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Food and Agriculture
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Продовольственная и
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Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Thirty-second Session

Rome, 11-15 July 2016

EXPERT CONSULTATION ON GEAR MARKING

Executive Summary

This document provides additional information on the Expert Consultation on the Marking of Fishing Gear, held on 4-7 April 2016, in support of document COFI/2016/8 on Global and regional processes. The report of the Expert Consultation is provided in document COFI/2016/SBD.3.

The recommendations by the Expert Consultation to COFI are set out in paragraph 5.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The issue of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) has been a concern for FAO and its members for many decades and it has been noted that the elaboration of a standard for the marking of fishing gear would be of benefit to coastal states in addressing problems associated with ALDFG.
2. At the Thirty-first Session of COFI, held in 2014, concern was expressed over ghost fishing by ALDFG and that greater attention should be paid by Members and regional fisheries bodies/regional fisheries management organizations to mitigate ALDFG impacts, noting that cost effective technologies and practices were available. Many Members highlighted the need for further work on this issue. In response to these concerns, FAO convened an Expert Consultation in Rome, Italy, on 4-7 April 2016 with the purpose to develop draft guidelines on the marking of fishing gear, to be submitted for consideration at the Thirty-second session of COFI.

II. REVIEW OF THE DRAFT GUIDELINES

3. The preliminary text of the draft Guidelines was introduced at the Expert Consultation and the overall structure discussed. The Consultation focused on the need for actionable, practical and user-friendly guidelines that will assist States and regional fisheries management organizations/arrangements in meeting the objectives set out by COFI and in conformity with relevant international fisheries instruments.
4. The Expert Consultation reviewed the preliminary text prepared by the Secretariat and developed a text containing the draft Guidelines. The agreed draft Guidelines will be attached to the report of the Expert Consultation. The provisional list of contents of the draft Guidelines is provided in the Annex to this document.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The Expert Consultation recommended that COFI consider:
 - a) that the draft Guidelines, as agreed by the Expert Consultation, should be considered as a draft text to be further developed through a Technical Consultation;
 - b) tasking FAO to lead further work associated with effective implementation of a system for the marking of fishing gear. In this regard, the Expert Consultation identified the following priority activities:
 - i. Capacity development of the relevant national and regional authorities and the fishing sector to implement effective gear marking systems;
 - ii. Preparing studies, upon which best practices, including incentives to enhance the uptake of gear marking systems, could be developed; and
 - iii. Collaborating with relevant intergovernmental and regional organizations to raise awareness, improve communication and develop capacity on implementing effective systems for the marking of fishing gear, including FADs, as well as to attempt to quantify the extent of ALDFG worldwide.

ANNEX**Provisional list of contents of the draft Guidelines**

BackgroundStatement of purposeScope and principles

Definitions

Implementation of a gear marking system

Control and monitoring

Reporting of abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear

Recovery of abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear

Commercial traceability of fishing gear marking

Fish aggregating devices

Marking the position of a gear in the water column

Research and development

Awareness raising, communication and capacity development

Special requirements of developing states and small scale fisheries

Additional considerations

ANNEX A: Risk assessment criteria to assist in determining the appropriateness or otherwise of implementing a system for marking fishing gear

ANNEX B1: Type of gear marks

ANNEX B2: Suggested location of marks in relation to gear type

ANNEX C: Guidance for the marking of fishing gear to indicate position in the water column