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Main Decisions and Recommendations of Regional FAO Conferences and Fisheries Bodies

REPORT OF THE 16TH SESSION OF THE COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE, BUSAN, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, 4-8 SEPTEMBER 2017

1. The Sixteenth session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI FT) of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) was held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 4 to 8 September 2017, at the kind invitation of the Republic of Korea. The Session was attended by 34 Members of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), by observers from four intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations.
2. COFI FT Members expressed support for measures, which can lead to the prevention, deterrence and elimination of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, including traceability and catch documentation schemes, noting that these should not become unnecessary technical barriers to trade. It also noted the need to prohibit subsidies that contribute to overcapacity, overfishing and IUU fishing and remarked the importance of sustainable production and consumption.
3. COFI FT strongly supported the collaboration of FAO with WTO, particularly in connection with the current negotiations on fisheries subsidies and stressed the importance of capacity building and technical assistance on fisheries subsidies for developing countries. Members confirmed the significant importance and relevance of social sustainability issues in the value chain and recommended that FAO continue strengthening its work in this area in close collaboration with international partner organizations including ILO, International Maritime Organization, UNCTAD, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, OECD and others.

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4. COFI FT Members:
 - emphasized the importance of the implementation of the International Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, the associated human rights-based approaches and opportunities for involvement and strengthening of local fish producing communities and fostering consultation and participation of local stakeholders and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
 - recognized the importance of reducing food loss and waste in the context of food security and nutrition, supported the planned work of FAO in raising awareness on Catch Documentation Schemes Guidelines, underlined the complementarity of CDS with other international instruments and initiatives like the PSMA and the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels.
 - expressed strong support for FAO to continue to work in close cooperation with WHO and the various Codex Committees dealing with fish-related issues, and also for the joint work with WHO and the World Organization for Animal Health on antimicrobial resistance and with other international organizations on the implications of microplastics on the environment, aquatic organisms and food safety.
5. The Sub-Committee expressed its continued support for FAO–CITES cooperation under the 2006 FAO–CITES Memorandum of Understanding. The Sub-Committee also encouraged FAO to continue its cooperation and coordination among relevant agencies and instruments on CITES issues, for example with national fisheries authorities and RFMOs.
6. The relevance of the impact of climate change was highlighted, including its possible effect on consumption and trade. Its complexity, in particular on assessing current and future consequences was also noted. Members shared information on recent national and regional trends related to climate change, including modifications in distribution of certain fish stocks, which can lead to difficulties in the negotiations of shared stocks.

REPORT OF THE 41ST SESSION OF GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN (GFCM), BUDVA, MONTENEGRO, 16-20 OCTOBER 2017

7. The Forty-first session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) that took place in Budva, Montenegro, on 16-20 October 2017, was attended by delegates of 22 contracting parties, as well as of three cooperating non-contracting parties and one non-contracting party. Representatives from 20 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its regional projects as well as the Bureaus of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, were also in attendance.
8. GFCM Members reviewed the progress in the implementation of the mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, including in relation to the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration and discussed cooperation activities within the framework of agreements with contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties and with partner organizations. In light of its increasing cooperation with the GFCM, the GFCM granted cooperating non-contracting party status to the Republic of Moldova.
9. A total of eight binding recommendations were adopted in relation to the management of fisheries and aquaculture in the GFCM area of application, discussing the following issues:
 - 1) reporting of aquaculture data and information;
 - 2) management of blackspot seabream fisheries in the Alboran Sea;

- 3) establishment of a fisheries restricted area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit (Adriatic Sea), where GFCM adopted the EU proposal for banning demersal fisheries.;
 - 4) multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea, including establishment of an Aquaculture Demonstrative Centre in the Black Sea;
 - 5) establishment of a regional adaptive management plan for the exploitation of red coral in the Mediterranean;
 - 6) submission of data on fishing activities in the GFCM area of application;
 - 7) a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application;
 - 8) an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme outside the waters under national jurisdiction in the Strait of Sicily.
10. GFCM also adopted the following six resolutions:
- a strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture;
 - guidelines for the streamlining of aquaculture authorization and leasing processes;
 - reactivation of the Working Group on Fishing Technology in the Mediterranean basin;
 - a permanent working group on vulnerable marine ecosystems;
 - a network of essential fish habitats; and
 - adopted resolution on the application of an International Maritime Organization number.
11. GFCM adopted its programme of work for the next intersession and approved its budget as well as a number of strategic actions to be funded through extra-budgetary resources. The renewed Bureaus of the Committee on Administration and Finance, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture, the Working Group on the Black Sea and the Compliance Committee were also unanimously endorsed.

REPORT OF THE 9TH SESSION OF COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE, ROME, ITALY, 24-27 OCTOBER 2017

12. The Ninth session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI AQ) of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) was held in Rome, Italy from 24 to 27 October 2017. It was attended by eighty-nine Members of FAO, by two associate Members, by representatives from two specialized agencies of the United Nations and by observers from seven intergovernmental and six international non-governmental organizations.

