

34th SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES
Speech by the Delegation of the ARGENTINE REPUBLIC

First, we greet to all authorities and delegations that are participating in this reunion, and we thank and congratulate FAO and the Secretariat for the great work done since the last meeting, and also for facilitating this meeting despite the difficulties that this pandemic is generating worldwide.

We would like to highlight the great efforts that Argentina has made in order to maintain the fisheries and aquaculture levels of production, employment and profitability during these difficult times that we currently live in.

Argentina is a net exporter of fishery products, and thank to the joint effort of the Government, the industry and workers to establish sanitary protocols, and the necessary organization and coordination to ensure safety and health of population, in particular to those workers of the sector, today we can say that we had managed to sustain the activity at normal and balance levels with health and safety standard. In related to trade, the impact of the pandemic in our sector has been the global demand reduction at the beginning of 2020. However, in Argentina, annual landings remained stable compared to the last 10 years, above of 770 000 tons. Our exports also managed to sustain the previous levels (around 1700 billion US dollars) with a strong increasing trend in the last months of the year.

It is worth mentioning that these results were also sustained thanks to an excellent season of squid, the sustained abundance of hake and the prawns fishery, as it was noted in the SOFIA 2020 Report, that has seen surprisingly growth from 2010, mainly due to the real-time management of the fishery, with the areas openings and closings based on scientific information from onboard observers and scientific from our research institution, INIDEP. In these and in all of the other fisheries in Argentina, we are proud to say that we have made strong process in the Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG) in the fisheries ecosystem management based on science, with more than 95% of the landings managed on the basis of scientific and/or technical recommendations by the INIDEP working group or the Maritime Technical Commission (CTMFM).

Another point that we have strongly advanced in the last year was the tightening up on sanctions to infringement of our Federal Law on Fisheries and the control of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Amendments to the law have been made in order to reinforce the value of fines paid by local infringers, as well as foreign who enter illegally into our waters. In this sense, it should be recalled that Argentina does not allow the entry of foreign fleets to exploit fishery resources in its jurisdictional waters nor on its continental shelf.

Moreover, the structured of the Fisheries National Administration is being reinforced, for which new openings have been generated, and new personnel are being incorporated in order to improve control and audit, as well as to incorporating more and better technology and information systems that allow to facilitate the detection of infractions, and what is even better, discourage and avoid them.

With the same ecosystem vision that we work with at a national level, we do this jointly within the CTMFM framework that our Fisheries Common Zone manages together with the Eastern Republic of Uruguay. During 2020, we have been able to sustain the annual scheme of technical meetings and the fisheries policy decision-making, and maintain the activity under control with management measures, and even to move towards the development of a Gatzuzo Recovery Plan, an emblematic shark species of the area, and the Regional Action Plan for reducing the interaction of seabirds and fisheries.

Regarding the development and strengthening of the scientific sector, the National Institute for Fisheries Research and Development (INIDEP), an advisory body of the Fisheries Federal Council, has recently incorporated two research vessels, B/I VICTOR ANGELESCU and B/I MAR ARGENTINO, which has the latest generation equipment and tools that will allow not only to deepen the biological knowledge, but also to collect information about the environment to better understand the climate change effects. Since 2000, INIDEP has a fixed monitoring station, in front of Mar de la Plata, called the “Permanent Station for Environmental Studies – EPEA”, where samples and information related to oceanographic, climatic and biological aspects are collected. In addition, since 2009, in order to expand those studies on the continental shelf, another series was started with seasonal frequency, covering an area in Buenos Aires from the coastal to the slope, called COSTAL section. In 2019, the expanded COSTAL was made within the CTMFM.

In connection with artisanal fisheries, Argentina would like to highlight that the Undersecretariat of Fisheries and aquaculture has participated in the IHH project “Illuminating hidden harvest: the global contribution of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development”, mentioned in Document COFI/2020/Inf.12.1, identifying and validating existing data and studies; and it is one of the 40 collaborating countries mentioned in the document, and considers it to be a very useful document and that contributes to the future improvement of the living conditions of people who depend on fisheries and aquaculture as a livelihood. Moreover, our country has answered the special questionnaire on data related to small-scale fisheries (within the 228 countries mentioned). In this regard, the work undertaken by FAO is considered extremely useful, and it is expected that more countries will be able to join and enlighten this much-needed sector on protection policies of their livelihoods to achieve the corresponding SGS.

With respect to the detailed Project for the planning of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (2022) (Document COFI/2020/Inf.12.2), Argentina supports the initiative and points out that work is being carried out, together with the Coordination of Artisanal Fisheries of the Secretariat of Family Agriculture of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, in the elaboration of an agenda to increase awareness of the sector, and to deepen the work with fishing communities.

All the afore-mentioned so far, and many other actions that we have reported and will report to FAO, allow to show how much progress in the Region with the implementation of the fisheries ecosystem approach has been made, promoted by FAO and in particular by this Committee.

In addition to this, our country is actively engaged in the fisheries subsidies negotiations within the World Trade Organization (WTO), and has been positioned as a “demandeur” promoting the establishment of disciplines on fisheries subsidies (among them, the ones related to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing). It recalls the great impact that the fisheries subsidies provision has in the sector and the urgency to move forward the negotiations on this matter that take place at WTO. In this regard, our country welcomes and appreciates the technical support and advice provided by FAO to the fisheries subsidies negotiations in the WTO, and aims that an agreement can be reached soon.

We wish all of you that this 34th Session of COFI will be a good week of work, which is going to be arduous and novel, as many other things that we have had to do in recent times, awaiting that we may quickly leave from this global calamity that has afflicted us.