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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

Sixth Session

Cape Town, South Africa, 26-30 March 2012

TOWARDS A PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

Executive Summary

In response to the request of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (SCA), this document provides a brief overview of the contents discussed at the past five sessions of the SCA. It analyzes and proposes several options for developing a plan of action. The Sub-Committee is requested to consider the options and provide guidance and make recommendations for developing the plan of action.

The Sub-Committee is requested to:

- (i) Consider the three options outlined in the working document and advise which would be the most appropriate option in light of the objective to further improve the work of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture;
- (ii) For Option 2, decide on timing and duration of the first session of the Bureau meeting with the Secretariat;
- (iii) For Option 3, review the draft Statutes for an Open Ended Working Group on Aquaculture, as given in the Annex 3 of this document, with a view to adopting them, and decide on the timing and duration of an Open Ended Working Group on Aquaculture.

Introduction

1. There is a clear need for an increased supply of farmed aquatic animals for human consumption, at affordable levels, in the coming decades to meet the health needs and general aspirations of the global society. Currently aquaculture contributes about 48 percent of aquatic animal food destined for human consumption and this is expected to surpass 50 percent by 2015. The additional supply required to meet the demand gap should come from aquaculture. Although the sector

appears to be poised to meet this growing global demand for aquatic food, it is faced with several significant challenges which will determine its future sustainability.

2. Many aquaculture systems rely on unaccounted environmental goods and services. There is increased competition for natural resources. There are many uncertainties. They include the impact of climate change, fishmeal and fish oil supplies for feeds, limits of integration, consolidation and scale of economies of production systems, and the societal acceptability of new bio-engineering technologies. There are policy issues about the priority given to conserving the environment versus the exploitation of natural resources for food production. It is imperative that these issues and challenges are carefully addressed and the sector's sustainability is maintained or improved in order for the increasing prices of food can be kept minimal so that all societies will afford to access aquatic food.

3. There is, therefore, a need for improved discussion on aquaculture at the national, regional and international levels and an opportunity for the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (SCA) not only to be engaged in this discussion but also to develop a strategic framework including a plan of action towards improving sector sustainability.

4. The purpose of this document is to provide an analysis of past COFI SCA sessions and propose options for mechanisms that would ultimately lead to a further improvement of the SCA's future work.

Background

5. The Sub-Committee on Aquaculture is a subsidiary committee of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) by which it was established at its Twenty-fourth Session in 2001 in accordance with Rule XXX-10 of the General Rules of the Organization and Rule VII of the COFI Rules of Procedure. The Sub-Committee is open to all Member Nations of FAO. Non-Member states of the Organization that are members of the United Nations, or any of its Specialized Agencies or the International Atomic Energy Agency, may be admitted by the Council of the Organization to membership in the Sub-Committee. The Committee may, when necessary, establish subcommittees, subsidiary working parties or study groups subject to the necessary funds being available in the relevant chapter of the approved budget of the Organization, and may include in the membership of such subcommittees, subsidiary working parties or study groups Member Nations that are not Members of the Committee and Associate Members. The Council may admit to membership of subcommittees, subsidiary working parties and study groups established by the Committee States which, while not Member Nations or Associate Members of the Organization, are members of the United Nations, any of its specialized agencies or the International Atomic Energy Agency. Former Member Nations of the Organization that have withdrawn leaving arrears of contributions shall not be admitted to membership until such time as they have paid up all such arrears, or the Conference has approved an arrangement for the settlement thereof, or unless the Council in special circumstances decides otherwise with respect to such admission.

6. In accordance with its Terms of Reference, based on the recommendations of an earlier Expert Consultation¹, the Sub-Committee provides a forum for consultation and discussion on aquaculture and advises COFI on technical and policy matters related to aquaculture and on the work to be performed by the Organization in the field of aquaculture (Annex 1).

¹ FAO 2000. Report of the Expert Consultation on the Proposed Sub-Committee on Aquaculture of the Committee on Fisheries. Bangkok, Thailand, 28-29 February 2000. *FAO Fish. Rep.* 623. Rome, FAO. 36p.

7. Since its establishment in 2001, the Sub-Committee has convened on 5 separate occasions. The very first Sub-Committee on Aquaculture was held in Beijing, P.R. China in April 2002, followed by Trondheim, Norway in August 2003, New Delhi, India in September 2006, Puerto Varas, Chile in October 2008 and Phuket, Thailand in September-October 2010.

8. During the last two sessions of the SCA, in 2008 and 2010 respectively, the Sub-Committee, whilst reaffirming its support for FAO activities, expressed its satisfaction on the progress achieved, particularly considering the limited financial resources. In this regard, it was recommended that the creation of a strategic framework for the Sub-Committee would permit FAO to better identify completed and ongoing activities as well as priorities not completed due to resource constraints. For the latter, FAO should inform the Sub-Committee of proposals and options for completing the remaining activities^{2,3}.

