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**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES FOR
SECURING SUSTAINABLE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN THE
CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY ERADICATION IN
CACFISH REGION**

BACKGROUND

1. FAO and the international community have on several occasions reviewed issues related to small-scale fishing communities, including their low profile in national policies and fishers' precarious living and working conditions. FAO has recommended practical strategies for creating an enabling environment to better fisheries livelihoods and increasing this sector's contribution to poverty alleviation and food security. In this context, the FAO developed Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), which were adopted by the FAO Conference in July 2016.

2. The term "small-scale fisheries" (SSF) is broad and has no universal definition. The small-scale fisheries sector employs more than 90 percent of the world's capture fishers, and approximately 200 million people worldwide are directly dependent on SSF for their livelihood. The SSF Guidelines is the first international instrument dedicated entirely to the immensely important small-scale fisheries sector. The SSF Guidelines represent a global consensus on principles and guidance for small-scale fisheries governance and development. They were developed in close collaboration with representatives of SSF organizations in a process facilitated by FAO. The SSF Guidelines are directed at all those involved in the sector and intend to guide and encourage governments, fishing communities and other stakeholders to work together and ensure secure and sustainable SSF for the benefit of small-scale fishers, fish workers and their communities as well as for society at large.

3. Objectives of the SSF Guidelines include:

- Enhance the contribution of SSF to global food security and nutrition and to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food;
- Promote the contribution of SSF to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for the planet and its people;

- Contribute to the equitable development of SSF communities and poverty eradication and to improve the socio-economic situation of fishers and fish workers within the context of sustainable fisheries management;
- Provide guidance that could be considered by states and stakeholders for the development and implementation of ecosystem friendly and participatory policies, strategies and legal frameworks for the enhancement of responsible and sustainable SSF;
- Achieve the sustainable utilization, prudent and responsible management and conservation of fisheries resources consistent with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and related instruments;
- Enhance public awareness and promote the advancement of knowledge on the culture, role, contribution, and potential of SSF, considering ancestral and traditional knowledge and their constraints and opportunities.

4. This document provides a summary of the CACFish activities, results and recommendations related to implementation of the SSF Guidelines by countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Seven countries participated in these activities by completing national surveys and contributing to two expert meetings, namely: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Ukraine.

5. An Expert Working Group on Small-Scale Fisheries (WG SSF) was established under the Commission's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to oversee aspects of this activity. The first meeting of the regional expert Working Group was held on 12 October 2016 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The main outcomes of the meeting were the Terms of Reference for the service provider and the choice of Egirdir Fisheries and Aquaculture Research Institute (SAREM), Turkey to carry out the activities. SAREM was engaged by the Secretariat for this purpose.

6. A second expert meeting was organized on 20-21 September 2017 in Egirdir, Turkey, where the country pilot studies and survey results of **Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Ukraine** were presented, discussed, reviewed and finalized. The key findings and recommendations from this activity are provided in this document and the Annex.

SURVEY OBJECTIVES

7. The national survey was designed to reveal the general situation of small-scale fisheries in inland waters of Central Asia and the Caucasus, and to be used to identify any gaps between actual country practices and best practices in the SSF Guidelines. The survey collected information in the 7 participating countries on:

- the situation of small-scale fisheries;
- the challenges, opportunities and good practices of small-scale fisheries;
- the governance of small-scale fisheries: approaches and emerging trends;
- recommendations for practical implementation of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

RESULTS

8. The survey consisted of 10 main sections and 56 items. The national consultants engaged in each of the 7 countries were also tasked with preparing a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). Based on national survey results, a general outline of the SSF structure in Central Asia and the Caucasus was prepared in the synthesis report of the service provider and discussed at the second expert meeting. Due to some missing records, not all the countries participating in the survey could provide complete data. This had an effect on the applicability of the analysis of the SSF structure for the CA region as a whole. SWOT analysis responses of countries are presented in Annex I.

COUNTRY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PILOT STUDIES ON “ACTIONS NEEDED TO INCREASE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SSF GUIDELINES”

9. Local Level actions:

- implementation of the SSF Guidelines in the work of local authorities regulating SSF;
- organization of meetings of local authorities representatives with representatives (associations) of SSF and organization of technical assistance for them;
- meetings and discussions with the local population;
- carrying out of the information-explanatory work by means of mass media;
- proposals and conduct of scientific and technical assistance for SSF representatives;
- proper level of propaganda is needed;
- discussion of the SSF Guidelines with the local population, SSF representatives;
- work with authorized bodies (committees, administrations);
- work with executive bodies;
- conducting marketing research;
- translation of the SSF Guidelines into national languages;
- organization of relevant seminars;
- creation of TV commercials and broadcasting them on local channels;
- production of brochures, posters, billboards;
- introduction of the SSF guidelines in the school curriculum for biology or ecology;
- providing more information and training to improve low and weak level services in the sector at the national and local levels;
- supporting scientific research institutes to support funding for research in fishery and aquaculture;
- supporting the construction of hatcheries as the majority of hatchery facilities are not being used or have fallen into disuse, which does not allow effective restocking of the ponds and natural water bodies;
- training more specialists in the sector of fishery and aquaculture;
- holding meetings with SSF fishers in their local area.

