtual attendance surpassing 1,200 people, the event received a highly positive response.
5. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there was collaboration between the coordination committee of WECAFC and the sub-regional committees of Mesoamerica and South America. They jointly supported members, published numerous articles and gave several presentations. Some articles included:
 - a. [The International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture in Latin America and the Caribbean: Towards Inclusive, Responsible and Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture](#)
 - b. [A “Sea” Grassroots Approach to Celebrating IYAFAs 2022 in the Western Central Atlantic Region](#)
 - c. [Regional Closing event of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture in Latin America](#)
6. The three Committees have, under the coordination and direction of the International Steering Committee and the IYAFAs Secretariat, included a wide range of artisanal fisheries and aquaculture stakeholders, from fishers, fish farmers and fish workers to government representatives and academics as members, who have an equal voice and vote, establishing agreements by consensus and within a framework of solidarity, environmental and social responsibility, and respect for diversity.
7. The WECAFC Regional Coordination committee also provided direct financial support to the South American committee to support the publication of two policy briefs:
 - a. [Public policy recommendations for the sustainable development of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture in South America - Policy guidelines for policy makers.](#)

- b. [Characterization of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture in South America and recommendations for public policies](#)
- 8. The WECAFC IYAFSA 2022 regional coordination committee selected regional small-scale fisheries and aquaculture champions. The first call for nominations closed in November 2021. The WECAFC Secretariat received and accepted 23 nominations from across the area of competence, including from Member States and partner organizations. The recognition of champions, represent individuals and entities who have played a significant role in the sector and who have the potential to further influence progress in the development of sustainable small-scale fisheries and aquaculture food systems.
- 9. During the 18th Session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, a high-level side-event was hosted on "Creating an enabling policy and practice environment for a post-IYAFSA 2022 celebration in the context of the Voluntary Guidelines for SSF," was hosted by WECAFC Secretariat and the Environmental Defense Fund. Stakeholders gathered to address challenges, explore innovative solutions, and identify opportunities for sustaining the development of artisanal fisheries and aquaculture in the Western Central Atlantic Region. Panelists included representatives from OSPESCA, Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica, and Costa Rica. The event aimed to institutionalize the momentum from IYAFSA 2022, supporting the long-term sustainability of the region's artisanal fisheries and aquaculture sector. The session included a call to action by Mr. Aaron Chacon, a young fisher from Costa Rica. The main points of action from the session included a greater mainstreaming of youth and gender and increased consideration for social security and social protection for fishers in the region.
- 10. The coordination committee organized two events at the 75th meeting of Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute held 7-11 November 2022.
 - a. The WECAFC Secretariat organized a special session and workshop. The special session aimed to connect IYAFSA with sustainable blue economy development in the Gulf and Caribbean region. It brought together stakeholders to discuss artisanal fisheries, aquaculture, and their integration into the blue economy. The session also aimed to contribute to ongoing work on the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small-Scale Fisheries* and the United Nations *Sustainable Development Goals*. The session included eight presentations covering topics such as community-based fisheries management, blue justice, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - b. The WECAFC Secretariat co-organized the first Regional Women in Fisheries Forum. This forum aimed to recognize and celebrate the important role of women in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture. Participants had the opportunity to network, share knowledge, and discuss best practices for gender integration in the fisheries sector. Over fifty participants from 19 countries attended the forum. The event was made possible through collaboration with partners, including the CRFM Secretariat, CNFOUWI-CERMES, Wildlife Conservation Society - Belize, SAEDI Consulting Inc., and the WECAFC Secretariat. The forum resulted in the drafting of the first Call to Action for mainstreaming gender and gender equity in the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Sector (Appendix 2).
- 11. The CRFM at the 20th Meeting of the Caribbean Fisheries Forum in March 2022, passed a resolution (Agenda Item 14 (iv)) that welcomed the celebrations of IYAFSA 2022 and called upon member countries to continue implementing activities at the national levels through FACs.
- 12. The CRFM drafted and passed, via a Special Meeting of the Ministerial Council on October 2022, a high-level policy document, Resolution No. SMC 12(05) of 2022, to mainstream small-scale fisheries and aquaculture (SSF/A) in the ongoing blue economy dialogue.

