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منظمة
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CENTRAL ASIAN AND CAUCASUS REGIONAL FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE COMMISSION

Seventh Session

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Istanbul, Turkey

MAIN DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE AND FAO FISHERIES BODIES

INTRODUCTION

1. This document contains highlights of the topics discussed at the (i) 34th Session of FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI-34), held virtually from 1 to 5 February 2021; (ii) FAO's 32nd Regional Conference for Europe (ERC-32), held virtually from 2 to 4 November 2020; and (iii) 6th Session of CACFish (CACFish-6), held in Izmir, Turkey from 15 to 18 October 2018.

Main decisions and recommendations from 34rd Session of FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI-34)

2. The Committee on Fisheries (COFI) was established in 1965. It is a Governing Body of FAO currently serving as the only global inter-governmental for fisheries and aquaculture issues. The two main functions of COFI are to review the programmes of work of FAO in the field of fisheries and aquaculture and their implementation, and to conduct periodic general reviews of fishery and aquaculture problems of an international character and appraise such problems and their possible solutions with a view to concerted action by nations, FAO, intergovernmental bodies and civil society. The Committee also reviews specific matters relating to fisheries and aquaculture referred to it by the Council or the Director-General, or placed by the Committee on its agenda at the request of Members, or the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

3. The primary agenda items of COFI 34 were as follows:

- State of world fisheries and aquaculture and progress with the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries,

- Decisions and recommendations of the sub-committees of COFI,
 - Contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
 - Fisheries and ocean governance,
 - Contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,
 - Supporting small-scale and artisanal fisheries
 - Combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing
 - Climate change and other environment related matters,
 - Developments in global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture
 - FAO's Programme of Work in fisheries and aquaculture under the FAO Strategic Framework.
4. Listed below are the main decisions and recommendations of COFI 34. The Committee:
- commended FAO for the 2020 State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) publication. Requested FAO to consider, in future SOFIA reports, methodological improvements to better reflect the regional status of fish stocks recognizing efforts to rebuild stocks, and increasing the number of stocks with assessments, while ensuring the integrity of the time series. Recommended a robust and participatory peer review process, and to share the report with Members well in advance of publishing;
 - endorsed the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture to renew its commitment to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, recognize the transformations in the sector since the endorsement of the Code, and refocus priorities to secure the long-term sustainability and resilience of the sector;
 - called on FAO and COFI Members, consistent with the COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, to bring fisheries and aquaculture fully into the discussions during the preparation of the United Nations Food Systems Summit;
 - recommended further development of the Global Integrated Sustainable Aquaculture Programme (GISAP);
 - supported the need for an FAO Action Plan on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) for 2021–2025, based on robust scientific evidence and risk analysis, including training and the capacity building needs of Members;
 - welcomed the publication of the report on The State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and recommended the further development of a draft Global Plan of Action for Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
 - welcomed the further development of the voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture in 2021 as a tool towards further development of national policies for the aquaculture sector and requested FAO to consider guidance for concrete actions for the sector – according to national contexts, capacities and priorities – on the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and on climate change adaptation and mitigation;
 - requested FAO to continue providing technical support in the framework of negotiations on fisheries subsidies carried out in the World Trade Organization (WTO);
 - requested FAO to continue supporting Members in the development and implementation of national plans of action to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing;
 - expressed strong support for FAO's scientific advice to the Codex Alimentarius Commission, reiterating the need for appropriate funding;

