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STATE OF WORLD FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE AND THE PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES AND RELATED INSTRUMENTS

Executive Summary

This paper provides a summary of the analyses on the implementation of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code) and its related instruments, by FAO Members, regional fishery bodies (RFBs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), since the last report to the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2014. It reviews the role of the biennial flagship publication The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) within the global framework as defined by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; in supporting the work of decision-makers in general and that of FAO in particular, and presents key information in SOFIA 2016 concerning the current status, recent trends and prospects in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

Suggested Action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- underline the importance of FAO's role in reporting on the state of world fisheries and aquaculture, and advise on how COFI can best contribute to this and benefit from it;
- underline the relevance of SOFIA and advise on its role in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and how the publication can be improved;
- note the progress on the implementation of the Code and advise on how to address the gaps and constraints identified on various components of the Code and in this regard;

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- note the record response rate to the questionnaire and encourage Members to maintain their commitment in responding to the related instruments;
- provide guidance on how to continue to broaden and deepen the implementation of the Code;
- advise on the broader use of the data and information submitted through the Code questionnaire, including for reporting on other processes, ad hoc assessments and studies, and specific technical reports;
- advise on the review of the contents of the questionnaire and further enhancements of the web-based application and related data management and data processing tools;
- note progress concerning safety at sea in the fisheries sector, including through cooperation between FAO and the International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO).

I. PART I

STATE OF WORLD FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

1. The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) is usually produced and launched at COFI just before the Session. Recent major international developments and expectations of heightened media attention to the data contained in SOFIA 2016 have necessitated some revisions to the original timeline.
2. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), several of which are highly relevant to fisheries and aquaculture, calls for new approaches and combinations in the ways policies, programmes, partnerships and investments are pulled together to achieve the common goals.
3. The purpose of the present document is to: (i) consider the role of SOFIA in supporting the work of decision-makers in general and that of FAO in particular within the new global framework set by the 2030 Agenda; and (ii) present key information in SOFIA 2016 concerning the current status, recent trends and prospects in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.
4. SOFIA is intended to facilitate a comprehensive, objective and global view of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, particularly of emerging issues. SOFIA 2016 is the twelfth edition in the biennial series, which started in 1994.

Role and influence of SOFIA publication

5. The role and impact of SOFIA, and indeed of other products of the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, at the science–policy interface are discussed as a case study in a very recent publication.¹
6. The case study is in part based on a specific assessment conducted by FAO’s Office of Evaluation within a broader overall evaluation of FAO publications to assess the extent to which SOFIA is achieving its intended outcomes.² This assessment has captured evidence on the relevance, quality and effectiveness of SOFIA through the following tools: (i) desk review; (ii) interviews with key informants;³ (iii) user (readership) survey;⁴ and (iv) web and cybermetric analyses.
7. In terms of web traffic, data from FAO’s Document Repository show SOFIA 2014 averaging 21 247 views per month (July 2014 – April 2016), with 19 338 views in the most recent month for which data are available (April 2016).

¹ Ababouch, L., Taconet, M., Plummer, J., Garibaldi, L. & Vannuccini, S. 2016. Bridging the science-policy divide to promote fisheries knowledge for all: the case of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. In B.H. MacDonald, S.S. Soomai, E.M. De Santo & P.G. Wells, eds. *Science, information, and policy interface for effective coastal and ocean management*, pp. 389–417. Boca Raton, USA, CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group. 474 pp.

² FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO’s contribution to knowledge on food and agriculture* [online]. Annex 2.7, pp. 93–111. Office of Evaluation. Thematic Evaluation series. Rome. [Cited 10 May 2016]. www.fao.org/evaluation/oed-documents-and-reports/en/

³ About 200 key informants in 12 countries selected in consultation with FAO staff responded to a client survey. A Member Country survey administered through the Permanent Representations to FAO received responses from 38 Governments.

⁴ Based on an analysis of 252 completed questionnaires.

