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**MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CACFISH DECISIONS AND THE
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES IN THE REGION**

INTRODUCTION

1. The aim of this document is to report on the outcomes of two monitoring exercises in which the CACFish membership and other countries in the CACFish area participated recently, being: 1) the 2015 questionnaire for monitoring the implementation of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and 2) the 2016 questionnaire on the implementation of CACFish Recommendations and Guidelines.

2. The following CACFish members (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey) and CACFish non-members (China, Kazakhstan and Russian Federation) in the Central Asian and Caucasus region (CACFish region in short) responded to the 2015 questionnaire for monitoring the implementation of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. In the following sections the aggregated responses from these relevant Central Asian and Caucasus Fisheries and aquaculture stakeholders are compared with the global trend reported to the 32nd session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), which took place in July 2016.

3. In Article 2, the Code lays out ten objectives. Members were invited to rank the relevance of these objectives (Table 3). Top priorities at global level included the importance of the Code for improving legal and institutional frameworks. For the CACFish region countries, however, the Code was considered most important for protection of living aquatic resources, its contribution to achieving food security and for collaboration in conservation of fisheries resources, management and development.

4. The Code is subdivided into themes, covering eight technical domains of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Members were invited to assign priority ratings to these domains. Fisheries management and aquaculture development continued to be ranked as top priorities, both at world-level as well as for the CACFish countries. Fisheries research was also given top priority by the CACFish countries.

5. At global level, 92 percent of the respondents reported that they have a fisheries policy in place. In the CACFish region this was only 72 percent of the respondents. Almost all

respondents from the region confirmed that their policies were at least partially in conformity with the Code.

Fisheries Management

6. Eighty-two percent of the global respondents reported that they have fishery management plans in place. This is much higher than the 57% of respondents in the CACFish region. However most of the fishery management plans that are in place in the region are believed to contain measures for stock recovery, reference points, address gear selectivity, prohibit destructive fishing practices, provide for stakeholder participation in management decision making, address protection of endangered species, support small-scale fisheries and apply precautionary approaches.

7. In the case of inland fisheries, the most commonly applied indicators for managing stocks in the region are catch -effort indicators (CPUE, gear, nominal catch, numbers of vessels and horsepower), ecosystem indicators (habitat integrity) and socio economic indicators (consumption data and price).

8. Globally, seventy-eight percent of the respondents reported having started implementation of the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF). In the CACFish region all respondents said that the EAF implementation has started in their countries.

Fishing operations

9. Members were invited to report on measures to control fishing operations within and outside their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Similarly to global level, the CACFish region reported that the three most important measures to control fishing operations were strengthening MCS, penalties and sanctions, and vessel registers.

10. Sixty-three percent of COFI Members reported that bycatch and discards occur in major fisheries, compared to 57% of countries in the CACFish region. Less than 30% of the countries in the region have formal bycatch and discards monitoring schemes in place; probably because bycatch is less of a problem than in some marine fisheries (e.g. trawl fisheries).

Aquaculture development

11. Ninety-seven percent of COFI Members reported that aquaculture development occurs in their countries. In the CACFish region more than 40% of the countries reported to have largely complete and enabling aquaculture policies, legal and institutional frameworks.

12. The Code encourages governments to promote responsible aquaculture practices. Eighty-six percent of the CACFish region countries responding reported that government agencies have adopted codes or instruments in this regard. Private sector actors were reported to also have adopted such codes or instruments at the producer level (43 percent), supplier level (43 percent) and manufacturer level (43 percent).

13. Environmental assessments, monitoring aquaculture operations and minimizing the harmful effects of alien species introductions are all encouraged by the Code. More than 70 percent of the responses received from the CACFish region reported having in place procedures to undertake such activities.

14. Governments are encouraged to promote responsible aquaculture practices to support rural communities, producer organizations and fish farmers. All countries in the CACFish region stated that they had taken measures in this regard. Creating an enabling investment climate for aquaculture development, facilitating access to credit and involving stakeholders in national aquaculture planning processes were the measures taken most by countries in the CACFish region.

Integration of fisheries into coastal area management

15. Of the COFI Members reporting to have a coastline (89 percent), only 27, 29 and 32 percent have a largely complete and enabling policy, legal and institutional framework for integrated coastal zone management in place, respectively. In the CACFish region close to half of the countries have partially developed policy, legal and institutional frameworks for integrated coastal zone management.

