

Benefits of decent employment in fisheries and aquaculture

Vigo, 9 October 2015, 9:00 – 10:30, [XX] Room

Working for blue growth: Social Responsibility in the fish business – a win-win situation for all

Background

Both the private and policy actors in fisheries and aquaculture are increasingly aware of the connection between the social and economic aspects in the industry. More than 58 million people are directly employed in fisheries and aquaculture; additional indirect employment opportunities occur along the value chain from harvesting, processing to distribution, supporting the livelihoods of 10-12% of the global population. There remains, however, a gap between internationally recognized labor standards and good practices and their application.

Parts of the industry have been accused of failing to apply decent work standards. The private sector, local governments, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, and civil society are increasingly partnering to address such decent work deficits. “Corporate social responsibility” initiatives have been undertaken, and standard setting, voluntary codes of conduct and other types of guidelines as well as policies have emerged.

Decent employment is work that respects labor standards highlighted in the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and some other criteria specific to rural areas. This includes for instance:

- Work that does not involve worst forms of child labor or forced labor;
- Work which ensures a living income (beyond the poverty line);
- Work that does not involve excessive working hours (according to national standards);
- Work where no gender/age/other discrimination is experienced and positive measures have been taken to support the economic empowerment of women/youth/other vulnerable groups;
- Work where minimum specific value chain standards for Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) are respected;
- Work where freedom of association is guaranteed
- Work where access to adapted technical and vocational training is promoted.

While at the intergovernmental level, the International Labor Organization (ILO) leads the global employment and decent work agenda, the FAO plays a crucial complementary role in promoting employment and decent work in rural areas, as reflected in the revised strategic framework of the FAO.

Due to the significance of the topic and its relevance to the whole sector and the different stakeholders, the 2015 Forum in Vigo is a good occasion to discuss the incentives and benefits of addressing *Decent Employment in Fisheries and Aquaculture* and to strengthen FAO’s engagement with the private sector as mandated repeatedly by the COFI-Subcommittee on Fish Trade. The side event on decent employment in fisheries and aquaculture at the Shrimp Congress in Vigo 2014 was the starting point of what was then dubbed ‘The Vigo Dialogue’- an open dialogue between the different stakeholders in fisheries and aquaculture on decent work. This event on decent work in fisheries and aquaculture at the 2015 Forum is the continuation of this ‘Dialogue’ and expected to become a permanent event on the agenda.

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Objectives

The overall objective of the event is to continue the dialogue between governments, private sector, civil society and other relevant partners on improving labour conditions in fisheries and aquaculture. Last year the emphasis was on identifying main issues in relation to decent employment in fisheries and aquaculture. This year the focus will be on the benefits of addressing those issues for different stakeholders, e.g. better reputation for companies, more efficiency in production and operation, improved conditions for producers/workers, etc.

The panelists and participants are invited to:

- Share experiences with decent work and employment promotion: good practices and success stories
- Discuss market trends and current topics in relation to working conditions and decent employment
- Highlight incentives and benefits of decent employment for the different stakeholders
- Identify possibilities and means of ensuring decent employment in fisheries and aquaculture
- Recommend areas for policies, partnerships and action to help advancing the decent work agenda
- Identify issues for future discussion at the “Vigo Dialogue” and for joint action (e.g. communication: retailers and consumers; labor issues in fish trade; role of fish worker unions, etc)

Presenters will include governments, private sector, civil society, FAO and ILO. The participants will be invited to consider issuing a joint “Vigo Dialogue” Statement of Intent to highlight primary interests in decent employment in fisheries and aquaculture and elements of a future agenda for action. The outcome of the discussions will also be part of a larger stocktaking exercise on decent employment in the fish business sector which will inform ongoing and future initiatives of FAO and aims to inspire engagement of other stakeholders.

Agenda - tentative

09:00 – 09:10	Opening remarks	A.M. Mathiesen, Assistant Director-General, FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department B. Wagner, Head, Transport & Maritime Unit, Sectoral Policies Department, International Labour Office (ILO)
	Government Perspectives	B. Esau, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Namibia Waraporn Prompoj, Deputy Director General, Dept. of Fisheries, Thailand T. Pickerell, SeaFish, United Kingdom
	Industry Perspectives	J. de la Cerda L. Baspino, Pescanova M. Wallhoff, Regal Springs Tilapia M. Rodriguez, director de Sostenibilidad, Carrefour
	A civil society perspective	S. Matthew, International Collective in Support of Fishworkers
09:50 – 10:20	Panel Debate/Questions and answers	moderated by U. Barg, FAO
10:20 – 10:30	Conclusion: recommendations for action	U. Barg, FAO

Conxemar and FAO

This event is arranged by FAO and will take place within the framework of the First International Fisheries Stakeholder Forum and the 20th anniversary of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, jointly organized by the Spanish Ministry for Agriculture, Food and Environment (MAGRAMA), Conxemar and FAO. For the last three years, FAO’s Fisheries and Aquaculture Department has been directly involved in the co-organization of international congresses on seafood commodities, together with Conxemar, a national association representing 222 companies involved in processing, importing, exporting and distribution of frozen seafood in Spain. In 2014 more than 375 professionals from 24 different countries attended the event in Vigo, Spain. FAO facilitated the attendance of different Ministers and country representatives from developing countries.

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