10. National level actions:

- implementation of the SSF Guidelines at the level of national legislation;
- development of the national concept of SSF and its implementation in the national fisheries policy, strategy and program;
- institutional reform of the SSF management system;
- involvement of SSF representatives in the development of policy, strategy and planning, as well as in the monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) in the field of fisheries;
- creation of social and economic conditions for the sustainable development of SSF;
- a proper level of propaganda is necessary;
- work with authorized bodies (committees, administrations);
- work with executive bodies;
- conducting marketing research;
- adoption of the SSF Guidelines at the legislative level;
- making and publishing a glossary in national languages;
- creation of TV commercials and broadcasting them on the national channels;
- organization of seminars with the participation of all stakeholders to discuss the effective implementation of the SSF Guidelines in practice;
- instruction to the state authorities and local authorities to raise public awareness and conduct propaganda on the biodiversity conservation;
- visual and written media;
- rule of Law and Regulations;
- modernization and adaptation of legislation to all-European legislation;
- access to crediting and lowering of interest rates;
- reform of the fish protection bodies;
- introduction and development of effective programs for reproduction;
- encouraging fishermen to transit from fisheries to aquaculture.

11. Regional level actions (Central Asia and Caucasus):

- adoption of the programs for the development of SSF at the regional level;
- adoption of the regulatory juridical acts controlling SSF at the regional level;
- financing of the development programs of SSF at the regional level;
- technical assistance from the FAO to strengthen the national legislative basis, development of the concept, policy, strategy and planning of the SSF in the region;
- technical assistance from the FAO to involve SSF representatives in the process of developing policy, strategy and planning, as well as in the monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) in the field of fisheries in the region;
- strengthening of the scientific and political interaction, exchange of knowledge and support for policy reforms at the national and regional levels;

- exchange of the experience in implementation of the SSF Guidelines in developed countries (e.g. Turkey and EU countries);
- regional cooperation on the issues of social and economic development of SSF, certification of fish production, marketing, market and trade;
- bilateral or regional cooperation with CACFish is necessary;
- the publication of colorful brochures on the SSF Guidelines;
- organization and discussion of the practice of implementing and applying the SSF Guidelines on the CACFish website;
- exchange of experiences on the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EXPERT MEETING

12. As a result of this CACFish activity, the following conclusions were formulated:
- 1) There is a need to conduct regular SSF surveys to ensure sustainable fisheries in Central Asia and Caucasus region.
 - 2) It is necessary to record individual employees on vessels, including gender disaggregated data, per the SSF Guidelines.
 - 3) There needs to be increased awareness and wider dissemination of the SSF Guidelines in countries of the region.
 - 4) An increased number of cooperatives for SSF will contribute to food security of countries and price stability for the region.
 - 5) SSF contribution to GDP in CACFish region is below 1%, although freshwater resources of the countries implies high potential for SSF in the region.
 - 6) With technical and financial support, the countries can increase the production of SSF, achieve regional prosperity through increased rural employment, and provide fresh and high-quality fish for domestic food security.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EXPERT MEETING

13. The expert meeting produced recommendations on how to promote SSF in the CACFish region. These are:
- identification of effective methods to prevent overfishing of inland waterbodies, support application of these methods as standard fisheries management in the countries;
 - improvement of the SSF recording system, encouraging the use of the same recording system in each country of Central Asia and the Caucasus;
 - support for the development of a common SSF definition among the countries of the region and establishment of its legal framework;
 - support for promotion of cooperative activities among SSF;
 - support for scientific studies related to SSF;
 - encouragement of the use of common methods in determining the amount of the harvest and the duration of fishing bans.
14. Government actions that can enhance compliance with the SSF Guidelines at the local and national levels in the CACFish region are:

- review of local legislation, availability and status of fisheries policy for SSF, strategy, planning and development program for local and national harmonization and implementation of the SSF Guidelines;
- find opportunities to include SSF in fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance to combat IUU fishing;
- studying local and national socio-economic conditions for the sustainable development of SSF and compliance with the SSF Guidelines;
- conducting marketing research in SSF in order to define a more objective status of the SSF communities in the region;
- monitoring the status of ichthyofauna and its habitat on a regular basis;
- evaluating the status of aquatic biological resources.

