



# COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

## SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE

### Seventeenth Session

Vigo, Spain, 25–29 November 2019

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN FISH VALUE CHAINS

### Executive Summary

This document outlines the process, development and proposed future work of FAO in the development of a Guidance framework on social responsibility in fisheries and aquaculture value chains, in accordance with the FAO's mandate given by the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI:FT) in 2017 and the recommendation by Members on future guidance on social issues during COFI in 2018.

### Suggested action by the Sub-Committee

- Share national experience on the development of social responsibility in fisheries and aquaculture value chains;
- Provide recommendations regarding the development of the draft Guidance, including the participation of multiple stakeholders, and for the continuation of FAO work based on the current draft guidance as a framework for the elaboration and development of the related appendixes;
- Consider mechanisms for providing financial support to further work, including the possibility of having expert consultations for the development of the appendixes.



## BACKGROUND

1. At the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of COFI:FT (Agadir, 2016) Members highlighted the increasing concerns about social and labour conditions in the industry<sup>1</sup>.
2. At the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of COFI:FT (Busan, 2017)<sup>2</sup> for the first time Members welcomed the inclusion of social sustainability in the agenda. Members confirmed the importance and relevance of the topic in fisheries and aquaculture value chains, in particular the recognition and protection of human and labour rights at both national and international levels.
3. During its 33<sup>rd</sup> Session, the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI)<sup>3</sup> recommended the development of a guidance on social responsibility in fisheries and aquaculture value chains. The guidance should promote decent work and the recognition of human and labour rights in fisheries and aquaculture. Members recommended that the guidance be developed in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including industry and fish worker associations.
4. Since 2014, the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department has led an annual multi-stakeholder consultation called “The Vigo Dialogue on Decent Work” which focuses on the benefits of promoting decent employment in fisheries and aquaculture. The Dialogue aims to discuss labour issues and suggest priority actions through the implementation of relevant international and national legal frameworks and instruments by governments, unions, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society and industry, among others.
5. The FAO Strategic Programme on Rural Poverty Reduction also promotes decent work and social protection, covering a significant range of related activities in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. In addition, COFI has recognized the existence of linkages between illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and working conditions.
6. By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Members have committed to leave no one behind in their implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to the recognition of human dignity as being fundamental to reach these goals.
7. The SDGs relevant to the current work of FAO in the development of a guidance framework on social responsibility in fisheries and aquaculture value chains are:
  - SDG1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere;
  - SDG2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture;
  - SDG5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
  - SDG8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
  - SDG10: Reduce inequality within and among countries;
  - SDG14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;
  - SDG17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5580t.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i8157t.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca5184en>

## **PROCESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FAO GUIDANCE ON SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE VALUE CHAINS**

8. After the 2018 Vigo Dialogue in Spain, FAO started a series of meetings with other international organizations in order to discuss and strengthen collaboration for the development of this Guidance.

9. During 2019, FAO has conducted four “Dialogues” worldwide (Agadir, Brussels, Rome and Shanghai)– in order to receive inputs, comments, suggestions and feedback from relevant stakeholders in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, on the first draft Guidance. Participants representing trade unions, governments, NGOs, academia, civil society, industry and international organizations, amongst others, attended the Dialogues.

10. The first event organized by FAO was the “Agadir Dialogue on Traceability and Socially Responsible Fisheries and Aquaculture Value Chains” on 22 February 2019 during the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of Haliteutis Expo in Morocco. It was a regional event, attended by 38 participants from the industry, governments, regulatory bodies, regional institutions, civil society and professional organizations. The event facilitated an open discussion in order to highlight and address the main challenges regarding social issues in fish value chains from a regional perspective. Participants gave inputs and suggestions to be included in the draft Guidance.

11. The “Brussels Dialogue on Socially Responsible Fisheries and Aquaculture Value Chains” was held on 8 May 2019 during the Seafood Expo Global 2019 in Belgium. It was an open event, with more than 80 participants. The main purpose was to present the outline of the draft Guidance developed by the two external consultants and to discuss and share experiences regarding social issues in the fisheries and aquaculture value chains. Representatives from the industry, trade unions, associations, NGOs, institutions, international organizations, amongst others, discussed and provided inputs in order to make the Guidance more inclusive and robust.