8. The assessment discovered that, among policy-makers, SOFIA is perceived as a critical source of global trends and statistics, and, to a lesser degree, of knowledge about fisheries in a variety of topics and contexts, which supports decision-making and policy decisions. One of SOFIA's key contributions relates to the interface between global and national statistics. In particular, SOFIA has helped to improve sectoral statistics over the years, which in turn are re-used in a number of analytical products and research. Among programme managers, about 64 percent of survey respondents indicate that SOFIA reports have moderately to highly guided the development/improvement of sectoral strategies or programmes.
9. The assessment further finds that SOFIA is regularly quoted in workshops, scientific papers, and press articles by civil society and media outlets, as well as by partner international organizations.
10. The assessment report concludes that the utility and uptake of SOFIA at sectoral level and among different sets of users appear to be substantial, with uptake being evidenced in particular with policy-makers, programme managers, researchers, and academia.
11. In addition to the evidence from the recent formal assessment, one can also cite a recent publication from the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) of the United States of America as an indicator of SOFIA's relevance and impact at the science-policy interface. Its 2015 report⁵ to the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Agriculture states "Lastly, to address Question 4 on the worldwide capacity to produce enough nutritious seafood, the Committee used the FAO's report on the *State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture*, 2012. This was considered the most current and comprehensive source on this topic, ...".

Some key information in SOFIA 2016

12. Global total capture fishery production in 2014 was 93.4 million tonnes, of which 81.5 million tonnes from marine waters and 11.9 million tonnes from inland waters. For the first time since 1998, anchoveta was not the top-ranked species in terms of catch as it fell below Alaska pollock. Four highly valuable groups (tunas, lobsters, shrimps and cephalopods) registered new record catches in 2014. Total catches of tuna and tuna-like species were almost 7.7 million tonnes.
13. A milestone was reached in 2014 when the aquaculture sector's contribution to the supply of fish for human consumption overtook that of wild-caught fish for the first time. China has played a major role in this growth as it represents more than 60 percent of world aquaculture production. However, the rest of the world (excluding China) has also contributed with its share of aquaculture in the overall supply of fish for human consumption more than doubling since 1995.
14. Growth in the global supply of fish for human consumption has outpaced population growth in the past five decades, increasing at an average annual rate of 3.2 percent in the period 1961–2013. World per capita apparent fish consumption increased from an average of 9.9 kg in the 1960s to 14.4 kg in the 1990s and 19.7 kg in 2013, with preliminary estimates for 2014 and 2015 pointing towards further growth beyond 20 kg.
15. In 2013, fish accounted for about 17 percent of the global population's intake of animal protein and 6.7 percent of all protein consumed. Moreover, fish provided more than 3.1 billion people with almost 20 percent of their average per capita intake of animal protein.
16. Production of aquatic animals from aquaculture in 2014 amounted to 73.8 million tonnes, with an estimated first-sale value of US\$160.2 billion. This total comprised 49.8 million tonnes of finfish (US\$99.2 billion), 16.1 million tonnes of molluscs (US\$19 billion), 6.9 million tonnes of crustaceans

⁵ Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC). 2015. *Scientific report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. Advisory Report to the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Agriculture* [online]. [Cited 10 May 2016]. www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015-scientific-report/PDFs/Scientific-Report-of-the-2015-Dietary-Guidelines-Advisory-Committee.pdf

(US\$36.2 billion) and 7.3 million tonnes of other aquatic animals including amphibians (US\$3.7 billion).

17. An estimated 56.6 million people were engaged in the primary sector of capture fisheries and aquaculture in 2014, of whom 36 percent were engaged full time, 23 percent part time, and the remainder were either occasional fishers or of unspecified status. In 2014, 84 percent of the global population engaged in the fisheries and aquaculture sector was in Asia, followed by Africa (10 percent), and Latin America and the Caribbean (4 percent). Of the 18 million people engaged in fish farming, 94 percent were in Asia. Women accounted for 19 percent of all people directly engaged in the primary sector in 2014, but when the secondary sector (e.g. processing, trading) is included women make up about half of the workforce.