16. Countries were asked to report on conflict areas within fisheries and between the fisheries sector and other sectors operating within the coastal area. The two highest rated conflict areas in the CACFish region were between coastal and industrial fisheries (43%) and between fishing gear types (29%). All of the concerned countries reported having resolution mechanisms in place for the main conflict areas.

Post-harvest practices and trade

17. The percentage of countries in the CACFish region that reported having in place a largely complete and enabling effective food safety and quality assurance system for fish and fisheries products was over 70%.

18. Post-harvest losses and waste are relevant to almost all CACFish region countries which have taken measures to address it, including enacting food-safety regulations and establishing regulatory bodies (30 percent of CACFish countries).

19. Most fish processors in the region are in a position to trace the origins of the fisheries products they purchase, while only about 40% of consumers can do so.

20. Processing and trading in illegally harvested fisheries resources are relevant problems for most countries in the region, which have taken measures to address these matters. Measures include enhanced fisheries control and inspections (57 percent), enhanced custom and border controls and sanctioning of processing or marketing of illegally harvested fish (43 percent).

Fisheries research

21. All responding countries in the CACFish region indicated that statistics on catch and fishing effort were collected in a timely, complete and reliable manner and confirmed that they have sufficient qualified personnel were available to generate data in support of sustainable fisheries management.

22. The most prominent data sources used by countries in the CACFish region for the development of fishery management plans are historical data and research vessel surveys, followed by in-port/landing site sampling surveys and routine data collection and processing, market and trade statistics. This is in line with the situation at global level.

23. Seventy-one percent of respondents from the CACFish region reported that they have data gaps in the management of their fishery resources, particularly data gaps related to catch and effort data, discards and stock status.

24. Countries were asked to report on research and programmes addressing the impact of climate change on fisheries. Seventy percent of CACFish region respondents indicated that research was undertaken to assess/predict the impact of climate change on fisheries (and aquaculture).

International Plans of Action (IPOAs) and Agreements

25. The percentage of countries in the CACFish region who reported having developed and started implementing a National Plan of Action (NPOA) for fishing capacity was below 30 percent. Overcapacity of the fishing fleet was considered a problem only for one of the countries in the CACFish region.

26. With regard to flagging and/or authorizing fishing vessels on the high seas, 43 percent of the respondents from the CACFish region declared to be doing so.

27. Only one of the respondents from the CACFish region stated that sharks are caught either as a target or bycatch in their fisheries. The assessment of sharks or the development of an NPOA Sharks was not considered important for the region.

28. The importance given to assessing the impact of fisheries on seabirds is low. Less than 40 percent of reporting countries in the CACFish region Members declared that longline, trawls and/or gillnet fishing was conducted in waters under their jurisdiction. Some 30 percent have already conducted an assessment of these fisheries to determine the need for a seabird plan and it appeared that an NPOA Seabirds was not required.

29. All countries in the CACFish region identified IUU fishing as a problem. For this reason more than 40% have drafted an NPOA-IUU and have started implementing it. Fifty-seven percent of respondents reported having taken measures to combat IUU fishing, most importantly through the improvement of legal frameworks, coastal State controls and MCS and increasing bilateral and regional collaboration.

30. Nearly 60 percent of respondents in the CACFish region reported that they were aware of the Strategy for Improving Information on Status and Trends of Capture Fisheries (Strategy-STF) and some 40 percent of the countries in the region are implementing Strategy-STF plans and programmes. In addition, some 40% of respondents reported being aware of the Strategy for Improving Information on Status and Trends of Aquaculture (Strategy-STA).

31. Only one of seven respondents from the CACFish region reported to have ratified, accepted or acceded to the 1993 FAO Compliance Agreement and none of the other countries reported that they intended to do so. A similar response was received with regards to the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement.

32. With regards to the 2009 Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA), 30 percent of the CACFish region respondents mentioned their country's intention to become a Party. The Russian Federation and Turkey have signed the PSMA in 2010, and are in the process of accession.

Constraints and suggested solutions

33. Eighty-nine percent of responding COFI Members reported that they faced some constraints in implementing the Code. For the respondents from the CACFish region this was even 100%. The top constraints in the region were related inadequate scientific research, statistics and access to information (over 70 percent), to insufficient budgetary resources and institutional weaknesses (57 percent), and to insufficient MCS, insufficient Human Resources and overcapacity in fisheries.

