



# COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

## SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

### Eighth Session

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## PROGRESS REPORTING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES (CCRF) PROVISIONS RELEVANT TO AQUACULTURE AND CULTURE- BASED FISHERIES WITH THE NEW REPORTING SYSTEM

### Executive Summary

This document presents;(a) the status of the progress in implementing the aquaculture and culture-based fisheries provisions of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) as informed by member countries in 2013, based on the results of the general CCRF questionnaire, and (b) the status based on the results of the new web-based CCRF aquaculture questionnaire, as informed by members in 2015. Seventy one countries responded to the web-based questionnaire, covering nearly 90 percent of the global aquaculture production. The response, and coverage, offers an overall improved perspective of the aquaculture compliance with the CCRF however further efforts are needed to improve the quality of the reports. The global responses indicate a good overall status of governance through aquaculture policy, planning and regulation, whilst efforts are underway to further improve implementation at the ground level through supporting and enhancing mechanisms and by improving the capacity of the states. The results of the new questionnaire facilitated by the web access appear to be a good source of national information which could be useful in FAO's regional and global trends analyses and feedback to Member countries. The new web reporting system has also shown to be useful to members.

#### The Sub-Committee is invited to:

- Review and comment on the document;
- Comment on the use of this CCRF reporting tool as an opportunity for self-assessment and global assessment of aquaculture performance including compliance to the aquaculture provisions of the Code; and
- Recommend actions and activities towards further improving the reporting process and the use of the web reporting tool.

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## **PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE CCRF PROVISIONS ON AQUACULTURE AND CULTURE-BASED FISHERIES**

1. FAO has been monitoring the implementation of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (hereinafter referred to as the Code or CCRF) with a standard questionnaire distributed to Member countries, regional fishery bodies (RFBs) and international non-governmental Organizations<sup>1</sup> (INGOs). The questionnaire includes sections on aquaculture, in particular Article 9 and some elements in Articles 5 and 10 of the CCRF.

2. Article 4.2 of the Code states; inter alia that FAO will report to the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) on the application and implementation of the Code using a standard questionnaire. In this regard, the COFI Secretariat biannually reviews the responses received from FAO Members, regional fishery bodies (RFBs), and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and reports on the progress to COFI. The Secretariat of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI/SCA) also regularly reviews the progress in the implementation of the Code's aquaculture-related provisions using the same methodology and presents this to the Sub-Committee for discussion and decision. This document is the seventh of such reports prepared by the Secretariat of the Sub-Committee and provides (i) a summary of the results of the general CCRF questionnaire regarding the questions that are relevant to aquaculture, and (ii) presents the second global reporting of the new CCRF aquaculture questionnaire, reported through the web-based system for the first time.

### **AQUACULTURE RELATED RESPONSES IN THE GENERAL CCRF QUESTIONNAIRE**

3. Ninety six countries compiled and submitted the 2013 general CCRF questionnaire, from these eighty two responded to questions relevant to aquaculture. This represents an 82 percent increase in the aquaculture responses to the general questionnaire. A limited number of elements are summarized below<sup>2</sup>.

4. Within the eight themes of the Code, "Fisheries Management" and "Aquaculture Development" continue to be ranked as top priorities with a 76.9 percent to fisheries and 59 percent to aquaculture. At the global level, 42 percent of the countries indicated having a national aquaculture policy framework, largely completed and/or implemented. Thirty-six percent and 48 percent of the countries indicated having a similar status for national legal framework and national institutional framework respectively, with regional differences. These values do not represent significant changes with respect to the situation reported in 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> Questionnaire for Monitoring the Implementation of the 1995 FAO Code Of Conduct For Responsible Fisheries. The International Plans of Action On Capacity, Sharks, Seabirds, and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing and The Strategy for Improving Information on Status and Trends of Capture Fisheries.

<sup>2</sup> COFI/2014/2/Rev.1. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mk055e.pdf>

COFI/2014/SBD.1. <http://www.fao.org/cofi/33132-073d4e66d49249c881e35839647c8f499.pdf>

5. Seventy-four percent of countries indicated having a government-developed code or instrument of best practices for aquaculture in accordance with the CCRF, whilst 55 percent of countries indicated having codes developed and implemented by producers, 32 percent by aquaculture suppliers and 30 percent by various manufacturers.

