



**EXPERT CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED SUB-  
COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES**

**Bangkok, Thailand, 28-29 February 2000**

**PROSPECTUS**

## **BACKGROUND**

1. The importance of aquaculture, its development and its growing socio-economic benefits and contributions, have been increasingly recognized during the last decade. Aquaculture has grown to one of the fastest growing food production sectors, continuously exceeding annual peaks in global production and value, with global production and value levels reaching 38.2 million metric tonnes in 1998 and with a total value of USD 50.4 billion in 1997 (up-to-date provisional estimate by FAO). Major global meetings such as the 1995 FAO/Japan Conference on the Sustainable Contribution of Fisheries to Food Security, the 1996 World Food Summit, and the Ministerial Meetings on Fisheries in 1995 and 1999, have acknowledged and reiterated the significant role which sustainable aquaculture development has at present and will have in the future.

2. At the 22nd Session of the Committee on Fisheries, known as COFI ([Annex](#)), held in Rome at FAO Headquarters from 17 to 20 March 1997, the importance of aquaculture as a major provider of food and income for the member countries was emphasized. During the discussion of the major issues in world fisheries, COFI underlined the valuable potential of aquaculture in meeting the expected increased demand for aquatic products. In the discussion of the implementation of the FAO Programme of Work and Budget 1996/1997, the medium-term plan for 1998/2003 and the proposed Programme of Work and Budget 1998/99, the mandate of FAO for fisheries and aquaculture and its leading role as specialized agency within the UN system was reaffirmed. COFI recalled the increasing contribution played by aquaculture to food security, employment and income of rural populations and, as a consequence, called for special attention to be given to the sustainable development of aquaculture, inland fisheries enhancements and culture-based

fisheries.

3. In light of the above, during the 1997 COFI Session, a significant number of delegations supported the proposal to consider the establishment, in accordance with the Constitution of FAO, of a Sub-Committee on Aquaculture under the auspices of the Committee of Fisheries to serve as a global multilateral governmental forum, open to all international parties interested in aquaculture development, for consultation on matters of global importance in aquaculture development and inland fisheries enhancement/culture-based fisheries, and on key development issues and problems and possible measures for their resolution. The Committee agreed that FAO should organize, with extra-budgetary funds, an expert consultation in order to work out a detailed proposal, including the justification for, terms of reference of, *modus operandi* and financial obligations of such a Sub-Committee, for consideration by the 23rd Session of COFI in 1999. As extra-budgetary funds could not be identified, the expert consultation could not be held.

4. The 23rd Session of COFI, which was held in February 1999 at FAO Headquarters in Rome, agreed again that sustainable aquaculture could have high potential in securing food availability and contributing to poverty alleviation in developing countries and placed high priority on activities to support sustainable aquaculture. There was broad support in the Committee to the proposal to establish a COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. Noting that extra-budgetary funds for such a body had not yet been identified, the Committee suggested that consideration be given to funding such a Sub-Committee from FAO's Regular Programme resources. The Committee agreed that the above priorities should be reflected in the Programme of Work and Budget 2000-2001. Funding for the Expert Consultation on the Sub-Committee was requested under the "real growth" budgetary option presented to the Conference but this option was not agreed on. As a consequence, and in order to reduce the cost to FAO while ensuring broad participation, it has been considered opportune to hold the Expert Consultation in conjunction with the Conference on Aquaculture in the Third Millennium, organized by the Network of Aquaculture Centers in Asia (NACA) in cooperation with FAO and hosted by the Department of Fisheries of the Government of Thailand, on 20-25 February 2000 in Bangkok, Thailand.

5. In various COFI sessions and conferences mentioned above, the scope and potential areas of work of the Sub-Committee were highlighted, and *inter alia*:

- Definition and enhancement of the role of aquaculture in relation to food security and rural development.
- Promotion of technical reviews and elaboration of agreements on international standards (for example, on food safety and quality, biotechnology and biosafety, environment, use of inputs, production practices, product labelling, etc).
- Support to the implementation of Article 5 of the Code of Conduct for

Responsible Fisheries (related to the special requirements of developing countries and continued need for technical and financial assistance). In particular, identification of technical and financial assistance requirements for developing countries and formulation of a Sub-Programme on Aquaculture Development within the Inter-Regional Programme in support of the implementation of the Code of Conduct.