18. The total number of fishing vessels in the world in 2014 is estimated at about 4.6 million. The fleet in Asia was the largest, consisting of 3.5 million vessels and accounting for 75 percent of the global fleet, followed by Africa (15 percent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (6 percent). Globally, 64 percent of reported fishing vessels were engine-powered in 2014, of which 80 percent were in Asia. In 2014, about 85 percent of the world's motorized fishing vessels were less than 12 m in length overall (LOA). The estimated number of fishing vessels of 24 m and longer operating in marine waters in 2014 was about 64 000.

19. Based on FAO's analysis of assessed commercial fish stocks, the share of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels decreased from 90 percent in 1974 to 68.6 percent in 2013. Thus, 31.4 percent of fish stocks were estimated as fished at a biologically unsustainable level and therefore overfished. Of the total number of stocks assessed in 2013, fully fished stocks accounted for 58.1 percent and underfished stocks 10.5 percent.

20. The share of world fish production utilized for direct human consumption has increased significantly in recent decades, up from 67 percent in the 1960s to 87 percent, or more than 146 million tonnes, in 2014. The remaining 21 million tonnes was destined for non-food products, of which 76 percent was reduced to fishmeal and fish oil in 2014.

21. In 2014, 46 percent (67 million tonnes) of the fish for direct human consumption was in the form of live, fresh or chilled fish. Freezing is the main method of processing fish for human consumption, and it accounted for 55 percent of total processed fish for human consumption and 26 percent of total fish production in 2014.

22. Developing economies, whose exports represented just 37 percent of world trade in 1976, saw their share rise to 54 percent of total fishery export value and 60 percent of the quantity (live weight) by 2014. In 2014, fishery exports from developing countries were valued at US\$80 billion, and their fishery net-export revenues (exports minus imports) reached US\$42 billion.

23. Governance of fisheries and aquaculture should be greatly influenced by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Paris Agreement of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The 17 SDGs and their 169 targets provide a framework to guide development actions of governments, international agencies, civil society and other institutions over the next 15 years with the ambitious aim of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

24. FAO's Blue Growth Initiative assists countries in developing and implementing the new global agenda in relation to sustainable capture fisheries and aquaculture, livelihoods and food systems, and economic growth from aquatic ecosystem services. It promotes implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code) and the ecosystem approach to fisheries and aquaculture (EAF/EAA). Reflecting the objectives of several SDGs, it especially targets the many vulnerable coastal and fisheries-dependent communities where ecosystems are already under stress from pollution, habitat degradation, overfishing and harmful practices.

25. For the past 20 years, the Code has served as the global reference instrument for the sustainable development of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Endorsed in 2014, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and

Poverty Eradication represent a global consensus on principles and guidance for small-scale fisheries governance and development towards enhanced food security and nutrition.

26. The coming into force and implementation of the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA) is expected to be a major advance in combating IUU fishing.

27. The Common Oceans / ABNJ Program aims to promote efficient and sustainable management of fisheries resources and biodiversity conservation in ABNJ to achieve internationally agreed global targets. The innovative five-year ABNJ Program, which started in 2014, is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and coordinated by FAO in close collaboration with three other GEF implementing agencies and a variety of partners.

28. Selected issues in SOFIA 2016 include: data needs for blue growth; improving the valuation of inland fisheries; cutting bycatch and discards in trawl fisheries; sustaining fisheries through fisherfolk organizations and collective action; promoting decent work; and aquaculture and climate change.

29. Highlights of special studies include: aquatic invasive alien species; ten steps to responsible inland fisheries; nutrition: from commitments to action; building resilience in fisheries and aquaculture; and governance of tenure and user rights.

30. The SOFIA 2016 Outlook section builds on the OECD-FAO Agriculture Outlook chapter on fish to describe the most plausible trends for the fishery and aquaculture sector in the next decade. It also outlines the potentially beneficial roles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and FAO's Blue Growth Initiative (BGI) in shaping future developments in fisheries and aquaculture.

