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## COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

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### THE ROME DECLARATION: TEN STEPS TO RESPONSIBLE INLAND FISHERIES

#### Executive Summary

This document describes The Rome Declaration: ten steps to responsible inland fisheries that was one output of the Global Conference on Inland Fisheries, Freshwater, Fish and the Future, convened at FAO Headquarters, January 26-28, 2015.

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Other documents can be consulted at <http://www.fao.org/cofi/en/>*



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## BACKGROUND

1. More than 200 scientists, policy makers, resource managers, private industry and representatives from civil society organizations gathered to discuss the governance, food security, information needs, and drivers associated with inland fisheries at the Global Conference on Inland Fisheries: Freshwater, Fish and the Future, convened at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy, 26-28 January 2015. The following ten steps to responsible inland fisheries and recommendations for their implementation emerged from the contributions and discussions at the global conference (Appendix).
2. The steps and recommendations are general and not targeted to specific groups; however, numerous entities at various levels of government and society will need to work together to implement them. The steps and recommendations build on, *inter alia*, the principles contained in the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security. As detailed in those instruments, for effective management and sustainability of freshwater ecosystems and their fisheries, it is critical to recognize and incorporate the rights of fishers, women, traditional resource users, and indigenous people into all levels of decision-making. Past development of inland water resources has often occurred in the absence of such recognition and deprived key groups of culturally and economically important connections and access to aquatic ecosystems and the services they deliver.

**APPENDIX****THE ROME DECLARATION: TEN STEPS TO RESPONSIBLE INLAND FISHERIES<sup>1</sup>****Step 1: Improve the assessment of biological production to enable science-based management**

Accurate and complete information about fishery production from inland waters is lacking at local, national and global levels. Governments often lack the resources or capacity to collect such information due to the diverse and dispersed nature of many inland fisheries. There is much scope for developing and refining biological assessment tools to facilitate science-based management.

**Implementation**

Develop, promote and support standardized methods for the assessment of inland fisheries harvest and aquaculture production including: data collection (including traditional [catch effort monitoring] and novel approaches such as household and government statistical surveys), database management, data sharing, and reporting that:

- Reflect diversity of fisheries, fishing methods, ecosystem types and local cultural context, and enable intra- and cross-sectoral comparisons;
- Include commercial, artisanal small scale, subsistence, and recreational fisheries; and
- Include as far as possible the contribution of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Support the development of novel approaches to collect inland fishery data, e.g., remote sensing of habitat types and population densities linked to fish production models.

Incorporate inland fisheries and aquaculture into ongoing agricultural statistical surveys to facilitate comparisons, and integrate information to support cross-sectoral decision-making.

Increase support for efforts to improve capacity of fishery resource officers to collect information on the sector.

Establish a minimum set of data requirements that would be practical for countries to collect and that would allow cross-sectoral comparisons.

**Step 2: Correctly value inland aquatic ecosystems**

The true economic and social values of healthy, productive inland aquatic ecosystems are often overlooked, underestimated and not taken into account in decision-making related to land and water use. Economic and social assessment is often difficult and valuation often limited. In most cases, especially in the developing world, inland fisheries are part of the informal or local economy, so their economic impact is not accurately measured in official government statistics.

**Implementation**

Apply the principles of the Voluntary Guidelines for “Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries” in inland fisheries and in so doing, recognize, respect, and support governance rooted in traditional customs, rights, and ecological knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> FAO/MSU. 2016. The Rome Declaration: Ten steps to responsible inland fisheries. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Michigan State University, Rome, Italy. 6pp.

Promote and support the adoption of approaches that include assessment of the ecosystem services provided by inland aquatic ecosystems to value their contribution to ecosystem health and societal wellbeing.

Ecosystem services should be valued along the entire value chain.

#### Step 3: Promote the nutritional value of inland fisheries

The relative contribution of inland fisheries to food security and nutrition is higher in poor food-insecure regions of the world than in many developed countries that have alternate sources of food. Good nutrition is especially critical in early childhood development (i.e., the first 1000 days). Loss of inland fishery production will undermine food security, especially in children, in these areas and put further pressure on other food producing sectors.

##### Implementation

Maintain or improve the accessibility/availability of nutrient-rich fish in areas with traditionally high fish consumption and/or high levels of under-nourishment and malnourishment by ensuring fair and equitable access regimes.

Establish fishery and water management plans that include maintenance of an adequate and diverse supply of nutrient rich aquatic products.