9. Within the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, one of the important goals is that members and other stakeholders should benefit from an increased production of fish and fish products based on the sustainable expansion and intensification of aquaculture. This is done through (i) promoting and enhancing sustainable aquaculture practices and technologies in member countries, (ii) developing key international norms and technical guidelines for sustainable aquaculture, available for members to adopt and implement, (iii) promoting national aquaculture policy frameworks and strategies in member countries, (iv) regularly analyzing and reporting on global aquaculture development status and trends, and (v) improving knowledge and information sharing among Members in aquaculture management and governance.

10. Activities usually fall within the aforementioned five groups, and are prioritized as outlined herebelow. Special attention is being paid to normative work that has been previously identified as requiring attention, mainly through COFI, its Sub-Committees, and Technical or Expert Consultations, or to technical work in the field which has been requested by Members through the established channels. Further factors in the prioritization process include high level meetings at the international level such as the FAO-NACA Global Conference on Aquaculture 2010 or at the regional level such as the FAO Regional Conferences or the recent Asia Regional Ministerial Meeting on Aquaculture for Food Security, Nutrition and Economic Development. Extra-budgetary funding is continuously sought to support work in these priority areas.

11. Since the first session of the SCA in the year 2002, interest among members has generally been high, and the number of delegations and observers attending the sessions has been good with overall attendance levels ranging from 48 to 66 delegations. The last Session in Thailand in 2010 recorded an overall attendance of 65 delegations, including 59 members and 6 observers, representing the second highest attendance compared to previous sessions.

12. Besides the procedural items, the standing items generally include (i) FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department's efforts in implementing the recommendations of the past session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture and (ii) Progress made on the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) provisions relevant to aquaculture and culture-based fisheries.

² FAO 2009. Report of the fourth session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. Puerto Varas, Chile, 6–10 October 2008. Paragraph 10. *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report 891*. FAO, Rome. 69p.

³ FAO 2010. Report of the fifth session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. Phuket, Thailand, 27 September–1 October 2010. Paragraph 17. *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report 950*. FAO, Rome. 158p.

13. Other emerging issues which have been covered to date include (i) General aquaculture status and development, (ii) Status and trends reporting, (iii) Regional aquaculture organizations, (iv) Aquaculture practices, management and resources, (v) Policy, planning, governance and socio-economic impacts, (vi) Technical guidelines on aquaculture certification, and safety and quality of aquaculture products, and (vii) Climate change. A complete list of the covered items in the various sessions of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture is provided in Annex 2.

14. Importantly, over the years, an increasing importance of the subject matter of aquaculture within the COFI discussions has been observed. The relevance and importance of aquaculture is most strongly reflected when the standing item on the decisions and recommendations of the sessions of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture is presented. The number of interventions made by members and observers has grown steadily over the years reaching an all-time high of 48 member interventions at the last COFI session in February 2011. Similarly, the number of interventions by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations peaked at the last COFI with eight organizations taking the floor.

15. The fifth Session of the Sub-Committee while appreciating the work of the FAO Secretariat, reiterated further support and priority be continuously provided to Africa and the Latin America, and called for support also to the least developed aquaculture countries in the regions such as the Pacific and Central Asia and Caucasus; and further stressed the importance of regional networking and called for support to it. The Sub-Committee reiterated the need for creation of a strategic framework for the Sub-Committee's work.

16. A strategic framework for the Sub-Committee could mean a structured way to understand the work programme of the Sub-Committee by clearly defining its components. The framework then helps to identify the resources, partners, and innovations that might contribute to success of implementation of the programme. Within the context of the Sub-Committee, this could mean the organization of the sessions, conducting of sessions and eventual implementation of the recommendations of the Sub-Committee.

17. Generally, work is implemented by the FAO Secretariat, technically led by the Fisheries/Aquaculture Officers in FAO Headquarters and the decentralized offices, based on the guidance and advice provided by the Sub-Committee. The agenda is set, and possibly the underlying criteria that may be used to facilitate the selection of agenda items may require further debate and consideration by the Sub-Committee. To date, the programme for the individual Sessions of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture is being prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Chair. Working and information documents are also prepared by the Secretariat and published on the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department's website before the Session. The working documents are then discussed during the relevant agenda item of the Session, and the Sub-Committee provides its recommendations for each item.