34. The top ranking solutions proposed to counter constraints faced in the implementation of the code in the region were: improvement of research, statistics and access to information, access to greater financial resources and improvement of institutional structures and collaboration.

35. The availability of various Code-related FAO technical guidelines for responsible fisheries in the fisheries administrations of CACFish region countries varies a lot. The non-availability of the guidelines in Russian was reported as one of the gaps, constraining wider application in the region.

Small-Scale Fisheries

36. Eighty-six percent of the countries in the CACFish region responded that Small-scale fisheries was important in their countries. Information provided on employment in SSF activities by gender and employment status was limited. The Voluntary Guidelines for Small-Scale Fisheries (VGSSF) encourage States to provide small-scale fishing communities and individuals access to affordable and effective means of resolving disputes over tenure rights in accordance with national legislation. In very few of the CACFish countries SSF are clearly defined. Often there is an informal definition available. Only two of the responding countries in the CACFish region reported having introduced or developed some regulations, policies, laws, plans or strategies specifically targeting or addressing SSF.

37. The countries were asked if they had started specific initiatives to implement the VGSSF. None of the countries in the CACFish region responded positively to this question, but most countries reported that they intended doing so in the future.

38. Mechanisms through which small-scale fishers and fish workers can contribute to decision making processes have been reported to exist by over 70 percent of the respondents in the CACFish region. The most common are mechanisms for fisher/fish workers' representatives into advisory/consultative bodies to the Ministries/Departments of fisheries.

CACFish Recommendations and Guidelines

39. In August 2016 the CACFish Secretariat prepared and sent a questionnaire to CACFish members and non-members in the CACFish mandate area to collect information on the application and usefulness of CACFish guidelines, better management practices (BMPs) and recommendations on fisheries and aquaculture for the management and development of these sectors in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

40. The aim was to monitor the implementation of the CACFish recommendations and guidelines and to find out whether the objectives of the various recommendations and guidelines are being met. The questionnaire was also meant to provide a tool to CACFish member countries and non-member countries in the region to measure their general progress towards regionally-agreed recommendations and guidelines. Finally, a monitoring exercise

would also help fisheries administrations to address specific gaps in national level implementation of the recommendations and guidelines.

41. Earlier CACFish sessions agreed that implementation of some of the adopted guidelines, BMPs, strategies and recommendations should be monitored on a bi-annual base or every 3 years. The following countries responded to this first monitoring exercise: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. The complete list of guidelines and recommendations with web-links can be found in the Annex to this paper.

Relevance of the Guidelines, BMPs and Recommendations

42. Of all the guidelines, BMPs and recommendations endorsed or adopted by the four CACFish sessions so far, the Guidelines for Sturgeon Hatchery Practices and Hatchery Management for Release was considered extremely relevant by all countries. The guidelines for “Responsible introductions and transfers of fish in Central Asia and the Caucasus”, the “Guidelines on the application of the environmental impact assessment procedure in aquaculture in the Central Asia and Caucasus region”, and the Recommendations made at the 4th session of CACFish were regarded very relevant by most respondents. The average rating of all other guidelines, BMPs and recommendations issued by CACFish so far was between relevant and very relevant. For a few countries certain guidelines and BMPs were less relevant than others, because the subjects addressed in them were not important for the respective countries at this moment, but could become important when the aquaculture and fisheries sectors develop further.

Sturgeon hatchery guidelines

43. The “Guidelines for Sturgeon Hatchery Practices and Hatchery Management for Release” are being implemented by the countries in the region. More than 70% of the respondents confirmed that the guidelines are being applied in their respective countries. Some respondents mentioned that the guidelines chapters on selection of broodstock for controlled production, documentation and staff and labour issues are only partially implemented. The fact that some countries don’t have any sturgeon hatchery or only possess one sturgeon hatchery has an effect on the implementation of some of the guidelines.

Recommendations on the feasibility of restocking

44. The recommendations of the Regional Study on the “Feasibility of Restocking and Culture-based Fisheries in Central Asia” are generally being implemented by the countries in the region. Measures to ensure ecosystem compatibility when restocking are implemented by over 70% of the countries in the region. The social and economic benefits of restocking for the stakeholders are also well taken into account by 85% of the countries. Overall, most of these guidelines are being implemented fully or partially by the countries. Two countries mentioned that no regulations were (yet) in place in support of responsible restocking and/or culture based fisheries.