#### Step 4: Develop and improve science-based approaches to fishery management

Many inland waterbodies do not have fishery or resource management arrangements that can adequately address sustainable use of resources. Where management arrangements exist, compliance and enforcement are often minimal or non-existent. This may result in excessive fishing pressure, decreased catch per unit effort, and conflicts between fishers, as well as changes in the productivity of fishery resources. In some areas, reductions in fishing capacity will be required. To facilitate fishery management, it will be important to improve access to and promote better sharing of data and information about inland fisheries supporting the assessment–management cycle.

##### Implementation

Implement an Ecosystem Approach to Inland Fisheries.

Support effective governmental, communal/co-operative, or rights-based governance arrangements and improve compliance with fishery management regulations.

Modify or establish fishery and resource management arrangements to protect the productive capacity of inland waters and the livelihoods of communities dependent on the resource.

Where reducing fishing capacity is called for, establish appropriate social safeguards and provision of alternative livelihoods for people leaving the fishery sector.

#### Step 5: Improve communication among freshwater users

Information on the importance of the inland fishery and aquaculture sectors is often not shared with or accessed by policy-makers, stakeholders and the general public, thereby making it difficult to generate political will to protect inland fishery resources and the people that depend on them. Moreover, many misconceptions exist on the needs and desires of fishing communities.

## Implementation

Building from the “Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines” and other relevant instruments, use appropriate and accessible communication channels to disseminate information about inland fish, fishers and fisheries to raise awareness of inland fisheries’ values and issues, to alter human behavior, and influence relevant policy and management.

The fisheries sector should engage other users of freshwater resources and participate in national and international fora that address freshwater resource issues, conflicts and synergies.

The fisheries sector should invite other users of freshwaters to participate in fisheries fora.

## Step 6: Improve governance, especially for shared waterbodies

Many national, international and transboundary inland waterbodies do not have a governance structure that holistically addresses the use and development of the water and its fishery resources. This often results in decisions made in one area adversely affecting aquatic resources, food security, and livelihoods in another.

## Implementation

Establish governance institutions (e.g., river or lake basin authorities) or expand and strengthen the mandate and capacity of existing institutions to address inland fisheries needs in the decision making processes.

Commit to incorporating internationally agreed decisions on shared water bodies within national government policies.

## Step 7: Develop collaborative approaches to cross-sectoral integration in development agendas

Water-resource development and management discussions very often marginalize or overlook inland fisheries. Therefore, trade-offs between economically and socially important water-resource sectors and ecosystem services from inland water systems often ignore inland fisheries and fishers. Development goals based on common needs, e.g., clean water and flood control, can yield mutually beneficial outcomes across water-resource sectors.

## Implementation

Promote cross-sectoral discussions about the trade-offs and synergies of inland water development and management options that consider the inland fishery sector a partner in resource development in an equitable manner.

Identify and strengthen platforms and legal frameworks for multistakeholder-based decision-making and management.

Incorporate inland fish and fisheries into the post-2015 sustainable development goals on water issues and include all ecosystem services provided by inland aquatic ecosystems.

## Step 8: Respect equity and rights of stakeholders

Lack of recognition of the cultural values, beliefs, knowledge, social organization, and diverse livelihood practices of indigenous people, inland fishers, fishworkers, and their communities has often

resulted in policies that exclude these groups and increase their vulnerability to changes affecting their fisheries. This exclusion deprives these groups of important sources of food as well as cultural and economic connections to inland aquatic ecosystems.

#### Implementation

Protect the cultural heritage of indigenous people and their connections to the environment.

Ratify and implement the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of 1989 (ILO-169), as well as the Universal Declaration of Indigenous Peoples and other International human rights instruments.

#### Step 9: Make aquaculture an important ally

Aquaculture is the fastest-growing food production sector and an important component in many poverty alleviation and food security programmes. It can complement capture fisheries, e.g., through stocking programmes, by providing alternative livelihoods for fishers leaving the capture fisheries sector, and by providing alternative food resources. It can also negatively affect capture fisheries, e.g., introduction of invasive species and diseases, through competition for water resources, pollution, and access restrictions to traditional fishing grounds.

#### Implementation

Adopt an ecosystem approach to fisheries and aquaculture management.

Recognize the common need for healthy and productive aquatic ecosystems and promote synergies and manage tradeoffs among fisheries, stock enhancement, and aquaculture.

Regulate and manage the use of non-native species in aquaculture development.

#### Step 10: Develop an action plan for global inland fisheries

Without immediate action, the food security, livelihoods and societal wellbeing currently provided by healthy inland aquatic ecosystems will be jeopardized, risking social, economic, and political conflict and injustice.

#### Implementation

Develop an action plan based on the above steps to ensure the sustainability and responsible use of inland fisheries and aquatic resources for future generations.

The action plan should involve the international community, governments, Civil Society Organizations, indigenous peoples groups, and private industry, and include all sectors using freshwater aquatic resources.