- called for FAO to continue cooperating with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN);
- emphasizing the importance of accurate data to support decision-making, and the relevant function of FAO in collecting, analysing and disseminating statistics, requested that FAO continue to assist Members in strengthening statistical capacity and delivery of data, especially in data-poor situations, as well as in integrating innovative technologies;
- welcomed the Draft Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition and appreciated its comprehensive consultative development process;
- requested FAO's support in capacity development, and stressed the need to strengthen gender equality, and gender and youth empowerment issues within the strategy;
- noted the importance of sustainable and inclusive ocean economies, the further implementation of the FAO Blue Growth Initiative in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and requested additional information on the proposal for a voluntary Blue Ports Network for the development of coastal areas in collaboration with Members and relevant organizations;
- requested increased work in relation to support for small-scale and artisanal fisheries and to intensify support to Members;
- expressed its commitment to the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) in 2022 and recommended promoting the importance of smallscale and artisanal fisheries and aquaculture in relevant events;
- recognized the role that the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels, and Supply Vessels plays in the implementation of the PSMA and other international instruments and initiatives, and called for the further development of the Global Record;
- commended FAO on its work on achieving sustainable fisheries and aquaculture through collaborative approaches with relevant global and regional organizations, bodies and initiatives and requested FAO to continue strengthening such work;
- requested FAO, within its mandate, to continue providing technical advice and relevant information, including on the objectives and implementation of existing fisheries instruments, in the process of deliberation on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ);
- underscored the central role of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and Regional Fisheries Advisory Bodies (RFABs), within their sphere of competence, in the implementation of international fisheries instruments, such as those aimed at combatting IUU fishing;
- emphasized the importance of safety at sea and working conditions in the fisheries sector and welcomed the close cooperation between FAO and the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), including through the Joint Working Group on IUU fishing and related matters, and requested FAO to further strengthen international cooperation on occupational health and safety issues in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and to promote decent work for fishers and fish workers;
- requested FAO to enhance technical guidance on mainstreaming climate adaptation and mitigation in fisheries management and aquaculture development; cc) welcomed the Action Plan for the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors (2021–2023);
- noted the relevance of other effective area based conservation measures (OECMs) to

achieving a number of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and global biodiversity targets, and requested that FAO produce and disseminate practical guidelines to support Members in their identification and implementation;

- noted the important role that RFABs, RFMOs and other regional initiatives play in mainstreaming biodiversity in the conservation and sustainable use of aquatic resources, and requested FAO to strengthen its support to them in this arena;
- agreed to continue a transparent and inclusive consultation process on the proposal of the establishment of a new sub-committee on fisheries management, under the leadership of the Chairperson of COFI, and looked forward to a proposal being submitted at COFI 35;
- welcomed the development of a new FAO Strategic Framework (2022–31), and called upon FAO to fully include fisheries and aquaculture under the four new Aspirations of Better Production, Better Nutrition, Better Environment and Better Life;
- endorsed the identified fisheries and aquaculture priority areas of work for the biennium 2020–2021;
- recommended that the relevant FAO Governing Bodies duly consider integrating actions identified in the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture;
- urged FAO, in collaboration with its partners to promote the importance of fisheries and aquaculture in relevant events and initiatives;
- urged FAO to promote good experiences and practices, including through South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the fisheries and aquaculture sector;
- expressed its support for the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture, and requested FAO to ensure that the activities of the International Platform include issues related to digital technology applications on fisheries and aquaculture, and further requested FAO to develop a solid funding concept for the International Platform based on voluntary contributions, and continue developing and refining its terms of reference for further review by the Programme Committee and the FAO Council;

Thirty-second session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC- 32)

5. Being the main Governing Body in the Europe and Central Asia region, the FAO Regional Conferences for Europe serve as an official forum where Ministers of Agriculture and other high officials from all FAO Members in the region meet to discuss challenges. The Conferences also provide a forum for the formulations of regional positions on the global policy and regulatory issues within the mandate of FAO. Furthermore, the Conferences also review and advise on the region related plans, programme or projects of FAO. Outcomes of the regular sessions of CACFish are reported to FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC).

