

COFI 35 – WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE PROCEDURE

RECEIVED COMMENTS FROM OBSERVERS

A – BASIC INFORMATION

Document Number	COFI/2022/9
Document Title	Developments in global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture
Commenting Observer	WWF
Referred paragraph numbers (if applicable)	-

B – COMMENT RECEIVED

WWF thanks FAO for preparing the comprehensive report on the developments in global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture and for its engagement in all these processes. In particular, WWF notes the important results of the UN Food Systems Summit in September 2021 and the need of member states of COFI to follow up on the pledges made in the Summit.

WWF welcomes the emergence of the Aquatic Blue Food Coalition (ABFC) and commends the constructive and collaborative approach that characterizes the work of the coalition, in particular the way it raises the profile of blue/aquatic foods in discussions of the future of food systems in the context of international forums and in national policy making as well as how it has highlighted the important role of small-scale fishers within the Aquatic and Blue Foods systems.

WWF looks forward to working with the coalition to mobilize support -- including investment, technical capacity, and partnerships -- to ensure aquatic/blue food systems are sustainably and equitably managed and are integrated into food systems.

With regarding to Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), WWF notes that the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) continues to show the failure of the region to end overfishing of the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna, which supports one of the world's most valuable fisheries and the livelihoods of thousands of local communities. The disregard for scientific advice in adopting catch limits to save the overfished yellowfin tuna stock in the Indian Ocean from collapse shows that the commission has failed in its responsibility to manage the species. WWF urges members of the IOTC to adopt science-based management measures to ensure the sustainability of Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna.

WWF believes that RFMOs have shown that they are unable to rebuild fish populations to sustainable levels, in particular where IUU fishing is taking place. A transformation of fisheries governance and fishing practices are urgently required to deliver on the Agenda 2030. Science-based management protocols are essential in addition to developing a culture of responsibility, accountability and compliance within the entire fisheries sector and with RFMO contracting parties. Substantial advances in data collection of fishing effort, environmental impact and transparency are essential.

As far as safety at sea, social protection and decent work in fisheries and aquaculture are concerned, WWF appreciates that the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture's focus and the work FAO has been doing in relation to these areas as detailed in <https://www.fao.org/3/nj532en/nj532en.pdf>.

WWF commends FAO for the work that is underway to address safety issues in small-scale fisheries and recommends increased resources be made available to facilitate rapid scaling of this work to all regions where small-scale fisheries are present, including through work with partners and local organizations.

Providing practical guidance is important, but as the increasing prevalence of seafood importation legislation attests to, issues of safety at sea, decent work, and social protections should not be seen as voluntary or optimal, but should be seen as a fundamental and integral part of a commercial fishing operations' social licence to operate and a condition of access to consumers in key export markets.

Whilst it is good to see a number of global instruments focused on supporting the eradication of IUU such as the Port State Measures agreement, the Cape Town Agreement and the Work in Fishing Convention, WWF is concerned by the slow pace of ratification of the agreement. WWF encourages COFI to recommend that the issues of safety at sea, decent work, and social protections be given greater prominence with member nations and with management bodies in particular, including through transparent reporting of ratifications, reporting on whether key protections are in place and audited at a national level and reporting the coverage of management measures for regional fisheries management organizations.