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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Thirty-first Session

Rome, 9-13 June 2014

AN UPDATE OF FAO'S WORK IN SUPPORT OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES ON BYCATCH MANAGEMENT AND REDUCTION OF DISCARDS

Executive Summary

This information document sets out information on the current work of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department in addressing the increasingly important and closely interlinked issues of bycatch, discards, fisheries management, fishing operations, fishing practices, sustainable livelihoods, food security and nutrition. Notwithstanding the progress made to date, more effective implementation of the Guidelines could be achieved through *inter alia*:

- providing an update on discards in the world's marine fisheries and developing tools to monitor, integrate and evaluate discards as a component of food loss and waste in fisheries supply chains;
- investigating incentives and disincentives linked to (i) uptake of bycatch and discard mitigation technologies by vessel operators, and (ii) the social and economic costs associated with implementing alternative regulatory frameworks;
- greater technical assistance to support field testing and demonstration of bycatch and discard mitigation technologies including use of new tools such as electronic monitoring and reporting systems, and
- increasing dialogue with fishing vessel operators and resource managers and creating bridges between cutting-edge research and technologies, fishermen, processors, wholesalers, retailers, policy makers and consumers.

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BACKGROUND

1. The Committee may recall that action on bycatch and discards have been raised at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), including in UNGA Resolution A/RES/64/72 on Sustainable Fisheries adopted by the Sixty-fourth Session wherein, States, subregional and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and Arrangements (RFMO/As) and other relevant international organizations were urged to reduce or eliminate bycatch, catch by lost or abandoned gear, fish discards and post-harvest losses, and to support studies and research that will reduce or eliminate bycatch of juvenile fish. The Committee may further recall that at the Twenty-eighth Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in March 2009, FAO was requested to develop International Guidelines on Bycatch Management and Reduction of Discards (the Guidelines). And, at its twenty-ninth session (February 2011), COFI endorsed the Guidelines¹ and further recommended that FAO provide support in capacity development and implementation of the Guidelines. At the Thirtieth Session of COFI, the Committee suggested continued attention to bycatch and discards to ensure that they were addressed comprehensively in conservation and management assessments, within an ecosystem approach. Following endorsement of the Guidelines, FAO and its partners have been proactive in developing a series of global and regional bycatch management initiatives as part of a global implementation strategy.

2. This information document sets out information on the current work of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department in addressing the increasingly important and closely interlinked issues of bycatch, discards, fisheries management, fishing operations, fishing practices, sustainable livelihoods, food security and nutrition.

FAO GLOBAL AND REGIONAL BYCATCH PROJECTS

3. The FAO-GEF REBYC-II CTI “Strategies for trawl fisheries bycatch management” project² commenced in May 2012 and involves stakeholders from five countries in Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam). The project takes a holistic approach to trawl fisheries bycatch management and works directly with fishers and fishing industry and other stakeholders. Project activities are being carried out in a selected number of main trawl areas in the five participating countries including; Arafura Sea, Gulf of Papua, Samar Sea, Gulf of Thailand and Kien Giang province in Viet Nam. In each of the selected areas, the most pertinent issues will be identified and public and private sector partnership established for finding appropriate solutions, with technical support from the project and its partners. The total project costs are USD 11 million of which USD 3.0 million is a grant provided by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

4. The FAO-GEF regional project “Sustainable management of bycatch in Latin America and Caribbean trawl fisheries (REBYC-II LAC)”³ is currently under final preparation. Countries partnering in the project are Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. The project has three technical components focused on; (i) Improved collaborative institutional and regulatory arrangements for bycatch management, (ii) Strengthening management and optimizing utilization of bycatch, and (iii) Sustainable livelihoods; diversification and alternatives. The total project costs are USD 17 million of which USD 6.0 million is a grant provided by GEF. The private fishing sector is a core partner in the project and engaged to develop and adopt best practice guidelines for trawl fisheries. Project implementation is scheduled for January 2015 and will have a duration of five years.

5. Bycatch in tuna fisheries forms a major element of the global FAO-GEF project “Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)”⁴. This project, involving all five tuna RFMOs, FAO members, the private sector

¹ www.fao.org/docrep/015/ba0022t/ba0022t00.pdf

² SE Asia region GCP/RAS/269/GFF (2012-2015) <http://iwlearn.net/iw-projects/3619>

³ LAC region GCP/RLA/203/GFF (in prep) http://www.thegef.org/gef/project_detail?projID=5304

⁴ FAO global tuna fisheries GCP /GLO/365/GFF (2014-2019) www.thegef.org/gef/project_detail?projID=4581

and NGOs was operationalized in early 2014 and is scheduled to run for five years. The project strategy is to foster a new wave of technical cooperation and partnering among the key stakeholders, incorporating up-to-date best-practices, broaden the stakeholder base, facilitate dialogues for improvement at national, regional and global levels to catalyze and accelerate priority activities of the tuna RFMOs. Component III of the project titled “Reducing ecosystem impacts of tuna fishing” is focused on integrated and improved bycatch mitigation technologies and practices in regional and national level planning processes and adoption of bycatch mitigation best practices by tuna vessels. One third of the work addresses bycatch and biodiversity conservation. The total project costs are USD 148 million of which USD 30 million provided by GEF.