BMPs for carp aquaculture

45. All but one country in the region has a code of conduct or instrument of best practices for carp aquaculture, developed or adopted by government agencies or producers’ associations or other stakeholders. In most countries the government developed such code of conduct or BMP document, and only in less than one-third of the countries the producer organizations and other stakeholders were involved in developing the document.

46. The “Better Management Practices for Carp Production in Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia” are well utilized (43% of the responding countries) for the construction of new farm facilities, hatchery, nursery and grow-out operations, feed management and handling of fish and socio-economic aspects of production. In general all sections of the BMPs are either fully or partially used in the CACFish region.

Fisheries and aquaculture statistics

47. Forty-three percent of the respondents mentioned that their countries are collecting timely, complete and reliable statistics on inland fisheries production, while the remaining respondents confirmed the partial collection of relevant statistics on inland fisheries and aquaculture. Similar responses were obtained when asked about the availability of qualified personnel needed to generate the necessary data to sustainably manage inland fisheries and aquaculture. While 57% of the countries stated to have a functioning national database for fisheries and aquaculture, and others responded to have partial databases, one of the respondents said such a database was still lacking in his country. Not all CACFish countries are able to submit fisheries and aquaculture production and employment statistics annually to FAO, largely because some statistics are not being collected regularly.

48. While more than 70% of the countries in the CACFish area are collecting catch and effort data of commercial species and other countries confirm partial collection of such statistics, nearly half of the countries are not collecting data on fish workers by gender. Forty-three percent of the respondents note that their country’s fishing vessels and aquaculture companies use logbooks, while a similar percentage notes partial use of logbooks.

Aquaculture related principles and EIA guidelines

49. The “Regional Principles for Responsible Aquaculture in the Central Asia and Caucasus Region” are fully or partially implemented by the countries in the CACFish region. A few countries mentioned however to have challenges with implementing the principles on feed and health management and the principle on social responsibility.

50. The “Guidelines on the application of the environmental impact assessment procedure in aquaculture in the Central Asia and Caucasus region” and related procedures are being implemented by government agencies in 57% of the countries in the CACFish region, while another 29% implements these guidelines partially. Over 85% of the respondents mentioned that procedures for environmental impact assessment in aquaculture have been incorporated into law/regulations in their respective countries.

51. Less than 30% of the respondents mention that procedures/regulations for responsible introductions and transfers of fish been developed and or adopted in their country, while over 70% mentions that these are partially in place or under development. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents noted that the procedures/regulations applied are in line with the “Responsible introductions and transfers of fish in Central Asia and the Caucasus” and others mentioned partial application of the document.

52. About half of the countries in the CACFish area are applying procedures/regulations for aquatic animal health management and a similar percentage are using the “Regional strategy and associated principles for aquatic animal health management in CACFish area”. The other

half of the countries has incomplete procedures or regulations for aquatic animal health and applies the regional strategy only partially.

Recommendations from CACFish 3

53. Seventy percent of the respondents confirmed that research to assess the inland fisheries stocks is carried out in their countries, while the remaining countries mentioned that only some activities in this subject were conducted. Less than one-third of the countries follow international standards and methodologies for inland fisheries stock assessments. Climate change adaptation strategies have been partially developed and/or adopted for the fisheries and/or aquaculture sectors, but only one country confirms that these are already in place.

54. Twenty-eight percent of the countries note that they do not have any measures to promote the production and trade of disease free seeds and healthy fry. While 43% of the respondents mention that broodstock management has been integrated in the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy, the remaining 57% confirm partial integration of broodstock management in national policies and strategies.

Recommendations from CACFish 4

55. As there has only been limited time for implementation of the recommendations on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) since the fourth session of CACFish, where these recommendations got endorsed, it is important to recognize that 85% of the respondents note that a Fishing vessel register and a commercial fishing license system are in place in their countries. Nearly all countries in the region have a recreational fishing license/permit system, which is however sometimes not covering all aspects of recreational fishing.

56. Forty-three percent of the respondents mention that their countries have developed or adopted a National Plan of Action to deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

57. Progress towards fish hatchery certification appears limited in the region, within the short time frame since the fourth session, but various countries are working on this subject.