6. Eighty two percent of countries indicated the need for improvement regarding the environmental assessment of aquaculture operations and 77 percent indicated that improvements are needed for the monitoring of aquaculture operations. Regarding minimizing harmful effects of alien species introductions, 42 percent of the countries indicated having fully effective measures, whilst 58 percent indicated the need for improvements. As in the previous reporting, members indicated that strengthening institutional technical capacity was the most critical in order to improve the three mentioned core procedures. Members are encouraged to promote responsible aquaculture practices in support of rural communities, producer organizations and fish farmers. Eighty eight percent of Members stated that they had taken the necessary measures in this regard.

## **THE NEW WEB-BASED QUESTIONNAIRE TO IMPROVE THE REPORTING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AQUACULTURE AND CULTURE-BASED FISHERIES PROVISIONS OF THE CCRF**

### **Background**

7. In order to better address aquaculture and to improve the reporting rate and implementation of the Code, both COFI and COFI/SCA requested FAO to develop a questionnaire to assess the status of compliance of States to the aquaculture provisions of the CCRF. In response, FAO started a long and participatory process to design a specific questionnaire in 2008, this was globally applied early in 2013 and the first progress reporting on the implementation of the code in aquaculture and culture based fisheries was presented to COFI/SCA VII in Saint Petersburg in October that same year<sup>3</sup>. The Sub-Committee welcomed the new questionnaire and recommended uploading this in the new web-based system designed for the main CCRF questionnaire. This recommendation was subsequently endorsed by the 30th session of COFI (Rome, July 2014).

8. Pursuant to the above recommendations, during the last intercessional period the secretariat: (i) adapted and uploaded the new CCRF aquaculture questionnaire and the response guide (in the official languages of the organization) in the main CCRF questionnaire web portal and (ii) distributed the questionnaire to all member countries in early March 2015.

9. The questionnaire online system is accessible through a dedicated portal on the FAO domain using unique user names and passwords, and meets the necessary confidentiality, security and usability requirements.

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<sup>3</sup> COFI:AQ/VII/2013/3. <http://www.fao.org/cofi/43693-07d8392d5c5a68f3d8e278337fbcf6cb2.pdf>

## QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTION, RESPONSES AND DATA ANALYSIS

10. Seventy-one countries compiled and submitted the aforementioned questionnaire to FAO<sup>4</sup>, including those countries that contribute towards 90 percent of the global production. Most questionnaires were uploaded in the web system following the deadline. However, in some cases they were submitted after the Secretariat approached the aquaculture authorities directly. In few cases Members indicated having some issues in accessing the web portal with their credentials but these were quickly solved by the secretariat.

11. The questionnaire was not distributed to CSOs, IGOs and regional fishery bodies on this occasion. An adapted version will be prepared for this purpose in the next reporting period.

12. The Questionnaire in the web system follows the same format as the previous excel version with some small modifications,<sup>5</sup> thus for each question, it offers the possibility to score from 0 to 5, 0 being the absolute lack of the measure or the mechanism involved in the question or statement, 4 denoting that the measure or mechanism is being applied, and 5 applies when there is full enforcement at the ground level. There was also the possibility to indicate that the question or statement was not applicable or not relevant (n.a.). The web system also provides the guidance for the scoring of each statement or question in a pop-up information message.

13. As in the previous exercise the questionnaire includes the possibility to evaluate FAO support in complying with the specific measures involved. Also web links are provided for the review of the relevant FAO publications or tools.

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<sup>4</sup> The questionnaire was circulated to FAO Members, by email through the Code-Aquaculture -questionnaire information system on 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2015. Three “registration” reminders and four “submission” reminders were sent between 16<sup>th</sup> of March and 5<sup>th</sup> of April. An additional notification was sent on 13<sup>th</sup> of April on the extension of the deadline for submission until 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2015. Questionnaires were accepted for inclusion in the analysis until April 27<sup>th</sup> 2015. Fifteen questionnaires were received from Africa, 10 from Asia, 18 from Europe, 19 from Latin America and the Caribbean, 5 from the Near East, 2 from Northern America and 2 from South West Pacific (Tables 1 and 2). Other three countries submitted their questionnaire after this date and could not be included in the analysis.