II. PART II

PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES AND RELATED INSTRUMENTS

INTRODUCTION

31. Article 4 of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code) states, *inter alia*, that FAO will report to the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) concerning its implementation. This report is the tenth prepared by the Secretariat for COFI and is contained in three documents - Part II of this document (COFI/2016/2), COFI/2016/Inf.7 and COFI/2016/SBD.1. The information contained in the report has been supplied by Members, regional fishery bodies (RFBs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Secretariat.

32. At its Thirty-first Session, the Committee commended the work undertaken by FAO to develop a web-based version of the questionnaire⁶ on the implementation of the Code and welcomed the substantial increase in response rates of Members, RFBs and NGOs. In line with the Committee's request in 2014, the Secretariat further developed the web-based system, together with the related data processing tools and usability features, and reviewed the questionnaire, taking into account developments in global fisheries and aquaculture and comments provided by respondents. Web-based versions of the supplementary questionnaires on aquaculture and fish trade, submitted to the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture and Sub-Committee on Fish Trade respectively, were also developed using the same information technology platform whilst ensuring coherence with the main Code questionnaire.

33. In view of the importance attached to small-scale fisheries by Members and the endorsement by COFI of the Voluntary Guidelines for Small Scale Fisheries, five structured questions on small-scale fisheries were added to the questionnaire. Furthermore, five introductory structured questions were added to the RFB version of the questionnaire, focusing on their setup, function and mandate.

34. For the 2016 report, 115 Members⁷ (58 percent of FAO Members⁸) responded to the questionnaire⁹, setting an all-time record in response rate and corresponding to an increase of 20 percent since the last report in 2014. Six Members reporting this year had never submitted a questionnaire in the past and an additional 9 Members reporting this year had not submitted a questionnaire for ten years or more. The greatest increase in response rate was for the Asian (15 Members reported; 50 percent increase), European (33 Members reported; 50 percent increase) and Latin America and the Caribbean (25 Members reported; 47 percent increase) regions, whilst for the Near East region there was a 45 percent decline in response rate from 2014 and other regions maintained a similar response rate.

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/fishery/topic/166326/en>

⁷ The European Union responded on behalf of its Member States, except for questions 18.2, 18.3, 19, 20, 32 and 42 which related to integration of fisheries into coastal area management, the flagging and / or authorization of fishing vessels to operate on the high seas, and access to FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries.

⁸ In this report, reference to "Members" refers to the FAO Members that responded to the questionnaire and whose responses were taken into account in compiling the report.

⁹ The questionnaire was circulated to FAO Members, RFBs and NGOs by email through the Code questionnaire information system on 5th November 2015. Four "registration" reminders and six "submission" reminders were sent between 20 November 2015 and 9 February 2016. An additional notification was sent on 14th December 2015 to extend the deadline to 31 January 2016 and subsequently on 3 February 2016 to extend it again to 15th February 2016.

35. The response rate for RFBs and NGOs was similar to that of 2014, with a total of 25 RFBs¹⁰ and 10 NGOs¹¹ completing the web-based electronic questionnaire.

36. This document presents key findings on the progress of implementation of the Code on the basis of the responses to the questionnaire by FAO members, RFBs and NGOs. A detailed analyses of the information submitted, namely on the activities and applications of the Code at national level, as well as activities of RFBs and NGOs is presented in a supplementary information document COFI/2016/Inf.7. Statistical tables summarizing Members' responses are also made available on the COFI Web site¹² and at COFI as a background document COFI/2016/SBD.1 to be read in conjunction with the information document.