13. COFI AQ emphasized the growing global significance of sustainable aquaculture development and its potential contribution to both food security and nutrition as well as the achievement of a wide range of SDG targets, while recognizing that there is a growing need for FAO's technical assistance regarding seed and feed production, cage culture and environmental monitoring. COFI AQ recommended that FAO should develop global guidelines for sustainable aquaculture development and welcomed the offer of the Kingdom of Norway to dedicate human and financial resources to this task.

14. A number of Member countries encouraged FAO to work more actively to implement the ecosystem approach to aquaculture (EAA) and to give particular attention to a risk-based approach in addressing disease issues within the framework of EAA, in zoning and area management. Some members emphasized the necessity to address the problem of the Tilapia Lake Virus as well as the importance of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) that encompasses human health and the food production sectors (including aquaculture) and thus requires urgent attention by Members and the support of FAO within the One Health Platform. The Sub-Committee welcomed FAO's accreditation by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and expressed the need for cooperation among FAO Regional Fishery Bodies and

aquaculture networks. The Sub-Committee endorsed FAO's Common Vision for Sustainable Food and Agriculture and its five principles as a useful framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda.

15. COFI AQ recognized the importance of extension for aquaculture development, and requested that FAO provide guidance and facilitate experience-sharing among Members, especially with regard to small-scale aquaculture, integrated agriculture-aquaculture, aquatic animal health and biodiversity, food safety, seed and feed production, youth employment and aquaculture business training. COFI AQ requested that FAO compile best practices and lessons in extension for aquaculture at national and regional level for sharing among Members.

16. With regard to FAO's ongoing and planned activities related to the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification, COFI AQ welcomed the work of FAO, noting the increasing role of certification in national and international markets, and highlighting the need to strengthen the capacity of small-scale producers to attain certification and eventually improve market access.

17. The Tenth Session of COFI AQ was held in Trondheim, Norway, 22 to 26 August 2019. Information was not available at the time of preparation of this meeting document. A verbal overview will be provided by the Secretariat during the EIFAAC Session.

REPORT OF THE 31st SESSION OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE, VORONEZH, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, 16-18 MAY 2018

18. The Thirty-first session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) was held in Voronezh, Russian Federation, from 16 to 18 May 2018. Representatives from 44 Members participated in the Regional Conference. Observers from three Members, one United Nations organization, one intergovernmental organization, two international non-governmental organizations and two civil society organizations were in attendance as well as two representatives from the private sector and one from the research and academia sector.

19. The ERC:

- highlighted the potential of agro-ecological approaches and called on governments to promote them; emphasized the need for research and quality data on agroecology; noted the increased interest of consumers and producers in sustainable agricultural products; highlighted the importance of reducing food loss and waste and stressed the need for the agricultural sector to address climate change;
- underlined the importance of developing e-agriculture as a tool for implementing Agenda 2030, recommended enhanced participation in e-agriculture of the private sector, including small and medium-sized enterprises, noted that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can support farmers, in particular smallholders, by providing them with tools for real-time monitoring, early warning systems, and disease control.

20. With regard to agroecology and e-agriculture, the ERC requested that FAO:

- take the lead to facilitate, in collaboration with other relevant actors the development of methodologies to measure sustainability performance of all agriculture and food systems;
- assist countries in Europe and Central Asia in transforming their agricultural sectors and leveraging the livelihoods of farmers, both women and men, through e-agriculture;
- collect and analyse good practices, tools and mechanisms in e-agriculture for knowledge sharing, policy advice and capacity development;

- develop, in collaboration with national, regional and international partners, an inclusive capacity-development framework and strategy in e-agriculture;
- provide a neutral regional platform for knowledge sharing on e-agriculture in the region.

21. The Regional Conference agreed on the alignment of the FAO Strategic Objectives with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and requested:

- continue the implementation of the two Regional Initiatives RI1) "Empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction" and RI2) "Improving agrifood trade and market integration" and their use as a programmatic approach to ensure coherence and integrated support of the country programme implementation in support of achieving the SDGs;
- link RI1 with the United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028;
- implement the third Regional Initiative "Sustainable natural resource management under a changing climate" (RI3) and ensure the linkage between RI1 and RI3 regarding sustainable agriculture and food systems;
- support Members in applying Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT), Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food (RTF) and Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI), and ensure that the cross-cutting issues of gender, governance, climate change and nutrition are addressed;
- ~~and~~ continue to support countries in the design and implementation of trade-related policies and strategies in line with World Trade Organization agreements, with a neutral and balanced approach.

The decision at the ERC 2018 will also result in further aligning and integrating the fisheries and aquaculture work in the region with the overall priorities and strengthening an integrated policy approach at national level to increase the contribution of the sector to achieve the sustainable development goals as defined in the respective national targets.