15. In Central Asia and the Caucasus, the priority research topics to improve compliance with the SSF rules include the following:

- exploring opportunities for regional interaction;
- sharing experiences in adaptation and implementation of the SSF Guidelines;
- exploring opportunities for the development of social and economic aspects of SSF;
- certification of fish products;
- regional cooperation on marketing and trade access for SSF;
- sharing experience with the world's leading SSF countries on implementing the SSF Guidelines at regional level;
- improved monitoring of implementation and results of the SSF Guidelines.

ANNEX I: Country survey responses for SWOT analysis

STRENGTHS:

- good legislative basis for the development of fisheries institutional structure;
- existence of the institutional administration structure for regulating SSF;
- favorable socio-economic conditions in the country for the development of SSF;
- interest of SSF participants in the development of production and the high consumer demand for fish products;
- sufficiently developed fisheries science to regulate fish stocks and catching, as well as other SSF development goals;
- potential opportunities for the expansion of SSF, both for the individual fishing objects, and for the development of new fishing locations in the Caspian Sea;
- relatively rich composition of the objects of the fishery (species of fish);
- favorable investment climate and export potential for the development of SSF;
- technical assistance from FAO on the issues related to the development of SSF;
- cooperation with the countries of the region on the SSF issue;
- the presence of a large area of water area;
- broad composition of commercial ichthyofauna;
- SSF accounts for almost all the catch in Kazakhstan (all internal reservoirs, except for the Caspian, where there is no marine fishing);
- despite a number of issues, SSF in Kazakhstan is quite stable and efficiently developing;
- where there is no other source of income, SSF is a socially determining factor in rural areas;
- convenient location of fishery water bodies for fish management;
- geographical location of Kazakhstan in Central Asia (import and export);
- relatively favorable economic situation in Kazakhstan;
- stable development of the country, which determines all the opportunities for doing business, including SSF in the fish sector;
- high export potential of fisheries among the branches of agriculture;
- good legislative base;
- existence of an institutional structure in the sphere of interaction of state bodies with SSF;
- contribution to the country's budget in the form of taxes;
- creating a value chain;
- SSF contribution to food security;
- a number of SSF representatives are engaged in the conservation of fish resources through the protection and artificial reproduction of fish resources in reservoirs at a long-term lease;
- a well-established communication system that allows exchanging experience, knowledge, and information among SSF representatives;
- creation of additional jobs;
- a system for training mid-level specialists in the field of fish farming has been created;
- there is a market for fish and fish products;

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- the country has national conditions to develop the SSF;
 - water resources;
 - useful experience;
 - technology;
 - government support;
 - strong legislative framework; effective management & regulations on fisheries;
 - increased awareness of SSF stakeholders via promotion of sustainable fishing practices through fishermen's organizations and public institutions;
 - well organized sector structure and strengthened institutional structure; SSF stakeholders are well represented by a number of professional organizations and fishermen's unions;
 - good level of cooperation among the related institutions and SSF sector stakeholders, i.e., fishermen's cooperatives, unions and associations, etc.
 - sufficient number and infrastructure of fishery-related universities and research agencies;
 - availability of the resource;
 - scientific maintenance;
 - tradition of the use of fish products in food;
 - carrying out works to preserve fish populations;
 - strong legislative basis;
 - favorable climatic conditions;
 - traditional character of this type of activity;
 - use of effective, but at the same time gentle fishing gear by fishermen;
 - making a profit in a short period;
 - low cost of the resource.

WEAKNESSES:

- lack of the specific definition for SSF in the national legislation on fisheries;
- lack of the SSF concept in the national fisheries policy, strategy and program;
- lack of involvement of SSF representatives in the process of developing policy, strategy and planning in the field of fisheries;
- inadequate involvement of SSF representatives in monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) in the field of fisheries;
- existence of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing (poaching);
- lack of reliable data and information, lack of qualified personnel;
- insufficient financial resources for the development of the fisheries sector as a whole, as well as for the SSF and fisheries science in particular;
- insufficiently developed material and technical base of SSF (boats, engines, equipment for processing fish, etc.);
- insufficiently developed post-harvest sector for processing of fish products;
- insufficient social and gender development, employment creation and adaptation to climate change;
- lack of reliable data and information;
- insufficient financial resources to ensure the conservation of fish resources;