12. The Rome Dialogue was a two-day event held from 19–20 June 2019 in Italy. The event focused on trade unions, global NGOs and the industry, with more than 25 participants attending the event. The main objective of the dialogue was to identify potentially missing gaps in the draft Guidance. Participants discussed the main problems of the various sub-sectors of the value chains (i.e., small-scale fisheries, large-scale/industrial fisheries, post-harvest activities, and “what if” scenarios) through dynamic group discussions.

13. The Shanghai Dialogue took place from 3–4 July 2019 in China, with the support of Shanghai Ocean University. The event gathered 11 experts with different backgrounds in value chains. The main purpose was to discuss relevant issues and gaps related to the draft Guidance. Participants were divided into groups to discuss three areas of the fish value chains (i.e., production, post-harvest activities, and “what if” scenarios), using the same dynamic model as in the Rome Dialogue.

14. Moreover, FAO has participated in other events, conferences and workshops related to social issue in fisheries, in order to tackle all the nuances to be addressed. These events included the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Committee for Fisheries, SEAFISH Seafood Ethics Common Language Group meetings, Poland’s VI Fish Congress, Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI) meetings, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Conference, Long Distance Fleet Advisory Council (LDAC) Seminar on labour and social dimension for sustainable fisheries, as well as FAO project meetings such as the FAO workshop in Costa Rica on social sustainability in fisheries.

15. In addition, FAO established an online public consultation, making the draft Guidance available for comments and suggestions. The online consultation was released through the FAO GLOBEFISH<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [www.globefish.org](http://www.globefish.org)

website and remained open for one and a half months during the summer of 2019. The online consultation was successful in reaching relevant stakeholders who could not attend the FAO Dialogues. FAO invited more than 1 000 people to register for the consultation, receiving more than 750 comments with the participation of 57 subscribers. The feedback received on the platform was reviewed and analysed in order to include the inputs in the draft Guidance.

16. In summary, the main outcomes and conclusions from the consultations stated that the Guidance should:

- be practical and simple taking into consideration that “one size does not fit all”, and be clear and understandable for all relevant parties;
- be relevant to all actors involved in the value chains;
- differentiate between small-scale fishing and industrial fishing;
- take into consideration the cultural and traditional nuances;
- recognize the importance of the role of women, ensuring their visibility and increasing their participation in policy and decision-making;
- take into account child labour, migrant labour and gender inclusiveness in a separate area;
- include retailers;
- help the sector to become more transparent along the value chains;
- have clear linkages to existing traceability initiatives;
- assist all actors involved in the fisheries and aquaculture value chains, including companies and governments, to improve and ensure better working practices and labour conditions.

## **THE FAO GUIDANCE FRAMEWORK ON SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE VALUE CHAINS**

17. In line with FAO’s mandate and the inputs received from stakeholders throughout the consultations, the Guidance that is being developed aims to be practical and inclusive.

18. The proposed Guidance is divided into two parts. The first part is generic and horizontal, recalling internationally accepted principles and other horizontally applicable issues throughout the value chains. This first part, presented in Annex 1, is the framework that will set the principles and boundaries for the elaboration and development of the second part.

19. The second part is not drafted yet. However, it will consist of appendices elaborating the specifications of the main activities of the fisheries and aquaculture value chains. In addition, each appendix should take into consideration aspects of child labour, gender equity and equality, and fair integration of migrant workers. The proposed appendices that will be developed, according to the inputs received from the consultations, are the following:

- Small-scale fishing;
- Industrial fishing;
- Aquaculture production;
- Processing;
- Distribution; and
- Retailing.

20. The appendixes will provide complementary and specific measures and tools to facilitate compliance, building on the existing international instruments, in order to ensure social responsibility.

21. As the first part of the Guidance aims to have a holistic approach of the value chains, the second part will be practical and simplified, and will focus on the specific nature of the activities in the fish value chains in order to be useful and comprehensible to all actors involved, regardless of size, capacity and knowledge.