18. The consolidated decisions and recommendations from the Sub-Committee are subsequently presented by the Secretariat to COFI in a report for adoption. COFI synthesizes global policy and regulatory matters for the attention of the FAO Conference, and programme and budgetary matters for the attention of the FAO Council. Recommendations are finally taken up, to the extent possible and feasible, and integrated into the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department's Programme of Work and Budget (PWB), usually at the beginning of a biennium, to be financed by both Regular Programme (RP) and extra budgetary resources (EBR).

19. The extent to which issues can be covered is subject to the availability of human and financial resources. In the subsequent Session of the Sub-Committee, the Department's efforts in implementing the recommendations of the past session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture are reported back.

20. Although it would be useful and effective to have a closer collaboration and cooperation between the FAO Secretariat and the Sub-Committee, for the implementation of at least some pertinent recommendations during the intersessional period, today, such arrangements have not been seriously considered.

21. Since the Sub-Committee brings out recommendations which have national, regional or global importance and value, it would be useful to develop mechanisms to involve the Sub-Committee as a whole or some of its members, as deemed necessary, for implementation of recommendations, considering potential sharing of financial or other resources.

22. With the above in mind, it is clear that the creation of a strategic framework requires significant consultation and dialogue between the Secretariat and the Sub-Committee. Consultation should be done at regular intervals and eventually lead to an agreed Strategy Paper (SP) with a programme of work and plan of action, which will reflect the objectives of the strategic framework. This SP should be a living document providing the necessary medium-term planning guidance whilst at the same time ensuring the necessary flexibility to respond to emerging priorities and needs of the Members. The regular consultation process leading to such a living document can be achieved through various options with increasing degrees of involvement of the members of the Sub-Committee and the FAO Secretariat:

Option 1: The FAO Secretariat drafts a SP which is prepared as a working document for the 7th Session of the SCA, and discussed and endorsed at this 7th Session of the SCA. The SCA could then review and revise the SP again at one of its forthcoming sessions.

Option 2: The FAO Secretariat drafts a concept note which would then be discussed during a Bureau meeting (Bureau consists of the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Sub-Committee) with the Secretariat during the inter-sessional period of the 6th and 7th Session. Further refinement can be achieved through electronic mail and facilitated web discussions. The resulting SP is prepared as a working document for the 7th Session of the SCA, and endorsed at this 7th Session of the SCA. The SCA could review and revise the SP at one of its forthcoming Sessions.

Option 3: The SCA may wish to establish an Open Ended Working Group for the purpose of:

- reviewing the global situation related to aquaculture issues and trends of international importance and make recommendations to the SCA on these matters;
- considering the progress made in implementing the SCA's recommendations on aquaculture as well as any other matters referred to the Working Group by the SCA;
- prepare a rolling Strategy Paper including programme of work and plan of action for the Sub-Committee.

The Working Group would be reporting back to the SCA on its activities.

Guidance sought

23. The Sub-Committee is requested to:

- Consider the three options outlined in the working document and advise which would be the most appropriate option in light of the objective to further improve the work of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture;
- For Option 2, decide on timing and duration of the first session of the Bureau meeting with the Secretariat;
- For Option 3, review the draft Statutes for an Open Ended Working Group on Aquaculture, as given in the Annex 3 of this document, with a view to adopting them, and decide on the timing and duration of an Open Ended Working Group on Aquaculture.

Annex 1. Terms of Reference of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture.

The Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture is as follows:

The Sub-Committee shall provide a forum for consultation and discussion on aquaculture and advise COFI on technical and policy matters related to aquaculture and on the work to be performed by the Organization in the subject matter field of aquaculture. In particular the Sub-Committee shall:

- (a) identify and discuss major issues and trends in global aquaculture development;
- (b) determine those issues and trends of international importance requiring action to increase the sustainable contribution of aquaculture to food security, economic development and poverty alleviation;
- (c) recommend international action to address aquaculture development needs and, in this regard:
 - (i) to advise on mechanisms to prepare, facilitate and implement action programmes identified, as well as on the expected contribution of partners;
 - (ii) to advise on the liaison with other relevant groups and organizations with a view to promoting harmonization and endorsing policies and actions, as appropriate;
 - (iii) to advise on the strengthening of international collaboration to assist developing countries in the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
- (d) advise on the preparation of technical reviews and of issues and trends of international significance;
- (e) address any specific matters relating to aquaculture referred to it by its Members, the Committee on Fisheries or the Director-General of FAO.

Annex 2. List of items at the sessions of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture 1-5.