<sup>5</sup> The questionnaire comprises four parts that assess the necessary aquaculture governance to ensure implementation of the Code. Part 1 consists of the **essential management instruments or measures (EMM)** including the existence of an aquaculture policy, aquaculture development plan and regulations to support the policy; Part 2 consists of the **supporting mechanisms (SM)** to facilitate the measures listed in Part 1, and Part 3 deals with the **enhancing mechanisms (EM)** to improve the implementation of the measures listed in Parts 1 and 2. Part 4 assesses the support **capacity (SCP)**, this is the capacity of the State to develop knowledge, information, technology and advice in support of the development, enforcement, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the measures included in the other parts.

14. The analysis of the different sections of the questionnaire and the processing of the information followed the methodology used during the first trial<sup>6</sup>.

15. A statistical summary of Members responses, containing 8 tables and some figures referred to in this document, is made available as a Session Background Document (SBD), in English, on the COFI SCA Web site and at COFI SCA to be read in conjunction with this paper.

16. The questionnaire provided a wealth of information; an attempt is made to address the most relevant provisions of the Code and relevant issues, also linking to the main questionnaire and past exercises when appropriate. Being this the second trial of the new questionnaire is possible in some cases to assess temporal consistency of the responses.

### **AQUACULTURE PERFORMANCE AND COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE: SECOND GLOBAL ASSESSMENT WITH THE CCRF QUESTIONNAIRE**

17. Overall results from the 2015 trial are consistent with those from 2013; as in the previous exercise, many countries performed a critical self-assessment that was evident from the coherence between the scoring to different parts and questions.

#### **Existence and implementation of essential management instruments and measures (EMM) that are needed to implement the Code**

18. This section underscores the fact that aquaculture development occurs in an orderly manner if its development objectives are clear and its governance is in place. Policy and its enabling regulations norm the sector's development while a national plan guides its implementation. Rating should be based on whether these are present and the extent of their implementation.

19. At the global level, the average scores for **essential management measures (EMM)**, **supporting measures (SM)**, **enhancing mechanisms (ENM)** and **support capacity (SCP)** were 3.5, 3, 2.6 and 3.1 respectively, indicating that EMM are better implemented than the other three which may reveal some overrating of the former. In general the scores for all questions were skewed towards 4 and 5 in North America, Europe and slightly in Asia and Near East, whilst they were closer to 3 or less in the other regions, possibly reflecting the differences in the state of development in the sector but also reflecting a more objective scoring as can be seen in the coherence of responses<sup>7</sup> and from the comments inserted in the allocated space.

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<sup>6</sup> Two types of descriptive analyses were done for the responses to each question; a percentage distribution of responding countries by score at the global level and by region, and global and regional average scores (Paras 18, 19 and 21 COFI:AQ/VII/2013/3. <http://www.fao.org/cofi/43693-07d8392d5c5a68f3d8e278337fbcf6cb2.pdf>)

<sup>7</sup> e.g. lower scores of SCP, ENM and SM agreeing with lower scores in EMM.

20. Sixteen countries provided very high scores, between 4.5 and 5, for the EMMs which represent an overall indicator of the existence and full implementation at the ground level of the aquaculture development plan through adequate regulations and following the national aquaculture policy, therefore no need for improvements. However in some of these countries the scoring of supporting and enhancing mechanisms and the scoring of the capacity of the state is lower therefore unlikely that the EMM are implemented fully at ground level. For example few countries that scored between 4 and 5 for the EMM scored 3 or less for the monitoring of aquaculture operations meaning insufficient evidence is available to rate the EMM as fully implemented.

21. It is possible that in some of these cases the process may have not been carried out in a thorough manner due to timing limitations and/or perhaps guidance provided was not used properly. Confidentiality of the responses may still be an issue for few members.

22. Regarding the global score for EMM, 34 and 21 percent of the countries scored 4 and 5 respectively, none of countries scored 0 and only 6 percent scored 1 whilst the global average scores for the three components of the EMM, that is **policy**, **plan** and **regulation**, were 3.6, 3.5 and 3.0 respectively, a similar situation to the past report except for a reduction in the average score for regulations.

23. Regarding existence and implementation of an aquaculture **policy**, 62 percent of the responding members scored 4 or 5 indicating a well developed and implemented aquaculture **policy**. As in the previous reporting this represents a higher figure compared to that reported to the general CCRF questionnaire of 2013, where 42 percent of reporting countries indicated having a largely complete and enabling policy.

