



# COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

## Thirty-fifth Session

5–9 September 2022

### DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE 24–27 MAY 2022

#### Executive Summary

This document summarizes the main outcomes of the Eleventh Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI/AQ/XI). The report is available as document COFI/2022/INF/14.

#### Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- endorse the report of the Eleventh Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture;
- take note of the progress made in developing the Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture and provide guidance to finalize the draft prior to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture;
- provide guidance on the follow-up to the matters raised.

*Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Eleventh Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) was held virtually in Rome, Italy, from 24 to 27 May 2022. It was attended by 107 Members of FAO, one observer, representatives from two specialized agencies of the United Nations, and observers from eight intergovernmental and eight international nongovernmental organizations.
2. The Eleventh Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture was chaired by Mr Belemane Semoli from South Africa.
3. The welcome address was delivered by Dr QU Dongyu, Director-General of FAO, and His Excellency Mr Miguel Garcia Winder, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations Agencies based in Rome.
4. The Sub-Committee elected Mr Patrick Sorgeloos (Belgium) as Chairperson of the Drafting Committee. The Drafting Committee included Belgium, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chile, China, Hungary, Japan, Norway, Oman, South Africa, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

## II. OUTCOMES OF THE SESSION

### *Implementation of the recommendations of the past sessions of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture*

5. The Sub-Committee commended the work implemented during the intersessional period and expressed appreciation of FAO's work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Sub-Committee highlighted the importance of aquaculture to food security and nutrition, livelihoods, economic development and public health. The Sub-Committee expressed its desire to increase the communication of the benefits of fish and fishery products to the general public.
6. The Sub-Committee commended FAO's efforts towards the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA), and underlined the importance of small-scale aquaculture farmers around the world. The Sub-Committee encouraged all Members to commemorate IYAFA and to take action to further engage artisanal fishers and small-scale farmers.
7. The Sub-Committee appreciated FAO's continued work on biosecurity and aquatic animal health, and encouraged FAO to continue supporting capacity development activities. The Sub-Committee appreciated technical guidance on related topics, and welcomed the FAO Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance.
8. The Sub-Committee welcomed the adoption of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the development of the global information system for aquatic genetic resources, and highlighted the need for wider adoption of selective breeding for the genetic improvement of species in aquaculture.
9. The Sub-Committee welcomed the adoption of the FAO Strategic Framework and recognized the relevance of the Programme Priority Area "Blue Transformation" to achieve the necessary transformation, as appropriate, of aquatic food systems.
10. The Sub-Committee noted the need to elaborate a clear strategy for the development of sustainable aquaculture and emphasized the need for the Global Integrated Sustainable Aquaculture Programme, as previously called for by Members, and to consider the draft Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture as a foundation for programmatic work.

11. The Sub-Committee noted the restructuring of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division and welcomed the creation of a gender team, in order to better address the requirements of the FAO policy on gender equality.
12. The Sub-Committee appreciated the work of the Bureau during the intersessional period, and encouraged the Secretariat to communicate with the COFI Bureau as well as share the Sub-Committee Bureau meeting reports with all Members in order to ensure better communication and transparency.
13. The Sub-Committee suggested that FAO reviews the procedure for the selection of experts working on the implementation of key recommendations of the Sub-Committee.

***Progress towards the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA)***

14. The Sub-Committee commended FAO for the work done towards the development of the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA). The Sub-Committee recommended that FAO work further on the structure of the GSA, providing a clear vision of global aquaculture development, and clearly and concisely describing the pathways to achieve that vision.
15. The Sub-Committee recalled the critical importance of the GSA, and the expectation to have a clear roadmap to define the process leading up to their adoption by the Sub-Committee's Twelfth Session. In this regard, it recommended a three-step process: FAO revises the draft GSA based on the recommendations of this Session; FAO shares the revised draft with all Members for their written inputs; FAO, together with the Sub-Committee Bureau, establishes a dedicated Task Force comprised of interested Members including representatives from each region, to finalize the draft GSA prior to the next Session of the Sub-Committee.

***Progress reporting on the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) provisions relevant to aquaculture and culture-based fisheries***

16. The Sub-Committee continues to recognize the value of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and supports the survey as a useful tool in identifying Members' needs as well as a broad indicator of progress over time.
17. The Sub-Committee noted with concern the reduced level of participation globally and regionally in this survey and requested that FAO analyses the issue and gains understanding of the reasons for poor returns and encourages efforts to promote consistent participation, and called upon all Members to complete the survey.

