WorldFish comments on 34th Session of the Committee of Fisheries (COFI)

Agenda Item #11: **Addressing climate change and other environment-related matters in fisheries and aquaculture**

WorldFish is encouraged to learn that 112 of the 169 NDCs and INDCs submitted by countries have referred to fisheries and aquaculture, including ocean and coastal zone management. This is a significant development. We would like to remind fellow delegates that a review of poverty reduction strategy papers submitted by 29 sub-Saharan African countries not more than 10 years ago had found that only 3 mentioned fisheries as a pathway out of poverty. Therefore, this is a significant shift in perception and understanding of the roles of fisheries and aquaculture as a pathway for shared prosperity.

We note that discussions held during the Fisheries Sustainability Symposium (18-21 November 2019, Rome, Italy) highlighted the value of cross-sectoral and holistic approaches to understanding and responding to the impacts of climate change. WorldFish research has demonstrated that fish and aquatic foods systems are complex non-linear systems, which involve multiple actors and varying networks and interactions. Therefore, response of the impacts of climate change to fish and aquatic foods systems and their implications for ecological, economic, and social systems can only be understood with an integrated systems approach.

WorldFish research demonstrates that the impacts of climate change are primarily felt by women, men and communities that may be experiencing compounding vulnerabilities. Climate variability and extremes are notably a key driver behind the rise in global hunger. Climate change, as one of the leading causes of severe food crises, negatively influences all aspects of food security including food availability, access, utilisation, and stability. In our mission toward healthy people and a healthy planet, we strongly support the proposal for a 'climate-poverty approach to improve the ways in which the interrelated challenges of poverty and climate change are addressed in fisheries and coastal areas and to ensure that responses to both are more coherent, effective and sustainable'. Insights from our recent research illustrate that the climate change community has yet to embrace these nuances, for example in addressing gender equality and climate change together. WorldFish is a willing research partner to COFI Member States and FAO in understanding the heterogeneity between people, communities and nations that must be accounted for in research, policy and investment responses.

WorldFish concurs that GHG emissions can be curtailed by introducing energy-saving, more efficient fishing and farming techniques and technologies, and reduction in loss and waste in value chains. Such shift will require significant increases in capacity building and technology transfer activities – which represent two priority areas for further investment, more specifically: (1) the acquisition, evaluation and dissemination of fisheries and aquaculture technological knowledge and the facilitation of access to relevant information; and (2) the enhancement of human resources within developing countries. In highlighting these areas, WorldFish and partners have also emphasized the importance of taking a "beyond-technology' and holistic approach to building adaptive capacity of communities and fish and aquatic foods systems (see here and here). We are a enthusiastic partner and supporter of the important role FAO plays in multilateral facilitation and brokering role to enable this.

Gareth Johnstone, Ph.D.
Director General

Read our **WorldFish 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy**
(available to download here)