24. Regarding the existence and implementation of an aquaculture plan, 19 percent of countries scored 2 or less thus indicating the need for improvement and some requested assistance. Low scoring also includes few countries with rapidly growing aquaculture indicating the urgent need to address this gap since proper development plans can facilitate the implementation of the code particularly if they include adequate monitoring and mechanisms for feedback and adjustment.

25. Regarding the implementation of the aquaculture **regulation**,<sup>9</sup> 19 percent of countries, largely in Europe and North America scored 4.5 or more while 21 percent scored 2 or less, in most cases these are countries that are only starting aquaculture development. When analysing compliance with specific regulations some global patterns and regional differences show, and there are some differences with the previous reporting. Regulations regarding the compliance with **food safety**, **farms registration** and **access use rights** got a highest global score of 3.7 each.

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<sup>8</sup> Each of these scores represents an average of the scores provided by members for **policy**, **plan** and **regulations**, while the score for the latter is also an average of the scores for individual regulations (Paras 18, 19 and 21 COFI:AQ/VII/2013/3. <http://www.fao.org/cofi/43693-07d8392d5c5a68f3d8e278337fbcf6cb2.pdf>)

<sup>9</sup> Calculated as the mean of the 17 specific regulations indicated in the questionnaire

26. Globally, regulations regarding **use of alien species** scored less than in the previous reporting period and while 18 and 34 percent of countries scored 4 and 5 respectively, 23 percent of countries scored 2 or less. There were indeed relevant differences among regions, for example the average score was 2.5 for Africa and 3.9 for Asia however with important intra-regional differences. This being an issue that deserves more attention especially considering that aquaculture has yet to grow and expand in Africa.

27. Regarding the implementation of **EIA** regulations the average score was 3.3, also lower than in 2013. Twenty three and 24 percent of the reporting countries scored 4 and 5 respectively, however 25 percent scored 2 or less thus indicating that an important number of countries have to improve on the implementation of EIA especially in Africa, Latin America, a few in Asia and the Near East.

28. **Fish health** regulation global average score was 3.3, also slightly lower than in 2013 and while 28 and 22 percent of the countries scored 4 and 5 respectively, 25 percent scored 2 or less also indicating that a relevant number of countries must improve the implementation of such regulations.

29. As in the 2013 reporting, the lowest scores for specific regulations in almost all regions were those related to **fish stocking, carrying capacity** of recipient water bodies, prevention and mitigation of **escapes** and **aquaculture zoning**. The global average scores were 2.9, 2.9, 2.6 and 2.5 respectively while 27, 31, 30 and 34 percent of the countries scored 2 or less for the mentioned regulations in the same order. Near East, Africa and South West Pacific countries gave the lowest scores to regulations regarding escapes from aquaculture.

30. As in the previous reporting, scores for most regulations were slightly lower in Africa, Latin America and the Near East but the distribution was not uniform. Few countries in Europe and in Asia also scored low reflecting intraregional differences.

31. More information regarding the status of compliance for each of the specific regulation is provided in the background document.

### **Support mechanisms (SM) that facilitate the implementation of essential management measures**

32. Questions in this section are aimed at assessing the extent and also the capacity of the country to support the policy, the development plan, and specifically the current regulations. As in 2013, the global average scores for the SM were in general lower than those for regulations. Also scoring values for 2015 were slightly lower than those in 2013.

33. In a similar pattern to that observed in 2013 **consultation with stakeholders** for the policy and development plan and the participation of **farmer associations** in sector development and management had the largest average scores, 4, 3.6 respectively. For the former, 72 percent of the

countries scored 4 or 5, while 24 percent scored 2 or less which is a significant decline compared to 2013 scores.

34. Government **monitoring and data collection** was also comparatively high with a global average score of 3.5, and 55 percent of the countries scoring 4 or 5. However, scores were spread within and amongst regions, 36 percent of countries in Africa, 26 percent in LAC, 20 percent of those in Near East and 10 percent of countries in Asia scored 2 or less, reflecting their need for significant improvement in the monitoring of aquaculture.

35. The implementation of **good aquaculture practices**, BMPs, GAPs etc., had a global score of 3 however 32 percent of the countries scored 2 or less meaning that such practices are not widely implemented. This includes 54 percent of the countries in Africa, 40 percent in the Near Est, 33 percent in Europe, 26 percent in Latin America indicating that further efforts are needed at global level.