6. The primary technical thematic agenda items of ERC-32 were as follows:

- Sustainable food systems and healthy diets in Europe and Central Asia
- Hand In Hand Initiative: Reaching the most vulnerable
- Solutions for Youth, Employment and Developing Rural Areas in relation to the United Nations Decade of Family Farming
- Innovation and digitalization

7. The ERC:

Sustainable food systems and healthy diets in Europe and Central Asia:

- Affirmed the importance of adopting a sustainable food systems approach for healthy diets that maximizes contributions to the three dimensions of sustainability (environmental, economic and social) while addressing trade-offs across activities, actors

and overall goals as a key commitment in achieving multiple SDGs and fostering synergies between policy measures;

- Stressed that the world was not on track to achieve the SDGs and confirmed that Members were fully committed to building a positive outcome from the United Nations Food Systems Summit as part of the Decade of Action to Deliver the SDGs by 2030;
- Encouraged Members to provide an enabling environment for implementing the food systems transformation agenda, preferably consisting of a national multisectoral coordinating mechanism with a broad mandate to use a food systems lens, with representation from the relevant government and non-state actors, including the private sector;
- Recognized the importance of innovation, research and well-functioning agricultural extension services as an important prerequisite for the technology and knowledge transfer to farmers and small enterprises, and of the new opportunities that digitalization offers to improve not only the productivity and sustainability of food systems but also transparency for consumers
- Requested that FAO work with regional and national coordinating mechanisms and bodies, upon request by FAO Members, in developing a methodology to assess the sustainability of food systems and to analyse, at the country level, the status of current diets and food systems.

Hand In Hand Initiative: Reaching the most vulnerable

- Welcomed and supported FAO's new approach for agriculture development through the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and recognized the role that the Hand-in-Hand Initiative can play in strengthening national ownership and capacities to accelerate progress to end poverty and hunger and promote rural development and economic growth;
- Encouraged Members to provide best practices and guidance on the underlying market-oriented agri-food systems approach to support the transformation of agricultural, rural and food systems as integral components of structural transformation to achieve economic, social and environmental dimensions of national sustainable development objectives;
- Requested that FAO consider ways to enhance and extend the Hand-in-Hand Initiative approach to strengthen FAO country support to achieve other FAO priority objectives and, especially, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated impact.

Solutions for Youth, Employment and Developing Rural Areas in relation to the United Nations Decade of Family Farming:

- noted the key role of rural women in performing critical tasks in family and non-family environments and the lack of development opportunities and safety nets among rural women, especially from risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Recognized the importance of agro-ecology and other innovative approaches, of digital transformation, and of the sharing of information, knowledge and research as key elements to transform the agriculture sector and make it attractive for young professionals
- Acknowledged the need for a systematic approach to stimulate sustainable growth and promote the structural transformation of the food and agriculture sector to expand the multidimensional nature of family farming and thus provide tailor-made and context-specific solutions in order to achieve the SDGs;
- Requested that FAO continue assisting the countries in the region in the sustainable structural transformation of rural areas to expand the multidimensional nature of family farming and to leverage the livelihoods of family farmers, with emphasis on youth and women;

8. The Report of the 6th Session of CACfish was discussed through a written consultation procedure prior to the ERC-32 resulting the below points adopted by the Regional Conference:
- Discussed priorities of work for fisheries and aquaculture development in the CACFish area of competence, in line with achieving the universal goals of the SDGs and the FAO Regional Initiatives, for consideration by the Seventh Session of CACFish in May 2021 in Tajikistan; and
 - Encouraged relevant Members of the ERC particularly from Central Asia and the Caucasus to announce their intention to join the Commission.

Sixth Session of CACFish (CACFish-6)

9. The five Member countries attended CACFish-6: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey. Ten countries were present as invited Countries, namely: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Intergovernmental organizations with observer status that participated were EUROFISH International Organization and the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). The Commission:

- discussed, among others the main decisions and recommendations of relevant FAO Conferences and Committees; and reviewed and approved the recommendations of the Fourth Meeting of TAC (2017), including intersessional period priority activities.
- encouraged all countries located in the wider Central Asia and Caucasus region that are not yet members to become members or, alternatively, to collaborate formally with the Commission as observers.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

8. The Commission is invited to:
- Note the discussions, recommendations and decisions of the respective FAO fisheries governing bodies and CACFish, and
 - Provide further guidance, as appropriate, regarding implementation of these recommendations and decisions.