6. A regional tuna project “Implementation of Global and Regional Oceanic Fisheries Conventions and Related Instruments in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS)”⁵ involving UNDP, FAO and GEF for the Western and Central Pacific has been submitted for GEF CEO endorsement. This project will be executed by Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) with the bycatch focus being on integrating bycatch species into management planning processes at the national level and aligned with relevant sub-regional or regional measures or global instruments. The total project costs are USD 80 million of which USD 10 million is provided by GEF.

PRE-CATCH LOSSES AND GHOST FISHING

7. Section eight of the Guidelines address pre-catch losses caused by fishing operations. This refers to fish and other animals killed as a result of fishing and which are not taken on board and includes, catches slipped by purse seines, mortalities resulting from stress and injuries incurred during escape from fishing gears as well as ghost fishing by Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gears (ALDFG). In these regards, the Guidelines ask States and RFMO/As to consider actions to assess and mitigate such impacts including, *inter alia*:

- improving the scientific information on the magnitude and causes of pre-catch losses and effects of ghost fishing, so that they can be included in stock, fishery and ecosystem assessments; and
- developing technologies and measures that quantify, and reduce, the mortalities and impacts associated with pre-catch losses and ghost fishing. This may include methods for estimating pre-catch losses by various gear types, modification of gears and fishing methods, identification of gear ownership, reduction of gear losses, development of gear retrieval procedures and programs, and reducing, and where possible eliminating, fishing power of lost gear, e.g. through the use of degradable materials.

8. During the last biennium, FAO has provided technical inputs to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in review of MARPOL Annex V which includes a requirement to record discharge or loss of fishing gears and to report the accidental loss or discharge of fishing gear which poses a significant threat to the marine environment and navigation. In addition, seed funding to FAO through UNEP has enabled cases studies of ALDFG policy and legislation to be carried out. Promoting and raising awareness on ALDFG through the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML)⁶ will also be initiated.

⁵ Regional tuna fisheries project GCP/RAS/267/GFF (in prep) www.thegef.org/gef/project_detail?projID=4746

⁶ <http://gpa.unep.org/index.php/global-partnership-on-marine-litter>

LINKING SCIENTISTS AND TECHNOLOGISTS FROM DEVELOPING AND DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

9. FAO is co-chair of the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) Working Group on Fish Behaviour and Fishing Technology (WGFTFB)⁷. This Working Group comprises the 20 member countries of ICES: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States of America. WGFTFB initiates and reviews investigations of scientists and technologists concerned with all aspects of the design, planning, and testing of fishing gears used in abundance estimation, selective fishing gears for bycatch and discard reduction, as well as environmentally benign fishing gears and methods with reduced effect on the seabed and other non-target ecosystem components. WGFTFB has been an effective platform for mentoring, partnering and collaboration between bycatch scientists from developing countries. In 2013 the WGFTFB annual meeting was held in Bangkok, Thailand in cooperation with the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC). A total of 138 persons from 25 countries attended with an estimated hundred persons participating in the mini symposium to discuss barriers and opportunities to transition to Low Impact Fuel Efficient (LIFE) Capture Technologies⁸.

BYCATCH AND DISCARDS AS PART OF FOOD LOSS AND WASTE (LINKS BETWEEN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES SO2 AND SO4)

10. FAO anticipate that under current production and consumption trends, global food production must increase 60% by 2050 in order to meet the demands of the growing world population. Yet, more than one third of the food produced today is lost or wasted. In previous years, FAO has assessed food loss and waste at different parts of the fisheries supply chain (discards and post-harvest) but has yet to develop a standard methodology to estimate food loss and waste across fisheries supply chains. Also, noting that FAOs last global discard study was completed in 2005⁹, an update to the 2005 study with a scope broadened to economic values of fish loss and waste across the supply chain and more regular monitoring maybe be one way of aligning critical work of the Department on bycatch and discards with the goals of the Organization. Such an approach would also be in line with FAOs Blue Growth initiative which stresses an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to fisheries management.

CONCLUSIONS

11. Notwithstanding the progress made to date, more effective implementation of the Guidelines could be achieved through:

- Providing an update on discards in the world's marine fisheries and developing tools to monitor, integrate and evaluate discards as a component of food loss and waste in fisheries supply chains;
- Investigating incentives and disincentives linked to (i) uptake of bycatch and discard mitigation technologies by vessel operators, and (ii) the social and economic costs associated with implementing alternative regulatory frameworks;
- Greater technical assistance to support field testing and demonstration of bycatch and discard mitigation technologies including use of new tools such as electronic monitoring and reporting systems;

⁷ www.ices.dk/community/groups/Pages/WGFTFB.aspx

⁸ Workshop report currently in preparation

⁹ Discards in the world's marine fisheries. An update. FAO Fisheries Technical Paper. No. 470. Rome, FAO. 2005. 131p.

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- Broadening the scope of FAO technical assistance to manage bycatch and reduce discards to other gear types where interactions with endangered, threatened or protected species occurs, such as gillnets and longlines; and
 - Increasing dialogue with fishing vessel operators and resource managers and creating bridges between cutting-edge research and technologies, fishermen, processors, wholesalers, retailers, policy makers and consumers.