

## **FAO COFI 2021 – Written submission by Iceland**

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

Iceland endorses the report of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade and would like to emphasise some of the points made in the report.

It is essential that the world trade system in seafood products rests on the basic principles of predictability, transparency, and non-discrimination. This should be evident in light of the role of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in terms of production and trade, contributing to: (i) global food security; (ii) economic growth and development, livelihoods and income; (iii) the inclusiveness of women; and (iv) the participation of developing countries.

Relating to this, Iceland would like to express concern regarding potential proliferation of unilateral market measures in the international seafood trade that can result in increased cost and act as potential technical barriers to trade, not least for small-scale fisheries in developing countries.

The FAO COFI Sub-Committee is the only global forum dedicated to discussions on trade issues in fisheries and aquaculture and it is therefore crucial that the FAO Secretariat strengthens its capacity to support the Committee in its work.

FAO has an important role in providing specialised technical expertise, capacity-building, and analytical work on trade-related issues of fish and fish products and Iceland supports the FAO's continued collaboration with other international organisations, focusing on core elements related to trade in fisheries and aquaculture.

Iceland particularly welcomes the continued work of FAO in the following areas related to fish trade and stresses the importance of continuing that emphasis:

- Quality and safety of fishery and aquaculture products,
- Work on food fraud in the seafood sector
- Technical assistance to develop and implement traceability systems.

Traceability requirements and catch documentation schemes can be potent mechanisms in combating IUU fisheries, but it is essential that coastal states, fishing states, RFMOs, port states and market states are all included in deliberations and decisions regarding design and implementation of such measures. The FAO is the right venue for that cooperation.

Iceland has noted with pleasure the importance of FAO work, including the PSMA and rules on IUU fishing, in the ongoing negotiations at the WTO on a new agreement to prohibit subsidies that threaten the sustainability of fishing. Iceland does not subsidise its fisheries and welcomes the work on ensuring sustainable fisheries globally by limiting harmful subsidies, which contribute to overcapacity, overfishing and IUU fishing, as well as negatively distorting trade.

Regarding the role of FAO in mainstreaming biodiversity, Iceland stresses the central role of FAO as the main UN body in the field of fisheries and aquaculture. It is therefore essential

that the FAO continue to provide advice in those fields to multilateral agreements and fora environmental, including those that focus on environmental issues.

We fully support the conclusions of the Sub-Committee regarding the importance of decisions being based on the best available scientific information and the continuous cooperation between FAO and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Iceland also endorses the recommendation that FAO be more active in communicating the status of aquatic resources and the progress in establishing and implementing measures for sustainable fisheries management and biodiversity conservation.

Iceland stresses the importance of social responsibility in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and that the work carried out by FAO on that issue should be fisheries sector specific, in close collaboration with other relevant specialised agencies and stakeholders. In addition, that future guidance on social responsibility along the fish value chain should be voluntary in nature, nonbinding, inclusive and practical, to assist fisheries sector actors in applying and implementing existing relevant instruments and guidelines.