FAO ACTION TO SUPPORT THE CODE'S IMPLEMENTATION

37. FAO supports the Code's implementation in a variety of ways including through regular and field programme activities. Directed activities to support the Code's implementation, including regional and national workshops to deepen the Code's implementation, as well as ongoing work for the development of technical guidelines, the translation of some guidelines and assistance to elaborate national plans of action, are regularly undertaken by FAO. A number of programmes supporting the implementation of the International Plans of Action (IPOAs), voluntary guidelines and strategies, at national and regional levels, have also been developed by FAO to assist Members in increasing their capacity to develop and manage their fisheries and aquaculture sectors in line with the provisions of these supplementary instruments, including through regional mechanisms and cooperation.

38. In 2015 FAO published Technical Guidelines on best practices to improve safety at sea in the fisheries sector¹³ bringing the total number of Technical Guidelines in the series to twenty nine.

39. The 20th anniversary of the Code was commemorated at an international congress organized by FAO, the Spanish Ministry for Agriculture, Food and Environment and the Spanish Association of Wholesalers, Importers, Manufacturers and Exporters of Fish Products and Aquaculture (Conxemar) in Vigo, Spain from 8-9 October 2015. It was attended by about 600 participants representing the fishing industry, government institutions, intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, civil society organizations and support institutions (research and development, certification, industry consultants, etc.). The topics covered included: (i) the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (ii) fishing for the future - 2035; (iii) consumers and industry, trade and challenges; (iv) fisheries management and fishing rights; (v) IUU fishing - the situation and prospects; (vi) sustainability and certification; and (vii) blue growth.

SUMMARY ON THE PROGRESS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE BY MEMBERS

General

40. Almost all Members reported having a fisheries policy in place and almost two-thirds of them conform fully with the Code. Over half of the Members have national fisheries legislation in full conformity with the Code and most of the rest plan to align their national legislation with the provisions of the Code. Many Members have fishery management plans in place which are largely

¹⁰ ACAP, APFIC, CACFish, CCAMLR, CCSBT, CTMFM, FCWC, GFCM, IATTC, ICCAT, ICES, IOTC, IPHC, NAFO, NASCO, NEAFC, NPAFC, OSPESCA, RECOFI, SEAFDEC, SEAFO, SPC, SPRFMO, SRFC, and WECAFC.

¹¹ CIPS, FEAP, GGAP, Greenpeace, ICSF, MSC, NACEE, OPRT, PCT and WFTU.

¹² <http://www.fao.org/cofi/cofi2012/64143>

¹³ *FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries N. 1, Suppl. 3*

implemented. The most common management measure implemented in both marine fisheries and inland fisheries relates to the prohibition of destructive fishing methods.

41. Three quarters of the Members have started implementing the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF), most of which have taken appropriate management action and established ecological, socio-economic and governance objectives and many have also established monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. More than half of the Members have developed target reference points for managing fisheries, several of which reported that the reference points were being approached for some stocks and more than a third reported that they were being exceeded in some cases. Several Members reported that indicators other than target reference points were also being used in managing their fisheries. Limiting fishing effort, increasing research activities and strengthening monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) were the most commonly used remedial actions employed in cases where target reference points were exceeded.

42. Most Members have taken steps to control fisheries operations within their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), largely through strengthening their MCS schemes, and outside their EEZ through, inter alia, mandatory authorisation schemes. By-catch and discards continue to occur in major fisheries of several Members. More than half of the Members have put in place bycatch and discard monitoring schemes and almost all have adopted management measures to minimize bycatch and discards where they were found to be unsustainable. Vessel monitoring systems (VMS) are partially or fully implemented by many Members systems (VMS), and others plan to do so in the future.

43. Aquaculture development occurs in most countries, however only half of the Members have complete and enabling policy, legal and institutional frameworks. Nevertheless, most Members have adopted codes or instruments to promote responsible aquaculture practices, and in many cases the private sector had also done so. Procedures to undertake environmental assessments, monitor aquaculture operations and minimize the harmful effects of alien species introductions are being implemented by several Members, although they are generally in need of improvement. Most Members have taken measures to promote responsible aquaculture practices to support rural communities, producer organizations and fish farmers.