No.	1st session	2nd session	3rd session	4th session	5th session
1	Opening of the Session	Opening of the Session	Opening of the Session	Opening of the Session	Opening of the Session
2	Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons and designation of the Drafting Committee	Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons and designation of the Drafting Committee	Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons and designation of the Drafting Committee	Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons and designation of the Drafting Committee	Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons and designation of the Drafting Committee
3	Adoption of the Agenda and arrangements for the Session	Adoption of the Agenda and arrangements for the Session	Adoption of the Agenda and arrangements for the Session	Adoption of the Agenda and arrangements for the Session	Adoption of the Agenda and arrangements for the Session
4	Current Status and Future Perspective of Aquaculture Development	FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department's efforts in implementing the recommendations of the past sessions of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture	FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department's efforts in implementing the recommendations of the past sessions of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture	FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department's efforts in implementing the recommendations of the past sessions of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture	FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department's efforts in implementing the recommendations of the past sessions of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture
5	The Role of Aquaculture in Enhancing Food Security and Economic Development	Recent efforts by FAO regional fishery bodies in responsible aquaculture and culture-based fisheries	Progress made on the implementation of the aquaculture-related provisions of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries	Special Event on the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department's Special Programme for Aquaculture Development in Africa	Improving the progress reporting on the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF), provisions relevant to aquaculture and culture-based fisheries and the proposal for a revised reporting mechanism on CCRF with an interactive questionnaire format
6	Integration of Aquaculture into Sustainable Rural Development	Progress in implementing the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) relevant to aquaculture and culture-based fisheries	Towards improving information on the status and trends in aquaculture development	Technical guidelines on aquaculture certification	Guidelines on aquaculture certification
7	Sustainable Shrimp Culture Development	Improving the status and trends reporting on aquaculture	Improving the socio-economic impacts of aquaculture	Improving the progress reporting on the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF), provisions relevant to aquaculture and culture-based fisheries	Aquatic biosecurity: a key for sustainable aquaculture development
8	Review of the activities of Regional and Inter-regional Organizations in Aquaculture Development	Strategies to improve safety and quality of aquaculture products	Improving planning and policy development in aquaculture: opportunities and challenges	Towards better governance in aquaculture	Climate change and aquaculture: opportunities and challenges for adaptation and mitigation

9	Requirements for Statistics and reporting on Status and Trends of Aquaculture	Towards responsible practices in culture-based fisheries	Better management of aquaculture: the future	Special Event on Experiences and lessons learnt on aquaculture governance (6 presentations)	Moving aquaculture further offshore: governance issues and challenges
10	Any Other Matters	Emerging issues	Prospective analysis of the future aquaculture development and the role of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture	Opportunities for addressing the challenges in meeting the rising global demand for food fish from aquaculture	Coordinating Working Party on Fisheries Statistics: Aquaculture
11	Date and Venue for the Second Session	Any Other Matters	Any other matters	Any other matters	Special event
12	Field visit	Date and Venue for the Second Session	Date and place of the fourth session	Date and place of the Fifth Session	Any other matters
13	Adoption of the Report	Field visit	Field visit	Field visit	Date and place of the sixth Session
14		Adoption of the Report	Adoption of the Report	Adoption of the Report	Field visit
15					Adoption of the Report

Annex 3. Draft statute of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture Open-ended Working Group on Aquaculture

Article 1 - Terms of Reference

1. The Open Ended Working Group on Aquaculture (hereafter referred to as the Working Group) of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (SCA) shall:

- review the global situation related to aquaculture issues and trends of international importance and make recommendations to the SCA on these matters;
- consider the progress made in implementing the SCA's recommendations on aquaculture as well as any other matters referred to the Working Group by the SCA;
- prepare a rolling Strategy Paper including programme of work and plan of action for the Sub-Committee, for consideration and endorsement of the SCA;
- report to the Sub-Committee on its activities.

Article II - Composition

The Working Group shall be open to all COFI Member Nations. All participants of the Working Group will bear their own costs of participation in the Working Group sessions.

Article III - Election and term of office of Members

The Members of the Working Group shall be elected at each regular session of the SCA and serve until the next regular session of the SCA. They shall be eligible for re-election.

Article IV - Officers

1. The Working Group shall elect its Chairperson and one or more Vice-Chairpersons from among the representatives of Members of the Working Group at the beginning of each session. These officers shall remain in office until the next session of the Working Group and be eligible for re-election.

2. The Chairperson, or a Vice-Chairperson in the absence of a Chairperson, shall preside over the meetings of the Working Group and exercise such other functions as may be required to facilitate its work.

Article V - Sessions

The SCA shall determine the timing and duration of the sessions of the Working Group, when required.

Article VI - Observers

1. Members of the SCA which are not Members of the Working Group may participate, upon written request to the SCA Secretariat, in the work of the Working Group in an observer capacity.

2. The Working Group may invite experts, as well as representatives of specialized international organizations, to attend its meetings.

Article VII - Application of the Rules of Procedure of the SCA

The provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the SCA shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to all matters not specifically dealt with under the present Statutes.