- Promotion of Regional and Inter-Regional collaboration, e.g.:
  - Continued support to Regional Programmes on specialized themes such as, for example, Sustainable Aquaculture for Rural Development, and Development of Technical Guidelines on Quarantine and Health Certification, and Establishment of Information Systems. Development and support to the Thematic Technical Networks.
  - Continued support to inter-regional multi-agency cooperative programmes such as, for example, the World Bank/NACA/WWF/FAO Programme on Shrimp Farming and the Environment.
- Management of, and planning for aquaculture development, and institutional and legal issues related to development and management of aquaculture.
- Further support to Research and Development in support of sustainable aquaculture development.
- Further support to international aquaculture information systems and networks.

## **OBJECTIVES**

6. The objectives of the Expert Consultation are:

- to review key issues in aquaculture and to determine those of international importance requiring the establishment of an intergovernmental forum for the development of norms and action aiming at sustainable contribution of aquaculture to food security and economic development in FAO Member Countries;
- to study the practical implications of the establishment of the proposed Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, including the determination of benefits for FAO Member Countries and interested parties and the financial implications of holding regular biennial meetings;
- to elaborate and draft Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of, and outline a possible Programme of Activities for the Sub-Committee,

including a draft agenda for the first two sessions of the Sub-Committee.

## **EXPECTED OUTPUTS**

7. The Report of the meeting will contain:

- a list of key issues of international importance in aquaculture requiring the establishment of a Sub-Committee;
- the brief description of possible contributions of a Sub-Committee to sustainable aquaculture development;
- an analysis of practical budgetary and programmatic implications of the establishment of the proposed Sub-Committee on Aquaculture for FAO and its members;
- draft Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Sub-Committee;
- draft annotated agenda for the first two sessions of the Sub-Committee.

## **WORKING DOCUMENT**

8. To facilitate the discussion on the key global issues affecting the development of the sector, a working document in relation to the objectives and expected outputs of the Consultation will be prepared and distributed to the participants in advance of the meeting (see document [FI:COFI-AQ/2000/3](#)).

## **PARTICIPANTS**

9. Because of the limited funding available to FAO, 17 experts have been selected by the FAO Secretariat on the basis of their technical ability and knowledge on aquaculture development, inter-governmental mechanisms, and with due regard for geographical representation. These experts are willing and able to work in English and will participate in the meeting and serve in their personal capacity (see [FI:COFI-AQ/2000/Inf.1](#)).

## **LANGUAGE**

10. Due to funding constraints, the Expert Consultation will be conducted in English. The report of the meeting will be translated into the five official languages of FAO.

## **VENUE AND DATES**

11. The Expert Consultation will be held in the FAO Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand, on 28-29 February 2000 (see [FI:COFI-AQ/2000/1](#)).

## **CONTACT PERSON**

Jiansan Jia  
Chief  
Inland Water Resources and Aquaculture Service  
Fisheries Department  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
Via delle Terme di Caracalla  
00100 Rome, Italy  
Tel: 0039 (06) 5705 5007  
Fax: 0039 (06) 5705 3020  
Email: [jjiansan.jia@fao.org](mailto:jjiansan.jia@fao.org)  
Website: <http://www.fao.org/fi>

## **ANNEX**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON COFI AND ITS FUNCTIONS**

#### **1. What Is COFI?**

The Committee on Fisheries (COFI), a subsidiary body of the FAO Council, was established by the FAO Conference at its Thirteenth Session in 1965. The Committee presently constitutes the only global inter-governmental forum where major international fisheries and aquaculture problems and issues are examined and recommendations addressed to governments, regional fishery bodies, NGOs, fishworkers, FAO and international community, periodically on a world-wide basis. COFI has also been used as a forum in which global agreements and non-binding instruments were negotiated.

COFI membership is open to any FAO Member and Non-Member eligible to be an observer of the Organization. Representatives of the UN, UN bodies and specialized agencies, regional fishery bodies, international and international non-governmental organizations participate in the debate, but without the right to vote.

COFI may establish sub-committees on certain specific issues, for example the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade. The membership of COFI Sub-Committees may include States which, while not Member Nations or Associate Members of the FAO, are members of the United Nations, any of its specialized agencies or the International Atomic Energy Agency. Such subsidiary bodies meet in the intersessional period of the parent Committee.

The Committee has held 23 sessions. The First Session in 1966, and thereafter annually until 1975. Since then, COFI has met generally on a biennial basis.

#### **2. Functions of COFI**

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, by FAO, inter-governmental bodies and the civil society. The Committee also reviews specific matters relating to fisheries and aquaculture referred to it by the Council or the Director-General of FAO, or placed by the Committee on its agenda at the request of Members, or the United Nations General Assembly.

In its work, the Committee supplements rather than supplants other organizations working in the field of fisheries and aquaculture.