II. National level IYAFa initiatives

13. Dr. Alejandro Espinoza, a champion of IYAFa and supported by the WECAFC Secretariat, actively participated in the World Small-Scale Fisheries Congress Meeting held in Mérida, Mexico in October 2022. During the congress, he gave a presentation on his ongoing research focused on Mexico's small-scale fisheries.
14. Support the execution of activities in coordination with FAO-Colombia, in the Association of Ticuna Indigenous Producers of Arara Wone Amazon, for the reactivation and implementation of cachama culture with alternative diets. FAO Colombia collaborated with the Ticuna Arara Wone Amazonas Indigenous Producers Association (ASOPROWONE) to reactivate equipment and provide knowledge transfer on alternative diets, which reduced production costs and enhanced product quality.
15. Through collaboration of the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity of Nicaragua, INPESCA (Nicaraguan Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture), FAO, and National Workers Front (FNT), in coordination with the Regional Government of the South Caribbean, the Bluefields Municipality, and Institutions of the National System of Production, Consumption, and Trade, held the National Forum on Artisanal Fishing and Aquaculture that was held in Bluefields, was a resounding success. More than 100 participants from various fishing communities came together to discuss their experiences, challenges, and innovations in the industry. The event highlighted the importance of sustainable fishing practices, the role of women in the sector, and the impact of climate change. The forum also featured an exhibition showcasing recipes, manuals, and educational materials related to fishing. The presence of key figures from FAO, the regional government, and INPESCA emphasized the government's commitment to the growth and preservation of the sector.
16. The University of West Indies – Centre for Resource Management and Environment Studies hosted several activities:
 - a. Youth Chats in Jamaica, Guyana, and St. Lucia. The sessions brought together young people to discuss approaches that can support the sustainability of small-scale fisheries from a youth-centric approach.
 - b. Popular theatre training and showcase for women in fisheries in Barbados.
 - c. Developed a study on intersectoral linkages in Caribbean fisheries.
 - d. A webinar on social justice for women in fisheries. This discussion focused on the multi-dimensionality of social justice and gender in fisheries.

TOWARDS THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE REGIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE TO FOSTER THE MAINSTREAMING OF THE SSF GUIDELINES IN WECAFC

1. The establishment of the regional coordination committee has played a crucial role in leading the implementation of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture (SSF/A) initiatives in the WECAFC region. As we reflect on its instrumental role, we recognize the committee's significant contribution during a pivotal year for SSF/A. It has facilitated dialogue, collaboration, and collective action among member countries to address key issues and generate impactful outcomes.
2. Throughout its existence, the regional coordination committee has been instrumental in fostering regional dynamics that are essential for sustaining progress in SSF. It has enabled the identification of critical outputs and challenges that require ongoing attention and concerted efforts at the regional level. By coordinating the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, the committee can promote sustainable fishing practices, improve governance frameworks, and enhanced the livelihoods of small-

scale fishers in the region.

3. As we commemorate the 10th anniversary of The SSF Guidelines in 2024, it presents an opportune moment to reflect on past achievements and look towards the future in the region. **The committee's institutionalization is vital to ensure its long-term effectiveness and continuity.** By establishing a permanent structure, we can solidify its mandate, enhance its capacity, and strengthen its role in driving regional cooperation and policy coherence in SSF.
4. In considering the institutionalization of the committee, it is essential to recognize and integrate the **women and youth** in fisheries agenda. Women play a significant role in the fisheries sector and their inclusion is crucial for achieving gender equality, promoting social equity, and ensuring sustainable development. Including the regional women in fisheries agenda as part of the institutionalized committee's biannual activities would amplify efforts to empower and support women in the sector. This inclusive approach would enable the committee to address gender-specific challenges, promote women's participation and leadership, and foster equitable opportunities within the SSF framework.
5. The institutionalized committee should establish dedicated programs and platforms that specifically target youth engagement. These initiatives could include youth forums, mentoring programs, capacity-building workshops, and opportunities for youth-led projects in small-scale fisheries. By empowering young individuals, we can nurture the next generation of leaders in the sector and ensure its long-term viability.
6. By actively involving youth in the institutionalized committee's activities, we can cultivate a sense of ownership and responsibility among young individuals towards sustainable small-scale fisheries. Their involvement will contribute to the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, skills, and practices, ensuring the continuity of traditional fishing techniques while embracing innovative approaches.
7. As we forge ahead, let us seize the opportunity provided by the 10th anniversary to institutionalize the regional coordination committee. By doing so, we can strengthen regional cooperation, enhance the mainstreaming of the SSF Guidelines, and ensure the sustainable development of small-scale fisheries in the WECAFC region.

APPENDIX 1

I: Regional Launch of IYAFA Call for Action

Hon. Saboto Caesar's Conclusion and Call For Action Regional Launch of IYAFA November 2021

1. The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022).
2. The special recognition of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture in 2022 represents an absolutely unique opportunity for increased attention to the men and women who are engaged in the industry, and make significant contribution in national and local economies of the Latin America and Caribbean region.
3. This regional launch presents a sample of the diversity of actors from across the region that span the small-scale fisheries and aquaculture value chain, and activities being mobilized to celebrate IYAFA.
4. The speakers including fishers, policymakers, civil society, private sector representatives and the different coordination committees, have demonstrated the intersectoral linkages being highlighted during IYAFA and portrayed needed actions to meet the goal of the celebratory year to further enhance the contribution of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture to the Sustainable Development Goals.
5. The CRFM recognises the importance of supporting small-scale fisheries at the policy level and has developed the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (CCCFP) which focuses on cooperation and collaboration of all stakeholders in managing and sustainably utilizing fisheries and related ecosystems. The CRFM Ministerial Council has also adopted a Resolution on the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA), which calls upon our Member States to promote the achievement of the objectives of the IYAFA 2022 celebrations.
6. Acknowledging the uniqueness of the international year and consistent with ongoing efforts across the region. Call upon:
 - a. Member States to integrate dedicated IYAFA activities into their programmes and promote the achievement of the objectives of the IYAFA 2022 celebrations. Particularly these activities should feature key actions for the region such as gender equality and women empowerment in the SS fisheries and SS aquaculture sectors; strengthening the adaptive capacity of these sectors to Climate Change and other external shocks like the global pandemic.
 - b. Partners to actively sign up as IYAFA supporters and organize initiatives and events.
 - c. All (member states and partners) to advocate for and support the achievement of the ambitions for the International Year, to turn 21st November, which is currently celebrated informally as World Fisheries Day, into an official UN Day on Small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture, so that we can come together every year in the future to continue the celebrations.