36. Consideration of ecosystem **functions** in aquaculture planning had a global score of 2.9, and 30 percent of the countries scored 2 or less indicating that ecosystem functions are not yet being properly addressed in many. There were strong intraregional differences with some countries scoring high and others scoring very low in each region.

37. On the lower range of global scoring we find **investment in aquaculture extension, infrastructure** and **research** in support of the Code with average values of 2.8, 2.7 and 2.6 respectively. These values are slightly lower than in 2013. Thirty nine percent and 41 percent of the countries at global level scored 2 or less for investment in research and extension respectively, and the situation was more marked in Africa, Latin America and the Near East but also included countries in Europe and South East Pacific. Clearly these supporting mechanisms need to be strengthened to advance aquaculture implementation of the code at global level.

38. The application of **polluter payments** in aquaculture had a global score of 2.5 as in 2013, and 37 percent of the countries scored 2 or less meaning that this supporting mechanism is at large not in place. However there were relevant inter regional and intraregional differences. Such result could be somehow in contradiction with the higher score for the implementation of EIA regulations (para 27).

39. Aquaculture **integration into coastal and watershed** planning and management had also low average global scores of 2.6 and 2.5 respectively and 38 percent of the countries scored 2 or less for the integration into coastal planning. In this case Asia had the highest scoring for the integration to coastal zone management and the second highest for integration into watershed management. This may be due to the long tradition of aquaculture in the region, similar reasoning explains the lowest scores in Africa or Latin America and in Europe at large where aquaculture is a newer development.

40. As in the 2013 reporting, the lowest average scores under SM in all regions were those for the existence of **incentives to restoration** of damaged habitats, with a global average of 1.5, indicating such incentives are at large not in place. Twenty five percent of countries considered this question as

non-applicable, a close figure to that reported in 2013. Nevertheless such incentives are being considered under certification programmes and could also be considered under payment for ecosystem services and could represent an important incentive for aquaculture development.

### **Enhancing mechanisms (ENM) that would improve the effectiveness of essential management measures and supporting mechanisms**

41. These “enhancing mechanisms” are measures that are not essential but are “good to have”. Having them makes the implementation of the aquaculture policy and plan less costly and more effective. These mechanisms are intended to underscore the social role of aquaculture and also the relevance of the support to farmers, especially small farmers, to facilitate the implementation of regulations and the fulfilment of the aquaculture plan to comply with the Code at large.

42. Similarly to what was observed in the 2013 reporting, this part of the questionnaire showed, overall, the lowest scores. There was also a reduction of the scores respect to 2013.

43. The question regarding existence of mechanisms to ensure that **livelihoods of local communities are benefitted** and not adversely impacted when developing aquaculture had a global score of 2.9, and although 39 percent of the countries scored between 3 and 4, reflecting overall an acceptable situation, there was relevant variability within regions. Thus 47 percent of countries in Africa, 37 in Latin America and the Caribbean and 30 percent of those in Asia scored 2 or less.

44. As in 2013, the availability of **soft credits for farmers** had an average global low score of 2.5, and 40 percent of the countries in Africa, 40 percent in Latin America and 30 percent in Asia scored 2 or less, thus indicating a poor availability and implementation of credit. This is therefore still a subject of high priority for improvement as an important mechanism in the development of aquaculture plans.

45. The implementation of voluntary **certification systems** that promote the practice of responsible aquaculture had a global score of 2.2 and 41 percent of the countries scored 2 or less and 16 percent of the countries scored 0 and 13 percent indicated this as non-applicable. The assessment indicates that the implementation of certifications systems for aquaculture at the global level is poor in all regions except in North American countries.

46. The existence and availability of government **assistance schemes in case of disasters** and commercial **insurance for farmers** scored 2.1 and 1.5 respectively reflecting the high vulnerability of the sector to disasters and loss in all regions. Sixty four percent of countries in Africa, 60 percent in Asia and 74 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean scored 2 or less for availability of insurance and 32 percent at global level indicate total absence of such instrument. Assistance schemes in case of disasters is quite similar since 45 percent of the countries scored 2 or less particularly in Latin America and Africa but the scores were also low in countries in other regions.

### **The level and degree of capacity of the state to address the essential management measures, supporting and enhancing mechanisms**

47. In this section the questionnaire attempts to assess the capacity of the State, including government, academy, and private sector, to develop knowledge, information, technology and advice and promote their adoption to support the development, enforcement, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the measures reported. Capacity to deal with disasters and climate change are also included.