44. Complete and enabling policy, legal and institutional frameworks for integrated coastal zone management have been put in place by less than a third of Members (countries with a coastline) and about half have partially developed frameworks. The most common conflicts reported within the coastal area were fishing gear conflicts and between coastal and industrial fisheries, however, many Members have conflict resolution mechanisms in place.

45. Only half of Members have a largely complete and enabling effective food safety and quality assurance system for fish and fisheries products. Post-harvest losses and waste were reported to be a problem by most Members, however almost all of them have taken appropriate measures to minimise them. Measures to improve bycatch utilization have also been widely applied. More than three-quarters of Members reported that processors were in a position to trace the origin of the fisheries products they purchase but only a third of the Members declared that consumers were able to do so. Although processing and trading in illegally harvested fisheries resources are commonly recognised as a problem, most Members have taken measures to address the issue, including through enhanced fisheries control and inspections, custom and border controls and implementation of national plans of action to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.

46. In general, estimates on stock status are available for half of the fish stocks targeted by Members' fishing fleet. Statistics on catch and fishing effort are collected in a timely, complete and reliable manner in many countries, even though about half of the Members have insufficient qualified personnel to generate data to support sustainable fisheries management. Historical data, port and landing site sampling surveys and routine data collection are the most the prominent data sources used by Members for the development of fishery management plans. Almost all Members reported that data gaps, most commonly those related to stock status, undermine the management of their fishery resources. More than half of the Members reported that they routinely monitored the state of the

marine environment and conducted research to assess and predict the impact of climate change on fisheries.

47. Less than a third of Members have developed and implemented national plans of action to manage fishing capacity in line with the IPOA-Capacity and few fishing capacity assessments have been completed. Many Members flag and / or authorize fishing vessels to operate on the high seas and the majority submit a record of such vessels to FAO. In most cases where overcapacity is recognised as a problem, steps were being taken to prevent the further build-up of overcapacity, mainly through limited entry regimes and a freeze on the number of licenses and / or vessels, and measures were implemented to reduce overcapacity and to prevent further negative impacts of overcapacity.

48. Increasing importance has been given by Members over the years to assessments of shark stocks which, in most cases, have led to the development of national plans of action for the conservation and management of sharks. High importance has also been attached to assessing the impact of fisheries on seabirds and several Members have developed a national plan of action to reduce incidental catches of seabirds, where relevant, and are applying mitigation measures.

49. IUU fishing is perceived as a problem by many Members and more than half of them have started implementing a national plan of action to combat IUU fishing and almost all have taken relevant measures including the improvement of coastal State controls and MCS and legal frameworks.

50. The implementation of plans and programmes related to the Strategies on improving status and trends in capture fisheries and aquaculture is being carried out by about half the Members, mainly by improving data collection, analysis and dissemination.

51. Members have a general appreciation of the principal international binding instruments, namely the 1993 FAO Compliance Agreement, the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the 2009 Agreement on Port State Measures. It is worth noting, however, that the results of the survey indicate that there is misunderstanding by some Members with respect to their status in relation to these Agreements.

Small-Scale Fisheries

52. Small-scale fisheries are present in almost all countries, which on average account for more than half of the total production, both in terms of quantities and value. About two-thirds of the people in the fisheries sector are involved in small-scale fisheries, of which seventy percent are directly involved in fishing activities, less than a quarter in post-harvest activities and some in other related activities.

53. Although information on gender distribution of people involved in small-scale fisheries is generally lacking, it can be deduced that there is a higher percentage of men engaged in full-time employment in all regions, except for post-harvest activities in which a higher percentage of women are engaged in full-time employment in three regions.

54. Small-scale fisheries are legally defined by about half of the Members and many of the others have informally defined them. Several of these Members intend to review the definitions through a multi-stakeholder process and some of the others intend to introduce it through a similar process. Most countries which have defined small-scale fisheries collect data on the sector. Regulations, policies, laws, plans or strategies specifically addressing small-scale fisheries have been introduced in many countries.