***Report from the Secretariat of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade***

18. The Sub-Committee noted that the aquaculture sector is becoming increasingly important for global food production and food security. It welcomed the work carried out by FAO on trade-related issues, and underlined the importance of aquaculture for domestic consumption as well as the increasing importance of international trade for aquaculture products, particularly in fostering the development of the sector and associated social and economic benefits.
19. The Sub-Committee emphasized the importance of continuing to work on communication on aquaculture, mainly to avoid consumer misconceptions.

***Building resilience of aquaculture to ensure food security, nutrition and livelihoods***

20. The Sub-Committee welcomed the food systems approach and the objective to create pathways to ensure that aquaculture adds to the resilience of the global food system, and appreciated the consideration of the three dimensions of sustainability for building resilience and the key

recommendations. The Sub-Committee strongly recommended that the food systems approach coverage and key recommendations are also reflected in the draft of the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture.

21. The Sub-Committee highlighted the susceptibility of aquaculture to shocks and emergencies and particularly emphasized the loss of resilience of the sector in the face of the impact of climate change. The Sub-Committee also emphasized that in most cases aquaculture may have a comparative advantage over terrestrial animal production systems in increasing animal protein production with lower environmental and climate change impacts.

22. The Sub-Committee stressed the importance of cooperation for better resilience and provided multiple examples. The Sub-Committee specifically stressed the important role of aquaculture networks, and called for their creation or further strengthening, in particular for the Latin America and the Caribbean region as well as the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

*Special Event on the Global Conference on Aquaculture Millennium +20 – Aquaculture for Food and Sustainable Development*

23. The Sub-Committee congratulated FAO and the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA) and the host, the People's Republic of China, on the successful Global Conference on Aquaculture Millennium +20 (GCA). The Sub-Committee further noted the importance of the GCA as a regular and significant global platform to engage a broad range of stakeholders in aquaculture, recognized the value of the conference outputs and noted the success of the hybrid format, and highlighted the important role that growth of sustainable aquaculture must play in meeting the nutritional needs of a growing population and enhancing the resilience of global food systems.

24. The Sub-Committee called upon FAO to continue to initiate and hold such conferences and noted that holding a conference in 2030 would be appropriate timing to review the development of sustainable aquaculture with regard to the 2030 Agenda.

25. The Sub-Committee noted that, while the Shanghai Declaration is a stakeholders' document not intended to be officially endorsed by FAO Members, some of the conclusions of the thematic discussions and some of the technical recommendations of the Declaration, as appropriate and when decided by the Members, could be considered in the context of FAO work, including the finalization of the GSA.

26. The Sub-Committee emphasized the importance of the ecosystem approach to aquaculture, as also outlined in the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture.

27. The Sub-Committee noted with appreciation new examples of international cooperation and encouraged FAO to work in partnership with national, regional and international initiatives to promote sustainable aquaculture.

28. The Sub-Committee recognized that integration of aquaculture into small-scale farming systems can be a catalyst for poor communities to address the wider challenges of improving food and nutrition security, increasing farm biodiversity and building resilience to climate change, and requested technical assistance in relation to implementation of the ecosystem approach to aquaculture.

### III. ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TWELFTH SESSION

#### *Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Twelfth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture*

29. Mr Edgar Edmundo Lanz Sánchez of Mexico was elected Chairperson of the Twelfth Session of the Sub-Committee. Ms Burcu Bilgin Topçu (Türkiye) was elected first Vice-Chairperson. Indonesia, South Africa, Fiji and Belgium were re-elected second, third, fourth and fifth Vice-Chairs, respectively.

30. The Bureau is composed of Mexico, Türkiye, Indonesia, South Africa, Fiji, Belgium, Canada, and the Near-East Region will send a nomination at a later date after regional consultation.

#### *Date and place of the Twelfth Session*

31. The Sub-Committee welcomed the kind invitation of Mexico to host its Twelfth Session. The dates and venue will be announced at the next Session of COFI.

32. The Sub-Committee also welcomed the kind invitation of Türkiye to FAO reiterating their offer to host the Thirteenth Session of the Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee further welcomed the kind invitation of Indonesia to host the Fourteenth Session of the Sub-Committee.