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# COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

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### STATUS UPDATE ON THE GLOBAL STUDY "ILLUMINATING HIDDEN HARVESTS: THE CONTRIBUTION OF SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT"

#### Executive Summary

Better data on and understanding of small-scale fisheries is needed to enable sound governance and sustainable development of the sector in line with the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). In June 2017, FAO in collaboration with WorldFish and Duke University initiated a global study entitled 'Illuminating Hidden Harvests: the contribution of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development' (IHH), which was introduced in the last session of the Committee (see COFI/2018/Inf.18). The release of the study is planned for the end of 2020.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief update on the status of the study and to share emerging insights on the need for better methodologies and additional monitoring capacity to improve our collective understanding of small-scale fisheries, in order to increase government attention and improve policy responses and outcomes for the sector.

## **I. OBJECTIVES OF IHH**

1. In order to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines and achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), IHH aims to provide evidence of key social, nutritional, environmental, economic and governance contributions of small-scale fisheries at global and local scales. IHH addresses questions such as: How many people are dependent on small-scale fisheries for their livelihoods? What percentage of total SSF catch is governed by co-management arrangements? What are the diverse ways women engage in fisheries? IHH will produce a revised and expanded version of the 2012 World Bank/FAO/WorldFish publication Hidden Harvest: the global contribution of capture fisheries focusing on small-scale fisheries. It will provide updated and more thorough information on variables such as catch and employment, but it will also present information on the current and potential nutritional contribution of inland and marine small-scale fisheries.

2. The data and knowledge generated by the study is expected to contribute to more effective decision-making by policy-makers and empower small-scale fishing communities and stakeholders to call for greater government support and investment. A communications effort will accompany the IHH study, involving close engagement with key stakeholders to ensure that the key findings and information are available to those who need them the most.

## **II. ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR**

3. A methodology was developed and used to collect and collate small-scale fisheries data from different existing data sources at national and international levels. Over 40 country case studies, representing 69 percent of the total marine catch and 65 percent of the global inland fish catch have been concluded. Over 200 people, including researchers, government staff and consultants, have been engaged in identifying and validating existing data and studies relevant to the small-scale fisheries sector in the case study countries. Moreover, an ad-hoc questionnaire on small-scale fisheries data was sent to 228 countries and territories, which had a 48 percent response rate.

4. The results of the case studies and the ad hoc questionnaire data will be used to project regional and global estimates of key variables such as small-scale fisheries catch, capacity, employment, and nutrition contributions, among others.

5. In addition, global experts are producing 10 thematic studies covering key topics for which global syntheses are not yet possible or may not be appropriate. For example, one thematic study will focus on the role of small-scale fisheries in providing key nutrients to vulnerable populations, with a focus on women and young children. Other thematic studies address gender, indigenous peoples, carbon footprint, and aspects related to conservation and governance.

## **III. THE WAY FORWARD: TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES**

6. The entire data collection and collation process so far, including both the country case studies and the ad hoc questionnaire, has revealed an incredible variability in data collection on small-scale fisheries by governments. In many cases, there is a clear lack of information available to policy-makers about these fisheries. In other cases, data on small-scale fisheries may be collected but the capacity to analyse and interpret it is lacking, or not prioritized.

*Going beyond fisheries: promoting new forms of interaction to advance knowledge and discoveries relevant to fisheries management and governance*

7. As noted in the SSF Guidelines, small-scale fisheries are complex socio-ecological systems requiring holistic management approaches. The IHH study acknowledges the complexity of the sector and takes a multidisciplinary approach. The IHH methodology in many cases required study authors, who generally had a fisheries background, to look beyond the sector to explore information in relation to food security and nutrition and gender. To facilitate this, gender experts and food security experts were connected to the country case study authors.

8. The methodology also invited researchers to explore non-conventional, non-fisheries specific data sources such as Labour Force Surveys or Household Income and Expenditure Surveys through a small-scale fisheries lens. Thus, the study created an important network of primarily local small-scale fisheries experts – including from research, government and others – which were exposed to other areas of knowledge outside the conventional area of fisheries management and motivated them to take a broader perspective of the sector.

9. IHH also provides the entry point to develop a global small-scale fisheries database that can support the better connection of different areas of knowledge and data sets, and the people working on those. Together with the methodologies developed and the data collected, these new connections could form the basis for new global monitoring frameworks.

*The need and desire for more training on small-scale fisheries data collection and analysis*

10. For the future, it is proposed that FAO and partners build on the IHH experience and further develop capacities of researchers, government and other relevant small-scale fisheries stakeholders at regional and country level.

11. While the immediate purpose of IHH is to provide a snapshot of the contribution of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development, the overall approach and the methodologies developed for data collection and analysis as well as the sources of data identified will be made available and can be applied and refined by Member governments. This could support the continuous updating of key indicators and tracking progress of securing sustainable small-scale fisheries and towards achieving the SDGs.

12. IHH is hence positioned to trigger transformational changes for how data on SSF is collected and analyzed. This could start to change the way fisheries and related livelihoods are monitored by reflecting the unique circumstances in which small-scale fisheries operate across different contexts, and by helping to ensure that they are appropriately accounted for by policy-makers.

13. The methods and findings of the IHH country case studies and thematic studies should be shared and there is a need to further connect experts of different relevant disciplines, and FAO can play an important role in this. This would contribute to harmonizing data collection approaches and developing capacities for understanding small-scale fisheries in an inter-disciplinary manner, which is critical for better informed policies for sustainable fisheries management, but also in relation to food security and nutrition, biodiversity, poverty eradication, gender equity and much more in line with the SSF Guidelines and SDGs.