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- relatively weak legislative basis and institutional structure (there is no specific law on fisheries and aquaculture);
 - poorly developed sector of the raw fish materials processing;
 - there is no support and benefits from the state;
 - the low level of funding to support fisheries science and the industry as a whole;
 - relatively low earnings in the fishing sector (including SSF);
 - social inequality (unequal access to social benefits), the SSF sector is much lower than other sectors of the economy;
 - lack of state support;
 - lack of specialists in the field of ichthyology, ichthyopathology, hydrobiology, hydrochemistry;
 - absence of monitoring studies on the state of fish stocks;
 - absence of control over the epizootic situation;
 - problem with sales;
 - lack of specialists in fish processing;
 - absence of a veterinary laboratory certified by the international standards for the certification of fish products;
 - lack of logistics centers;
 - lack of clusters;
 - there is no access to markets for the distribution of vsp + eco products produced by SSF.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- high consumer demand for fish products;
- sustainable management and rational use of fish resources;
- export potential of SSF products;
- favorable economic conditions in the country and loyal taxation;
- favorable juridical basis for the development of SSF;
- favorable investment climate for the development of SSF;
- potential for the development of the post-harvest sector for processing fish products;
- potential opportunities for regional cooperation and technical assistance from FAO on issues related to the development of SSF;
- demand for fish, especially for the valuable commercial fish species, is increasing year by year both from the domestic market and beyond it (abroad);
- stable income with rational use of fish resources;
- permanently renewable food source;
- provision of a permanent job in times of crisis;
- annual replenishment of the country's budget from taxes;
- correct distribution of material goods in the industry (small and relatively big farms are engaged in fishing);
- full employment of the local population (men by industry, women processing and processing of fish raw materials);
- the fight for food security and against poverty in the region;
- presence of abundant natural water resources;
- presence of a variety of climatic zones from subtropical to subarctic;

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- optimum conditions for business development and loyal taxation;
 - variety of natural landscapes contribute to the development of tourism and ecotourism, as well as the SSF;
 - growth of the contribution of the SSF to the import substitution of fish and fish products;
 - improving the welfare of the population;
 - growth of food culture, which leads to the increased consumption of fish and fish products;
 - with the increased awareness of the population, the need for safely ecologic fish products is growing;
 - good level of cooperation among the related institutions and SSF sector stakeholders, i.e., fishermen's cooperatives, unions and associations, etc;
 - bilateral and regional arrangement to enhance exports of fishery products obtained from SSF;
 - increased awareness on sustainable fishing practices;
 - subject to good public / government attention leading to take stakeholder requirements into consideration during the decision making and legislative processes;
 - ever-increasing level of significance due to high level of dependency on small scale coastal fishery and due to recent developments valuing SSF across the globe;
 - low cost of the resource;
 - demand for fish products;
 - cooperation;
 - existence of underutilized resources;
 - expansion of the assortment with the use of processing;
 - ability to expand activities: recreation, aquaculture;
 - the possibility of increasing the resource with a high cost by the correct organization of work with reproduction.

THREATS:

- Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing (poaching);
- construction of hydroelectric power stations and regulation of the flow of the Kura River and other rivers;
- lack of freshwater resources;
- lack of the scientifically based approach with increasing of irretrievable water withdrawal without taking into account the interests of fisheries;
- climate change, flood conditions of rivers, floods;
- reduction of commercial stocks of valuable fish species;
- change in the level of the Caspian Sea, groundwater, and unstable level of rivers;
- lack of qualified personnel for management and development of SSF;
- climate change and its potential effects;
- unstable water level;
- pollution of fishery reservoirs with poisonous chemicals;
- construction of small water power plants (cascade of reservoirs and dams);
- poor natural (violation or absence of spawning substrate) and artificial (reduction of the number of fish hatcheries, fish farms) reproduction of fish;

- absence of in-depth research on the changes in fish fauna, nutritive base and habitats under climate change conditions;
- absence of monitoring studies;
- lack of a scientific center to develop mechanisms for adaptation to climate change;
- low fish productivity of reservoirs;
- depletion of fish genetic resources due to the growth of IUU;
- absence of mechanisms at the legislative level of interaction between state authorities, local authorities and representatives of SSF for the joint use of natural resources;
- absence of responsibility for the natural resource at the legislative level;
- absence of the state funding for the program of conservation and augmentation of fish resources;
- insufficient level of education on fishery related matters;
- conservation status of endangered fish species, especially in the inland waters;
- high exploitation level of commercial fish stocks by industrial fleets;
- increased occurrence of invasive species;
- reduction of the profitability of this type of activity;
- high taxes;
- decrease in the resource reserve;
- excessive overfishing and poaching;
- high competition with amateur fishermen for the resource and tightening of the environmental legislation;
- deterioration of the production capabilities;
- excessive pollution of water bodies and reduction of the spawning grounds for the main commercial fish species.