48. The global average score of the **capacity of the state** was 3 and while twenty five percent of the countries scored 2 or less, 35 percent scored 4 or 5 which represents an overall acceptable situation but with potential for improvement. Capacity to deal with **food safety, environment aspects, fish health and research** scored 3.8, 3.4, 3.2 and 3.1 respectively. The capacity to address **extension and conflict management** scored 2.9 and 2.8 respectively while capacity on **disaster risk management** and to address **climate change** were the lowest scores, 2.6 and 2.3 respectively thus confirming the vulnerability of the sector to disasters that was diagnosed in the ENM (para 48 above).

### **EVALUATION OF FAO ASSISTANCE**

49. Most Members (68) answered this section and, as was the case for the 2013 exercise, the scoring for FAO assistance was lower than the scoring for the provisions of the questionnaire. However, a relevant proportion of the answers indicated not applicable (n.a.) and in some cases (Europe, North America) countries indicated that the development and implementation of their instruments is following the Code and that they have not needed assistance from FAO or used FAO publications and therefore they consider these questions as n.a.

50. This section of the questionnaire has been much better used than in the previous reporting to indicate the countries gaps and needs for assistance to implement certain regulations and mechanisms.

51. The average global scores for EMM, SP and ENM were 2.9, 2, and 1.6. At global level members rated the assistance to aquaculture policy to planning and regulation with 2.5, 2.5, and 2.3 respectively. Fifty five percent of the members scored 2 or less for the assistance to regulations, 39 and 34 percent for assistance to planning and policy respectively.

52. The highest average scores regarding FAO assistance to the implementation of individual regulations or measures corresponded to **food safety, consultation with stakeholders and fish health** with average values of 2.6, 2.4 and 2.4 respectively. Support to monitoring of aquaculture activities and to BMPs scored 2.1 and 2 respectively.

53. The highest average score for FAO assistance (all specific regulations, measures or mechanisms included) was in Asia, 2.3; followed by Africa and South West Pacific 2; Near East 1.7,

LAC 1.5, Europe 1.5 and North America 0.4. However as in the previous reporting the average scoring does not provide adequate information about FAO assistance since there is often a bimodal pattern, that is, a large proportion of countries whose scores are under 0 or 1 and under 3 or 4.

54. There was some correlation between members' scoring to regulations and measures and their scores to FAO assistance to those same regulations and measures but the values for the latter were always lower. In some cases the comments provided by members suggest that the available FAO publications and tools are not well known and or not available in the needed language. It is not clear either if the respondents are actually using the links provided by the questionnaire itself to publications and tools.

55. The information provided by individual countries is very helpful for FAO to better target assistance and streamline this with the efforts under the country programming frameworks and regional initiatives.

## **SUMMARY OF THE AQUACULTURE AND CULTURE BASED FISHERIES COMPLIANCE WITH THE RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE CODE**

56. In a large number of countries the 2015 response reflects a more coherent assessment of the compliance with the Code than in the 2013 reporting and the slight decrease in the scoring for most questions may be portraying a more realistic assessment of the situation (and not a declining trend). Yet there is room for adjustment and review for example of the high scoring for **EMM** and for some specific **regulations** since these may be overrating the current situation in view of the lower scoring for the **enhancing mechanisms** and the **support capacity of the States**. It is possibly easier to judge and score more objectively the existence and implementation individual measures and mechanisms than scoring the overall implementation of the national aquaculture policy or development plan. In this respect the current self-assessment reporting system can be used by Members as a good instrument to review the coherence between the national policy and the development plan with the status of the regulations and mechanisms to facilitate implementation at national level.

57. In general Members are making efforts to implement the Code in the aquaculture sector. At large most countries where aquaculture is growing already have some aquaculture policy or the sector is growing under a national policy that is coherent with the code. However, in general the implementation of the **policy** and of **aquaculture development plans** could be better assessed. The lower scoring for aquaculture plans seems more realistic in Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa and this could be a priority area to improve the sector compliance with the Code but it could be the case as well in numerous countries in other regions, especially where aquaculture is starting.