58. One-third of the countries in the CACFish area confirm that the stakeholders in the sector are aware of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, while in the other countries awareness raising on these guidelines is ongoing.

Key conclusions from the CACFish monitoring questionnaire

59. It can be concluded from the outcomes of this first monitoring exercise of CACFish that the guidelines, BMPs and recommendations that have been adopted by the sessions are considered very relevant, for the management and development of the sector, by the fisheries and aquaculture authorities in the CACFish area. The questionnaire responses show also that many of the guidelines and recommendations are being implemented (fully or partially) in the countries.

60. Despite the short timeframe between adoption of some of the recommendations and this monitoring exercise, the follow-up at national level by the fisheries and aquaculture authorities and other stakeholders has been significant. This confirms the relevance of the work of CACFish for the membership and other countries in the region.

61. The responses to the questionnaire also demonstrate that the implementation of the guidelines and recommendations is work in progress and that sometimes full implementation is hampered by slow processes in terms of development of national policies and regulatory frameworks that should facilitate implementation. In this respect it was mentioned that some processes have encountered delays due to various reasons, such as inadequate technical assistance from FAO, changes in political leadership at national level and retirement of key persons that supported these national level processes.

62. It was noted by one respondent that scientific evidence and information should be the basis for fisheries and aquaculture management decision making processes. Future recommendations and guidelines of CACFish should include methods to monitor the effectiveness of implementation of these recommendations and guidelines, in terms of their contribution to fisheries and aquaculture management and development, as well as to the status of the living aquatic resources in the region.

SUGGESTED ACTION FOR THE COMMISSION

63. The Commission is invited to:

- Note the progress on the implementation of the Code in the CACFish area and advise on how to address the gaps and constraints identified on various components of the Code and in this regard;
- Recognize the significant progress by CACFish members and other countries in the CACFish area towards national level implementation of recommendations, Better Management Practices and guidelines prepared and endorsed by CACFish at its past four sessions;
- Discuss how the implementation of CACFish recommendations, Better Management Practices and guidelines can be further promoted; and
- Discuss the format of the monitoring questionnaire used, propose amendments as necessary, and agree on a timeframe for carrying out similar surveys in the future.

ANNEX

CACFish 1 (Inaugural meeting – 2011, Turkey)

- 1) Guidelines for Sturgeon Hatchery Practices and Hatchery Management for Release

English: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2428e/i2428e.pdf>

Russian: ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/t570_advanced/CACFish_I_2011_Ref.4_RUS.pdf

- 2) Recommendations of the Regional Study on the “Feasibility of Restocking and Culture-based Fisheries in Central Asia”

English: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/ba0037e/ba0037e.pdf>

Russian: (not available)

- 3) Better Management Practices for Carp Production in Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia;

English: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2409e/i2409e.pdf>

Russian: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2409r/i2409r.pdf>

- 4) Conclusions and Recommendations of the Regional Workshop on Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics, Information, and Trends: Improving Data Collection, Analyses and Dissemination

English + Russian: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/ba0090b/ba0090b00.pdf>

CACFish 2 (2013, Tajikistan)

- 5) Regional Principles for Responsible Aquaculture in the Central Asia and Caucasus Region

English + Russian: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3266b.pdf>

- 6) Guidelines on the application of the environmental impact assessment procedure in aquaculture in the Central Asia and Caucasus region

English: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3220e.pdf>

Russian: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/sec/CACFish/2013/3r.pdf> (only summary available)

- 7) Improvement of collection, analysis, and dissemination of fisheries data and information.

English: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/sec/CACFish/2013/3e.pdf>

Russian: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/sec/CACFish/2013/3r.pdf>

- 8) Responsible introductions and transfers of fish in Central Asia and the Caucasus

English: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/sec/TAC/2012/7e.pdf>

Russian: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/sec/TAC/2012/7r.pdf>

CACFish 3 (2014, Azerbaijan)

- 9) Framework for a regional strategy and associated principles for aquatic animal health management in CACFish area.

English + Russian: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3988b.pdf>

- 10) Recommendations on: i) inland fisheries stock assessment; (ii) regional strategic principles for climate change; and (iii) fish breeding and broodstock management.

English + Russian: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4001b.pdf>

CACFish 4 (2015, Mongolia)

- 11) Recommendations on (i) Fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS); (ii) Inland fish hatchery management; and (iii) Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication

English and Russian: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5161b.pdf>