

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

Agenda Item #8: Supporting small-scale and artisanal fisheries

WorldFish and our partners within the CGIAR Research Program on Fish Agri-Food Systems and CGIAR are active contributors, collaborators and supporters of the four areas of action for supporting small-scale and artisanal fisheries. These commitments are also priorities to the CGIAR based on our commitments, and research supporting (1) human rights, the right to food, and tenure rights, (2) the keystone role of small-holders in sustainable and equitable food systems that continue to deliver nutritious foods, (3) small-scale fishers as effective and legitimate environmental stewards, in many contexts and (4) *“poor and marginalized women and men around the world will continue to rely on SSF for food and livelihoods for decades to come – particularly those living in sub Saharan Africa, the mega-deltas of Asia and the small island states of the Pacific”*. In sum, small-scale and artisanal fisheries are keystone actors in sustainable food system transformations, partners in the decade of Ocean Science and central to the attainment of the SDGs in many contexts. WorldFish is pleased to note that our research contributions to the International Symposium on Fisheries Sustainability are reflected in the policies and actions being discussed during this COFI meeting, including the formation of the new Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management.

WorldFish’s policy-focused research continues to provide evidence-based analysis, practical management recommendations, and evaluation support on implementation of the SSF Guidelines by a range of nations, organizations, and policies. The new WorldFish and CGIAR Research and Innovation Strategies will continue to align research to the SSF Guidelines in pursuit of Healthy People and Planet. WorldFish research, and the current collaboration with FAO on the monitoring and evaluation of the SSF Guidelines, identifies also where uptake has been lacking, incomplete or failing to lead to full alignment to the principles provided by the SSF Guidelines. We encourage members of COFI to continue their commitments to the SSF Guidelines, as critical as ever, as efforts commence to “build back better” post-COVID-19, the Blue Economy gains pace, climate change impacts become more widespread, urgency towards action on the SDGs intensifies on the approach to 2030, and trajectories for food system transformation are being determined, for example at the World Food Summit.

WorldFish is one of the three core team members responsible for the coordination and delivery of the Illuminating Hidden Harvest Initiative. Our role includes leading the delivery of new insights on food and nutrition security and gender equality. The readiness of COFI members to engage with IHH findings will provide an important and emerging window of opportunity to hone and reinvigorate investment in small-scale and artisanal fisheries. Zambia has been one leading example, where evidence (see [here](#) and [here](#)) from IHH has been deliberated as the Zambian Government and partners and distilled into a series of actions to rebalance fisheries, food and water investments and policy to enable the continued and improved benefits from small-scale and artisanal fisheries. Insights from IHH (and associated initiatives around the Blue Food Assessments), for example, illustrate the opportunity and importance for COFI members and partners to meet (at a minimum) sex-disaggregated data standards in fisheries and value chain reporting and monitoring, but also, to realize SDG5 and SDG10 the importance to understand, engage and challenge social and economic structures that can inhibit just blue food systems, and the contribution of women and men involved in SSF.

In sum, we congratulate and encourage FAO and COFI members to maintain momentum and focus on the widespread and meaningful commitment to support small-scale and artisanal fisheries, including through the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. Maintaining and increasing commitment is imperative in this period of rapid change, transformation and reconfiguration of food systems. As the pace of change and investment accelerate, the role of research and monitoring and evaluation of change processes and outcomes, in accordance with commitments made in the SSF Guidelines and to the SDGs is paramount. WorldFish will continue our commitment as a research partner to FAO and COFI members. An immediate opportunity for these partnerships and actions to deepen is planning for IYAFAs to be a critical point in time where commitment to small-scale and artisanal fisheries is unprecedented and action and outcome orientated.



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Read our [WorldFish 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#)
(available to [download here](#))