58. The existence and compliance with specific regulations reveals some global gaps that need to be addressed to ensure sustainability of the sector and the minimizing of impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services, these include **aquaculture zoning**,<sup>10</sup> prevention and mitigation of **aquaculture escapes**, **stocking** and regulations regarding **carrying capacity** of recipient water bodies.

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<sup>10</sup> The need to address aquaculture zoning and stocking has been underscored by members, paras 41 to 44 in the Report of the VII COFI SCA <http://www.fao.org/cofi/34736-07e58c52b91e7460ec7ea5bfa63e6fa21.pdf>

Aquaculture zoning and considerations to carrying capacity of recipient water bodies are essential to prevent eutrophication and biodiversity loss. Zoning is also important to minimize habitat destruction and to improve integration of aquaculture with other users of coastal zones and basins, thus improving resource use efficiency and minimizing impacts (including social) while regulating escapes and stocking could prevent impacts on genetic resources and ecosystem services.

59. The social role of aquaculture and the support to farmers, especially small farmers, to facilitate the implementation of regulations and the fulfilment of the aquaculture plan to comply with the Code at large, continues to show low support and this could be a major obstacle for the implementation of the code at the global level. Therefore, it is a clear priority area for the aquaculture sector to be more sustainable. Increased efforts are needed to improve supporting mechanisms such as integrating aquaculture in watershed and coastal zone management plans and the enhancing mechanisms; ensuring positive impacts of aquaculture in local communities and livelihoods, improving credit to small farmers, improving government assistance in case of disasters.

60. The integration of aquaculture in coastal zone and watershed planning and the improvement of aquaculture contribution to local communities are some of the key elements under the ecosystem approach to aquaculture (EAA) as a strategy to assist the sustainable development of the sector at local level<sup>11</sup>. This can be further supported through the Blue Growth Initiative that gives more relevance and facilitates links with other users of shared resources.

61. Although there are some clear regional patterns there is also important intraregional variability, and assistance and technical support should focus on most needed countries. FAO can undoubtedly better target assistance to regions and countries with this instrument and Member Countries can benefit by creating their own data base and self-assessment tools based on this questionnaire.

62. The reporting of aquaculture compliance with the Code not only provides a self-assessment of aquaculture performance but also provides relevant information to feed into the regional priorities and into the strategic framework of the Subcommittee as shown in the paras 55 and 58 above.

## **FUTURE STEPS TO FURTHER INCREASE AND IMPROVE REPORTING AND USE OF THE REPORTS FOR IMPROVED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE**

63. Although the result of the two period questionnaire trial is very positive, and there was an improved response rate and improved quality of responses, there is still the need to further improve reporting, not only to get responses from few important aquaculture producing countries that are missing now, but also from countries where the sector is new.

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<sup>11</sup> FAO.2010. Aquaculture development. 4. Ecosystem approach to aquaculture. *FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries*. No. 5, Suppl. 4. Rome, FAO. 2010. 53p.  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1750e/i1750e.pdf>

64. The information provided by this questionnaire improves the global understanding of aquaculture compliance with the Code, and can improve the understanding of regional and national needs for more targeted assistance. This is also a unique global self-assessment of an agriculture sector performance (environmental social and governance aspects) and should be used broadly to demonstrate the willingness of the sector to become more sustainable by promoting better practices and improving governance at all levels. Results of these assessments can also be used to track improvements towards SDGs.

65. Given the need for further improvements in the quality of responses and for members to better understand the value of the self-assessment and reporting the secretariat recommends to continue using this web-based questionnaire with minor modifications for at least 3 additional reporting periods to complete 5 reports with the new instrument.<sup>12</sup> This will allow a temporal and regional analysis and will provide more solid information to review and modify the questionnaire as needed after such period.

66. From the 2013 and 2015 reporting trials is clear that a more accurate scoring can also be achieved by: i) timely identification of a focal points and responsible persons to lead the response process, ii) improving guidance to clarify questions and scoring and the secretariat will review and improve this as appropriated, and by iii) extensive training on the use of the instrument, the relevance of implementing the code and reporting. The later will depend on the availability of resources and the secretariat encourage Members to also secure resources for this end.

67. The secretariat will continue to explore linking this questionnaire to the general CCRF questionnaire to avoid overlaps and redundancies and to increase complementarity.

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<sup>12</sup> Members had recommended to review the questionnaire after two trial periods 2013 and 2015 (Para 25 COFI SCA VI report <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i2765t.pdf>)