## ANNEX 1

# **GUIDANCE ON SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE VALUE CHAINS**

## **1. Background**

1.1 This Guidance aims to facilitate compliance towards social responsibility in fisheries and aquaculture along the value chains. It focuses on actors and their activities pragmatically. This Guidance arises from multi-year consultations led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), under a specific mandate received by FAO Members.

1.2 Every year, since 2014, the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department has conducted multi-stakeholder consultations, called “The Vigo Dialogue on Decent Work”, focusing on the benefits of promoting decent employment in fisheries and aquaculture. These dialogues aim to discuss labour issues and suggest priority actions through the implementation of relevant international and national legal frameworks and instruments by governments, unions, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society and industry, among others.

1.3 In 2016, during the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI:FT) in Agadir, Members highlighted the increasing concerns about social and labour conditions in the industry.

1.4 The year after, at the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of COFI:FT in Busan, for the first time a specific item in the agenda focused on social sustainability, Members confirmed the significant importance and relevance of those issues in the fish value chains, in particular the recognition and protection of human and labour rights in national and international levels.

1.5 At the 2018 Session, the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), recommended that a guidance on social sustainability shall be developed in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including industry and fish worker associations.

1.6 In addition, in 2019, in order to have diverse participation of multiple actors throughout the fish value chains in the drafting of such a guidance, FAO conducted a series of specific dialogues in Agadir, Brussels, Rome, and Shanghai, together with a public online consultation.

## **2. Nature and Scope**

2.1 This Guidance is voluntary in nature.

2.2 This Guidance is global in scope. All fisheries and aquaculture value chains are considered, covering upstream and downstream activities involving fish and fish products, including pre-harvest, harvest, and post-harvest.

2.3 This Guidance is primarily addressed to any business actor to ensure socially responsible fish and fish products, regardless of its stage along the value chain, its size (self-employed, small, medium and large), its nature (private or public), and its nationality (domestic, foreign or multinational).

2.4 This Guidance should be implemented by focusing on any actor working in any capacity in fisheries and aquaculture value chains through the promotion of a human rights-based approach.

2.5 This Guidance can be particularly useful for governments in creating a positive environment and promoting socially responsible value chains, as well as for unions, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, associations, research and academic institutions, international organizations, and all others concerned with the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

2.6 This Guidance consolidates internationally recognized principles to ensure social responsibility in fisheries and aquaculture value chains.

### 3. Objectives

3.1 The objectives of this Guidance are:

- a) to improve social responsibility in fisheries and aquaculture value chains;
- b) to promote human and labour rights, including decent work;
- c) to facilitate compliance by presenting a compilation of relevant international principles;
- d) to serve as a practical instrument of reference to assist actors in establishing or in improving any framework required for the exercise of socially responsible fisheries and aquaculture value chains;
- e) to support the formulation and implementation of appropriate measures;
- f) to enhance transparency along the fish value chains, which can improve traceability initiatives;
- g) to strength interlinkages and exchange of information among the actors, particularly through collaboration and cooperation;
- h) to contribute to a more socially sustainable sector generating economic and environmental benefits to all;
- i) to assist actors in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### 4. General Principles

4.1 This Guidance is based on international human rights anchored in the International Bill of Human Rights of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and instruments and standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

4.2 This Guidance is based on the following general principles:

- a) Sovereignty of countries in complying with all relevant laws and regulations;
- b) Clearly and widely publicizing policies, laws, decisions and procedures in applicable languages and formats accessible and applicable to all, equally enforced and independently adjudicated (“rule of law”);
- c) Non-discrimination under law and policies, as in practice;
- d) Equality and equity based on a balanced and fair participation of all actors or interested parties;
- e) Differentiated responsibilities of actors in the fisheries and aquaculture value chain;
- f) Clear accountability of each actor throughout the value chain;
- g) Transparency, particularly in connection with preventing any form of corruption and fraudulent practices;
- h) Practicality, viability and clarity of measures or actions implemented by actors;
- i) Not creating unnecessary obstacles or barriers to trade.