22. The EIFAAC Chair presented the outcomes of the 29th Session of the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (EIFAAC), and the ERC noted the recommendations of this Session regarding management of inland fisheries and freshwater aquaculture in Europe, appreciated the concrete recommendations from the EIFAAC International Symposium on "*Adaptation of inland fisheries and freshwater aquaculture to climate change*". The ERC also requested that EIFAAC identify and discuss priorities of work for the region; highlighted the role of EIFAAC as an important pan-European platform for scientific research and policy advice on inland fisheries and freshwater aquaculture, including recreational fishing; and called upon FAO to provide sufficient resources and encouraged Members to make voluntary contributions to EIFAAC.

23. The CACFish Secretary presented the outcomes of the 5th Session of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish), and the ERC agreed that the CACFish reports become an integral part of the ERC in an independent agenda item; requested that the ERC identify and discuss priorities of work for fisheries and aquaculture development in the CACFish subregion in line with achieving the universal goals of the United Nations SDGs and the FAO Regional Initiatives for consideration by the 6th Session of CACFish, October 2018, Turkey; encouraged relevant Members of the ERC and CACFish observer countries to announce their intention to join CACFish; and noted the importance of increasing the level of fish consumption in diets of Central Asia and the Caucasus and the role of CACFish in aquaculture development and promoting sustainable resource use.

REPORT OF THE 33rd SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, ROME, ITALY, 9-13 JULY 2018

24. The Thirty-third session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), was held in Rome, Italy from 9 to 13 July 2018. A record number of 760 delegates registered for the Session from 119 countries and 238 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. In his opening speech, the Director-General highlighted the call for action adopted by the UN Ocean Conference in June 2017, focusing on concrete and action-oriented recommendations.

25. Key topics reviewed and discussed by COFI included: launching of the FAO flagship publication, State of Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018 (SOFIA); fisheries and ocean governance; Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; 2030 Agenda; climate change, and CITES, and FAO's Programme of Work in fisheries and aquaculture under the FAO Strategic Framework. Fifteen side-events were organized during the week on a variety of topics such as SDG 14, access rights for small-scale fishers, value-addition for fish value chains, aquatic genetic resources, and sustainable aquaculture.

26. COFI Members expressed concern about the state of world fish stocks reported in SOFIA 2018, pointing out the role of IUU fishing, fisheries subsidies and transshipments in contributing to the increase in the proportion of overfished stocks. COFI called upon members for strong commitment in the fight against IUU fishing, including ratification of the *Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA)*, underscored the importance of national policy reforms for strong and efficient management action towards achieving sustainable fisheries and aquaculture and the SDGs.

27. In the Report of the Session, COFI touched upon a number of topics especially relevant for the CACFish region:

- emphasized the importance of fish in meeting the FAO strategic goal of a world without hunger and malnutrition;
- highlighted the role of regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and other regional processes for the sustainable management of common fisheries resources, and called for increased support to Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) and national mechanisms for sustainable fishery management; expressed the need for greater cooperation and information sharing between Members, including through mechanisms established by RFMOs and other IGOs;
- noted the key role which trade and aquaculture will continue to play in the provision of livelihoods and satisfying the demand of an ever-growing population; noted the contribution of small-scale fisheries (SSF) and aquaculture in rural development;
- recognized the value of the Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes (CDS) as part of a comprehensive suite of measures necessary to combat IUU fishing, particularly with respect to improving traceability of fisheries products;
- commended the comprehensive review of FAO on the impacts of climate change in fisheries and aquaculture and adaptation options, noting that it will be an essential support to Members for the strengthening of their Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans.

28. COFI Members discussed the findings and recommendations from the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI FT) and Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI AQ). There was a proposal by a Member to establish a third sub-committee on fisheries management. Members Committee requested the Secretariat, in close cooperation with the COFI Bureau, to develop a proposal for the possible

establishment of a new sub-committee on fisheries management, to be submitted for consideration of Members at the next session. COFI underlined that the proposal should elaborate on all relevant aspects, including financial and administrative implications and terms of reference for such a sub-committee.

REPORT OF THE 6th SESSION OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN AND CAUCASES REGIONAL FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE COMMISSION (CACFish), IZMIR, TURKEY, 15-18 OCTOBER 2018

29. The Sixth Session of CACFish in Izmir, Turkey was attended by the 5 Member countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey, as well as 9 Invited Observer countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Two Invited International Organizations attending the Session, namely the International Organization for the Development of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Europe (EUROFISH) and the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).

30. The Session agreed to maintain the annual Members contribution to USD 180,000 for the coming biennium. They discussed the intersessional work programme 2018-2019 recommended by the 4th Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Tbilisi, Georgia, 29-30 November 2017.

31. The priority needs identified by TAC Members were approved and the Secretariat was instructed to begin implementation of the CACFish regional workshops. The intersessional activities include: culture based fisheries (Kyrgyzstan), fish genetic resources (Turkey), post-harvest marketing rules and standards (Turkey), inland stock assessment (Tajikistan), aquaculture production techniques (Armenia), review of fisheries law (Kyrgyzstan), and use of land and waterbodies for aquaculture (Azerbaijan).

32. The 5th Meeting of TAC will be held in Armenia in November 2019. The 7th Session of CACFish will be hosted by Tajikistan in October 2020.