55. Almost half of the Members have specific initiatives to implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Small Scale Fisheries (VGSSF) which mainly comprise support to resources management-related activities and capacity development of fisheries organizations and other stakeholders, together with promotion of social development, employment and decent work. The most prominent constraints encountered by Members in implementing such initiatives were lack of financial resources and qualified human resources. The involvement of small-scale fishers and fish workers in fisheries

management decision-making processes has been commonly introduced in conjunction with the implementation of such initiatives. Mechanisms through which small-scale fishers and fish workers can contribute to decision making processes are in place in most countries and many of them include the promotion of the active participation of women.

Constraints and suggested solutions

56. Most Members face some constraints in implementing the Code, which are mainly related to insufficient budgetary and human resources. Access to more financial resources, training and awareness raising, improvement of research, statistics and access to information, were among the primary solutions identified by Members to overcome these constraints. Technical guidelines on the implementation of the Code are widely distributed among Members, especially those on the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries, aquaculture development, fisheries management, conservation and management of sharks and combatting IUU fishing.

ACTIVITIES OF REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES AND NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs)

57. The number of contracting parties of responding RFBs ranges between two and 50, with an average of 15 contracting parties. Slightly over a third of the RFBs have up to six cooperating non-contracting parties/non-member countries and more than half of them have observers, averaging twelve in number. Fisheries management is the most common primary mandate of these RFBs followed by a scientific / research role. Most RFBs cover both exclusive economic zones and areas beyond national jurisdiction, and a few of them also cover inland waters in addition to one or both of these areas. Three quarters of responding RFBs reported having adopted binding measures, non-binding measures or both between 2010 to 2015 period.

58. The establishment of management plans to ensure the sustainable utilization of living aquatic resources in marine capture fisheries mainly include measures related to ensuring that the level of fishing is commensurate with the state of fisheries resources and to addressing the protection of endangered species. In the case of inland capture fisheries, the prohibition of destructive fishing methods, addressing the biodiversity of aquatic habitats and ecosystems and addressing the interests and rights of small-scale fishers were the most common elements associated with management plans.

59. Many RFBs reported having taken steps to ensure that only fishing operations in accordance with their adopted fisheries management plans are conducted within their area of competence. The precautionary approach has been applied by most RFBs in the management of fisheries resources. In the last two years, almost all of the respondents have either taken or strengthened measures to limit bycatch and discards. Historical data, followed by in-port/landing site sampling surveys and routine data collection and FAO and/or other organizations' statistics are the most commonly used sources of information in the fisheries management process by RFBs.

60. Two-thirds of RFBs reported that reliable estimates of stock status are present for at least 50 percent of the stocks they considered important. Out of the RFBs that have developed stock specific target reference points (TRPs), the majority reported that one or more TRPs have been approached and/or exceeded. Limiting fishing effort was the most common measure put in place when TRPs were exceeded. Catch and effort indicators were by far the most popular alternative to the use of TRPs.

61. More than two-thirds of RFBs have established requirements for the implementation of VMS for the entire fishing fleet or a segment of the fishing fleet, which are generally complied with by members.

62. Efforts have been made by many RFBs on several fronts and in different ways to assist in the implementation of the IPOA-Capacity, IPOA-Sharks, IPOA-Seabirds and IPOA-IUU. Several RFBs have taken action to strengthen and develop innovative ways to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing, along with cooperating in the exchange of information, developing awareness raising programmes and undertaking other activities prescribed in the IPOA-IUU. About half of the RFBs have conducted assessments on the conservation and management of sharks, as well as on impact on incidental catch of seabirds. Fewer RFBs have engaged in assessing fishing capacity. Many RFBs have also undertaken research to enhance the availability of best scientific evidence and availability of information on the status and trends of capture fisheries to support the conservation and management of fisheries resources.