4.3 The following specific principles shall be observed to secure compliance with social responsibility based on this Guidance:

- a) *Human rights and dignity*  
Recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable human rights of all individuals.
- b) *Labour rights*  
Recognition and respect of the core international labour standards setting out the fundamental principles and rights at work (i.e. freedom of association and effective recognition of the right

to collective bargaining; elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; effective abolition of child labour; and elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation) and applicable international labour standards to ensure decent work in fisheries and aquaculture along value chains.

- c) *Equity and justice*  
Recognition and promotion of fair treatment, equity and equitable rights for all, in particular for gender, age, ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, and for vulnerable communities and small-scale fishers, taking into consideration the national context.
- d) *Non-discrimination*  
No actor should be subject to discrimination under law and policies, as well as in practice, including the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment or occupation.
- e) *Respect of cultures*  
Recognition and respect of any traditional form of organization, local knowledge and associated practices, including traditional communities, small-scale fishers, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, and religion or beliefs.
- f) *Health and safety*  
Adoption of appropriate practices to protect the health, welfare and safety of actors in the activities along the value chains, including the prevention of threats and hazards.
- g) *Transparency*  
Clearly defined roles and activities of all actors throughout the value chain.
- h) *Consultation and participation*  
An active, free, effective, meaningful and informative participation of actors and groups of actors throughout the value chain in decision-making processes, including social dialogues. The engagement and support of actors affected by those decisions, including facilitating feedback and responding to their contributions.
- i) *Gender equity and equality*  
Women and men shall fully equally enjoy all human rights in any sort of context while acknowledging differences between them. Specific measures shall be implemented in order to accelerate de facto gender equality, by empowering women, including leadership assignment.
- j) *Recognition of small-scale fishers*  
Having regard of their singularities, small-scale fishers shall enjoy all human rights in any sort of context, and in particular decent working conditions; access to information; labour, health and social protection.
- k) *Distinctive aspects of child labour*  
Children shall enjoy the same human rights accorded to all people, but they also have distinct rights to protection according to their age. Every child has the opportunity to develop physically and mentally to his/her full potential at different ages and stages of development, including access to education. The work of any child (1) below the required national minimum age of work; (2) that poses work concerns when the child is too young, or (3) considered altogether unsuitable because of its detrimental nature or conditions, shall be abolished.
- l) *Fair integration of migrant workers*  
Having regard their vulnerability, migrant workers shall enjoy all human rights in any sort of context, and in particular decent working conditions, access to information, labour protection and the necessary assistance and support from either their home or host country.

4.4 The general and specific principles are interdependent, interrelated and interconnected, and shall be taken into consideration as a whole into a holistic approach.

## **5. Relationship with Other International Instruments**

5.1 This Guidance shall be used, interpreted and applied in conformity with the relevant rules of international law, including the obligations of States under international agreements to which they are a party.

5.2 Nothing in this Guidance prejudices the rights, jurisdiction, and duties of States under international law.

5.3 This Guidance is complementary to, and supports national, regional, and international initiatives that address human rights and sustainable development.

## **6. Cooperation towards a Socially Responsible Fish Value Chain**

6.1 A socially responsible fisheries and aquaculture value chain is achieved when the private sector, governments, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors cooperate between them, all together, towards an effective implementation of human rights.

6.2 The scale and ambition of the results associated with this Guidance are based on working in a spirit of solidarity, in particular solidarity with vulnerable actors and communities, small-scale fishers, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities.

## **7. Specific Activities of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Value Chains**

7.1 This Guidance also comprises a set of Appendixes elaborating on general and specific principles, taking into consideration the specificities of the fisheries and aquaculture value chains.

7.2 These Appendixes provide complementary and specific measures and tools to facilitate compliance and to ensure social responsibility.

7.3 Gender equity and equality, distinctive aspects of child labour and fair integration of migrant workers shall be explicitly present in each Appendix.

7.4 The Appendixes to this Guidance constitute an integral part of this Guidance.

7.5 For each of the following activities, a separate appendix will be developed:

- a) Small-scale fishing
- b) Industrial fishing
- c) Aquaculture production
- d) Processing
- e) Distribution
- f) Retailing

7.6 The Appendixes are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, more than one Appendix should be used when there is a combination of activities.

7.7 New Appendixes addressing additional activities in the fisheries and aquaculture value chains can be added after being submitted to the FAO Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI:FT).