APPENDIX 2

II: Draft Regional Call to Action for the mainstreaming of gender and gender equity in the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Sector

Call to action for the mainstreaming of gender and gender equity in the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Sector

Women make up an estimated 47 percent of those involved in small-scale capture fisheries, accounting for around 56 million jobs along the fisheries supply chain, mostly in activities like processing and trade of fish.

Women in fisheries need to be seen and acknowledged, gain equal rights and equal access to assets like credit and technology, and have equal say in decision-making and policy processes.

Fisheries and aquaculture in Latin America and the Caribbean generate more than 2.6 million direct jobs, and 3 times that number of indirect jobs. Almost 90% of direct and indirect jobs in fisheries and aquaculture are linked to artisanal fisheries. Artisanal fishing provides up to 85% of the fish consumed within the region. While this is probably an underestimate, we note that data/statistics are critical for monitoring the sustainability of fisheries and understanding and improving women's meaningful participation and contribution to the sector.

Recognizing Sustainable Development Goal 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Recognizing Sustainable Development Goal 14.7 By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism.

Recognizing Sustainable Development Goal 14.b, provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets.

Recognizing the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines)* chapter 8 on gender equality and equity in small-scale fisheries and noting the intersectionality of gender throughout the thematic areas of the Guidelines.

Recognizing the initiatives to support gender mainstreaming in the region including the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism Gender Analysis, Strategy and Action Plan (Gender ASAP).

Recognizing the ongoing celebration of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture in 2022 and the preparation for the institutionalization of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture in national and regional policies.

Recognizing the Regional Policy on Gender Equality and Equity of the Central American Integration System 2014-2025 (Política Regional de Igualdad y Equidad de Genero del Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana 2014-2025 - **PRIEG/SICA-**) and by the Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA) and the The Fisheries and Aquaculture Integration Policy 2015-2025 (Política de Integración de Pesca y Acuicultura 2015-2025), which envisages, in relation to gender, that the development of capacities for marketing and management, access to financing and credit will be promoted; training and educational training, strengthening associative and greater involvement of women in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture associations.

Recalling that the CRFM Ministerial Council at its Eighth Special meeting had “... *accepted that international and national norms regarding issues pertaining to gender, youth, and decent work be adhered to, and be incorporated into all CRFM policies, protocols, programmes, and plans.*”

Recalling also that the CRFM Ministerial Council at its 15th meeting had approved the Gender Analysis, Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming in Fisheries for the CRFM States (Gender ASAP) developed under the CRFM Gender Mainstreaming Initiative.

Recalling that in the Central American Integration System (SICA) an Agenda for the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women of the SICA Region" (Agenda para el Empoderamiento Económico de las Mujeres Rurales de la Región SICA), was endorsed by OSPESCA and a Roadmap for the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector (Hoja de Ruta para el Empoderamiento Económico de las Mujeres Rurales del Sector de la Pesca y Acuicultura) was developed.

We call on governments and regional organizations to take actionable steps to:

1. Guarantee the creation of gender-responsive budgets and the use of gender responsive budgeting, acknowledging the intersectional needs of all women, including immigrant and indigenous women.
 - a. Develop innovative financing instruments to support the diversity of gendered activities along the value chain.
 - b. CARICOM and SICA countries should mandate budgetary allocations including but not limited to gender mainstreaming in the fisheries sector and specific allocations for gender-responsive actions.
2. Safeguard women's (inclusive of youth) participation and intentional engagement in fisheries (inclusive of youth), creating space for their intervention at multiple decision-making levels.
3. Protect women across the value chain from input to consumers, with meaningful attention on the structural and social power that constrains women in the fisheries value chain.
4. Implement women-led capacity-building initiatives that strengthen understanding and responses to the multi-dimensionality of women's livelihood needs.
5. Develop a comprehensive data management system, leveraging information, communication, and technology (ICT) to better understand the diversity and complexities of women's roles across the value chain.
 - a. Collect, analyze and use sex-disaggregated socio-economic data and information.
 - b. Develop and regularly update gender profiles across small-scale fisheries and aquaculture.
6. Implement (pro-feminist) empowerment opportunities and strategies for women in all elements of fisheries.
 - a. Create knowledge and skill-sharing spaces between fisherfolk and youth, including girls, in all aspects of fisheries, from production to decision-making.