63. Only about a quarter of responding RFBs are concerned with aquaculture development. Although Members of respective RFBs were reported to have procedures in place for good practice in aquaculture operations, all were reported to be in need of further improvements, especially with respect to legal frameworks and institutional technical capacity.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

64. Promoting the protection of living aquatic resources, of their environments and of coastal areas was identified by NGOs as the most important objective of the Code to achieve sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture. They also highly regarded the Code as an instrument to establish principles and criteria to implement policies for the conservation of fishery resources and fisheries management and development. Of the eight substantive themes developed in the Code and in the relevant FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries, the top three priorities identified by NGOs were fisheries management, fishing operations and trade.

65. The main constraints identified by NGOs for the implementation of the Code related to incomplete policy and/or legal frameworks and institutional weaknesses. Improving institutional and organisational structures, more training and awareness raising and aligning policy and legal frameworks with the Code were among the most important solutions suggested. The responding NGOs considered the organization and/or hosting of national and international workshops and the promotion of standards based on the Code to be most effective in making the Code more widely known and understood.

66. According to NGOs, ensuring that the level of fishing is commensurate with the state of fisheries resources, addressing the protection of endangered species and the prohibition of destructive fishing methods and practices were the most common measures within existing marine fishery management plans of countries and/or RFBs, whilst the former two were the most common in inland fisheries management.

67. Over half of the NGOs considered that countries had adequate procedures in place for good practice in aquaculture operations. Nevertheless, they deemed that improvements were needed, particularly in relation to strengthening institutional technical capacity, improving frequency and/or coverage of assessments and lowering their costs.

68. Most NGOs have engaged in efforts to assist in the implementation of the IPOA-Capacity, IPOA-Sharks and IPOA-IUU. Almost half of the NGOs reported to be engaged in assisting implementation of the IPOA-Seabirds. In relation to the Strategy-STF, some NGOs reported that they contributed to research to enhance scientific evidence to support the conservation, management and sustainable use of fishery resources.

THE WEB-BASED QUESTIONNAIRE AND DATABASE

69. The excellent response rates to the web-based questionnaire on the Code and the supplementary web-based questionnaires on aquaculture and trade, have provided for more complete and reliable analyses to be carried out on the implementation of the Code. The vast amount of information submitted has been appropriately stored in a database since 2014 but its use has, so far, been limited to producing this working document and associated documents for COFI. Considering the regular global coverage and wide-ranging nature of the data and information collected, the Committee may consider expanding the use of the database for other purposes, including, for example, for progress reporting on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Some of the indicators for the SDGs and Aichi targets require data collected through the Code questionnaire. The data could also be made available for ad hoc assessments and studies and for tailor made reports on specific subjects, with due consideration to confidentiality issues, which may be specified by the Committee.

70. Taking into account continuous developments in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, it is advisable that the questionnaire is reviewed periodically, including the addition of sections, as appropriate. In addition, the web-based application and related data management and data processing tools could be further enhanced to improve usability and data quality control, as well as to expand functionality.

SAFETY AT SEA IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

71. The importance of safety at sea in the fisheries sector was highlighted at the 2014 session of COFI, where the Committee welcomed the effective cooperation established in this regard between FAO, ILO and IMO. Many Members stressed the link between safety at sea and forced labour and the occurrence of IUU fishing activities. They referred, in this context, to the ILO Convention 188 and to the Cape Town Agreement of 2012 on the implementation of the provisions of the Torremolinos Protocol of 1993.

72. The main activities related to safety at sea, in which FAO has been involved since COFI 31, include the following: publication of best practices to improve safety at sea in the fisheries sector; the effects of fisheries resource management measures on the safety of fishing operations; regional seminars on the ratification and implementation of the Cape Town Agreement; the Third Session of the Joint FAO/IMO Ad Hoc Working Group on IUU Fishing and Related Matters; comprehensive revision of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, 1995 (STCW-F); activities to promote the ratification and effective implementation of ILO Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188); and an update of the Safety-for-fishermen website. A summary of these activities that support the implementation of the Code with regard to safety at sea in the fisheries sector is provided in document COFI/2016/Inf.8.