

Decent work in fisheries: What are the implications for seafood value chains?

Side event to the Fifteenth Session of the FAO COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade
24th February 2016, 5-6pm
Hotel Royal Atlas, Agadir, Morocco.

Global fish trade is a significant source of foreign currency and employment, especially for developing countries. In 2012, more than 200 countries reported having exported fish and fishery product for annual net revenues of USD 25 billion ([FAO, 2012](#)).

At the same time human rights abuses and poor working conditions are increasingly recognized as a major issue in seafood value chains worldwide. Forced labour, human trafficking, child labour, poor occupational health and safety, lack of social dialogue, to name a few, are negatively affecting the livelihoods of people depending on seafood value chains and are increasingly at the centre of public opinions and campaigns.

Although it is difficult to estimate the impact of public attention on poor working conditions in seafood value chains, it could likely affect seafood trade negatively. In fact, a growing number of consumers, in particular in key markets in developed countries, are putting sustainability and human rights concerns at the center of their purchase choices. This creates also a window of opportunity for retailers, enterprises and producer countries to improve working conditions in the seafood sector and share experiences in this respect.

Improving working and living conditions of fishers, fish farmers and fish processing workers in the seafood sector is part of FAO's effort to assist its members in the eradication of rural poverty. This includes the mainstreaming of the ILO Decent Work Agenda in the seafood sector, for example through the promotion of the 2007 ILO Work in Fishing Convention. Furthermore, in 2014, the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) endorsed the [Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication](#) and FAO is now supporting members in the implementation of these guidelines. This negotiated international instrument adopts a human rights based approach and includes a dedicated chapter on social development, employment and decent work.

In addition, FAO is promoting multi-stakeholder dialogues to raise awareness and exchange experiences in relation to decent work in fisheries and aquaculture among governments, the private sector, workers' unions to increase social sustainability of seafood value chains. One example for this is the '[Vigo Dialogue](#)', started during the FAO/CONXEMAR congress in 2014 with the purpose of providing a platform to identify decent work deficits in seafood value chains and discuss solutions and collaboration to addressing them.

Participants are invited to share their views and experiences as well as to propose approaches and solutions to decent work deficits in the seafood value chains.

Tentative agenda

5 min	Introductory remarks: Why decent work and employment matters Audun Lem, Deputy-Director, Fisheries and aquaculture department, FAO What role can FAO play in promoting decent work in seafood value chain
20 min	Examples of initiatives promoting social sustainability in seafood value chains Government and civil society representatives
10 min	Civil society perspective Kirill Buketov, Fish and seafood coordinator, IUF
25 min	Discussion, conclusions and recommendations Moderated by FAO