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# COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

## Thirty-fourth Session

1–5 February 2021

### WRITTEN INTRODUCTORY NOTES FOR THE AGENDA ITEMS SUBJECT TO WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE PROCEDURE

- In light of the decision to hold the 34th Session of COFI in virtual mode, substantive consideration of the below five agenda items will be undertaken by a written correspondence procedure:
  - Item 5 - Decisions and recommendations of the Tenth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, Trondheim, Norway, 23–27 August 2019;
  - Item 6 - Decisions and recommendations of the Seventeenth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, Vigo, Spain, 25–29 November 2019;
  - Item 13.1 - Terms of Reference of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture;
  - Item 14 - Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) of the Committee;
  - Item 17.1 - Developments in fora of importance for the mandate of COFI: for information.
- Details of "Special Procedures for a Virtual Meeting of COFI exceptional to its 34th Session", including the written correspondence procedure, are set out in the Annex to the Provisional Timetable (*COFI/2020/Inf.19*).

**Agenda item 5: Decisions and recommendations of the Tenth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, Trondheim, Norway, 23–27 August 2019**

The working document (*COFI/2020/3*) provides an overview of the topics discussed at the 10th Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture and makes reference to its main recommendations. The document provides supplementary information in the annexes on the preparation of a draft Global Plan of Action for Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the development of a Global Integrated Sustainable Aquaculture Programme (GISAP), and the preparation of the Global Conference on Aquaculture Millennium+20. The Report is available as document *COFI/2020/Inf.9*.

The Committee is invited to:

- endorse the report of the 10th Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture;
- provide guidance with regard to the work of FAO in the field of aquaculture, and in particular the preparation of the Global Conference on Aquaculture Millennium+20 and the Global Integrated Sustainable Aquaculture Programme (GISAP), including the development of a multi-donor assisted long-term component on aquaculture biosecurity;
- take note of the accomplishments of the implementation of the FAO Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) 2016-2020 in aquaculture and provide guidance on the FAO Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance 2021-2025; and
- welcome the publication of the report on the State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and take note of the ongoing development of a draft Global Plan of Action for Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

**Agenda item 6: Decisions and recommendations of the Seventeenth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, Vigo, Spain, 25–29 November 2019**

This Working Document (*COFI/2020/4*) presents the report of the last Session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI:FT), held in Vigo, Spain, in November 2019 and associated developments carried out by FAO since the meeting.

The topics discussed at the last Session of COFI:FT can be grouped in the areas of (i) economics and statistics, (ii) international fisheries frameworks, (iii) market access, (iv) recent FAO trade-related activities linked to previous COFI:FT sessions.

The details of the decisions and recommendations are available in the Report in Information Document *COFI/2020/Inf.10*.

During this Session of COFI:FT, FAO Members reiterated the importance of the Sub-Committee as the only global forum dedicated to discussions on trade issues in fisheries and aquaculture

In the area of economics and statistics, an overview of recent and expected future trends was presented, covering production, trade and consumption by major fish commodities and markets (countries), as well as including data on the FAO Fish Price Index. The importance of the

availability of accurate and timely data and information was stressed, and that FAO should continue capacity-building work in improving national data collection systems.

In the area of international fisheries frameworks, the continuous collaboration on fish trade issues between FAO and other international organizations was noted and recommended to continue, including with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). In addition, specific developments on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators were reported. Regarding the questionnaire monitoring the implementation of Article 11 of the FAO Code of Conduct of Responsible Fisheries (CCRF), it was recommended that FAO should redraft the questions to obtain more specific responses from Members and conduct further analysis of the open-ended responses to identify trends.

In the area of market access, the work developed by FAO on information on markets and trade, quality and safety, small-scale fisheries, product legality and transparency, traceability, biodiversity conservation and trade agreements was presented. FAO was recognized as the preeminent UN body for fisheries and aquaculture. The importance of the basic principles of predictability, transparency, and non-discrimination associated with the world trade system were reiterated. Challenges faced by small-scale fishers and developing countries in accessing markets were also highlighted.

The Sub-Committee was informed of two specific activities built on previous decisions of COFI and COFI:FT. It was recommended that the work carried out by FAO on social responsibility in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors should continue in close collaboration with other relevant specialized agencies and stakeholders to assist the fisheries and aquaculture sector actors in applying and implementing existing relevant instruments and guidelines. Any FAO guidance in this area should be voluntary in nature, nonbinding, inclusive and practical. It was also reiterated that the work on trade in fisheries-related services should continue from a value chain perspective, particularly in connection with the associated benefits and existing opportunities, including the generation of foreign exchange and employment opportunities for developing countries.

This Working Document also presents updates on FAO's main activities and deliverables since the last COFI:FT Session. The adaptation and mitigation measures taken by FAO in the area of trade-related issues involving fishery and aquaculture products to minimize disruptive impacts on technical assistance and capacity building due to COVID-19 was particularly emphasized. Developed activities by FAO involving market access, fish production, fish trade, the SDGs, and transparency were mentioned. Specific value chain initiatives were mentioned, such as standard analysis of value chains in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, the creation of an international network of fishing ports, and updates on food loss and waste, food safety, traceability and certification. The Vigo Dialogue 2020 focusing on social responsibility was also reported, as well as updates on recent trade-related publications.

The Committee is invited to:

- Endorse the report of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade; and
- Provide guidance on the follow-up to the matters raised.

### **Agenda item 13.1: Terms of Reference of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture**

The Berlin Agriculture Ministers Conference Communiqué of 18 January 2020, in the context of the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture's (GFFA), called upon FAO's Governing Bodies "to support a process" for "the establishment of an International Digital Council for Food and Agriculture."

At its 164th Session, the FAO Council endorsed the reports presenting the proposal for FAO to host an International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture and requested the review of its Terms of Reference (ToRs) by the Committee on Agriculture (COAG), the Committee on Forestry (COFO), the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), the Programme Committee and the FAO Council.

Accordingly, this document presents the revised ToRs for the Platform incorporating the feedback provided thereon by COAG at its 27th Session (28 September – 2 October 2020), COFO at its 25th Session (5 – 9 October 2020), the Programme Committee at its 129th Session (9-13 November 2020) and the FAO Council at its 165th Session (30 November – 4 December 2020) respectively and informs about the envisaged next steps.

The Committee may wish to review the Terms of Reference for the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture.

### **Agenda item 14: Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) of the Committee**

The document (*COFI/2020/12*) provides the progress report of the Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) 2018-2021 and the draft MYPOW 2020-2023, prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Bureau of COFI.

The Committee is invited to:

- examine this Progress Report, in accordance with its overall objectives and mandate and proposed results, work planning and methods, outlined in the approved MYPOW 2018-2021; and
- approve the proposed MYPOW 2020-2023, as set out in the Appendix.

**Agenda item 17.1: Developments *in fora* of importance for the mandate of COFI: *for information***

This document (*COFI/2020/Inf.16*) informs the Committee of developments in other fora of importance in FAO, for the mandate of the Committee. The document covers the decisions and recommendations by other Governing Bodies in FAO, such as the Conference, the Council, the Regional Conferences and other Technical Committees.