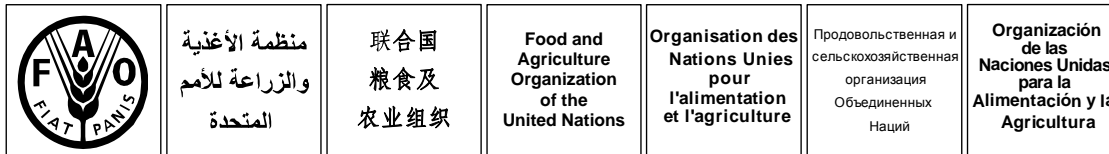


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REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES

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Main outcomes of the Near-East and North Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries

Executive Summary

This paper summarizes the main conclusions and outcome of the Near East and North Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries: Bringing Together Responsible Fishing and Social Development held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, from 26 to 28 March 2012. The meeting was attended by representatives of governments and Civil Society Organizations from 17 countries. The importance of small-scale fisheries in the region as a contributor to poverty alleviation, food and nutrition security, and socio-economic development was confirmed and it was agreed that the international guidelines for small-scale fisheries will be an important tool for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries governance and development. It was recognized that small-scale fisheries in the region are characterized by great diversity between subregions and countries, for example with regard to the type and numbers of actors involved, production and market structures and resources and means of the sector. Many countries are currently going through a period of transition which may have implications for the small-scale fisheries sector. There is a need to promote small-scale fisheries, which often represent traditional values and a way of life, and to secure their access to the resources necessary for sustainable livelihoods. Achieving sustainable governance and development of the sector requires concerted efforts, including organizational development and strengthening of capacities at all levels.

The WGFM is invited to:

- note the conclusions and outcome of the Consultative Meeting and their relevance in the development process of the International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries and provide guidance on further regional or national consultations and the conduct and funding of the formal negotiation process;
- advise on the modalities of engagement by CSOs in future regional technical consultation and meetings; recommend how to facilitate the future implementation of the Guidelines including through the development of specific implementation strategies within the RECOFI framework and including the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources; and
- propose other activities to be undertaken by RECOFI and its development partners in relation to securing sustainable small-scale fisheries.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Near East and North Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on *Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries: Bringing Together Responsible Fishing and Social Development* was held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, from 26 to 28 March 2012. It was jointly organized by FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Wealth, Sultanate of Oman. The workshop was attended by over 30 participants representing governments and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from 17 countries. Staff from FAO headquarters, regional and subregional offices, and projects participated as resource persons.
2. The workshop was convened to allow for the sharing of policies and practices in support of small-scale fisheries in the region and thereby contribute to the small-scale fisheries (SSF) Guidelines, currently under development by the FAO Secretariat in close collaboration with its partners.

WORKSHOP CONCLUSIONS

3. The following summary of discussions and key findings was adopted by workshop participants on 28 March 2012.
4. The workshop confirmed the importance of small-scale fisheries in the region as a contributor to poverty alleviation, food and nutrition security, and socio-economic development, and that the SSF Guidelines will be an important tool for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries governance and development.
5. In this context, the workshop recognized that:
 - Small-scale fisheries in the region are characterized by great diversity between subregions and countries with regard to, for example, the type and numbers of actors involved, the production and market structures and the resources and means of the sector.
 - Many countries are currently going through a period of transition which may have implications also for the small-scale fisheries sector.
 - There is a need to promote small-scale fisheries and secure their access to the resources necessary for sustainable livelihoods. Small-scale fisheries often represent traditional values and a way of life. Achieving sustainable governance and development of the sector will require concerted efforts, including organizational development and strengthening of capacities at all levels.
6. Four working groups discussed the topics of (i) governance of access to resources, resource management and stewardship, (ii) social and economic development and achieving equity and equality, (iii) disaster risk management and climate change and (iv) policy coherence, institutional coordination and collaboration. The two last working groups also integrated aspects of research, information and capacity needs.
7. The following main conclusions were arrived at by the groups:
 - (i) Governance of access to resources, resource management and stewardship
 - There is concern in the region with regard to overfishing and ecosystem health and there is a need for improved fisheries management. This should be based on participatory approaches and informed by the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) and latest available science.
 - Small-scale fisheries communities need secure access to both fishery resources and land for their livelihoods.
 - Data are generally lacking and efforts are required for improving data collection and analysis. Fishing communities need to collaborate with governments to ensure reliable and regular data for management.

- There is a need for increased attention, including monitoring mechanisms, to prevent and eliminate IUU fishing and to address overcapacity in the large-scale fisheries sector that contributes to intensive fishing and thus allow for sustainable small-scale fisheries.
 - Education and training of fishers are needed on various aspects of fisheries including safety measures.
- (ii) Social and economic development and achieving equity and equality
- The small-scale fisheries postharvest sector is an important part of the fishery system. Constraints faced by the sector include lack of adequate infrastructure, competition and market access.
 - Small-scale fisheries communities often have inadequate access to health, education and social services. Social security needs to be adapted to the particular circumstances of small-scale fisheries taking into account, for example, part time activities.
 - There is a need to take into consideration people under conflict and occupation among vulnerable groups.
 - In some cases, support to developing alternative livelihood activities could be needed but when small-scale fishers and fish workers want to continue in their profession this wish should be respected and adequately recognized in fisheries management regimes.
 - Women are mainly involved in the postharvest sector. Attention should be given to gender, considering the roles of both men and women.
 - The difference between child work and child labour needs to be better understood and child labour adequately addressed to avoid detrimental impact on the physical and mental development of children who are the future of society.
- (iii) Disaster risk management from natural and man-made events and climate change
- Small-scale fisheries need to be included in contingency planning and crisis response as well as in the League of Arab States disaster risk reduction strategy and regional and national climate change policies and plans. Timely access to funding is also essential.
 - Efforts should be made to increase the awareness among small-scale fisheries communities about climate change and their abilities to adapt by using adequate means and tools.
 - Improved data and information are needed on disaster risks and climate change with respect to fishing, communities, and ecological and environmental aspects. Data should be analyzed, disseminated and used (for decision-making). Local and traditional knowledge should be utilized and the communication between governments and small-scale fisheries communities need to be improved.
 - There is a need to address growing threats from man-made disasters, including piracy in the region that causes a constant threat to the livelihoods of fishing communities forcing fishers to stay in inshore waters and thereby further increasing fishing pressure on already heavily exploited fishery resources.
- (iv) Policy coherence, institutional coordination and collaboration
- The small-scale fisheries sector is impacted by developments in other sectors and under threat of several adverse influences including in particular pollution. Better cross-sectoral coordination and policy coherence are needed – at national and regional levels – avoiding contradictory objectives.
 - The involvement of all stakeholders, including in particular small-scale fisheries communities, in policy and decision-making processes is essential. Improved coordination among CSOs is also required.
 - The small-scale fisheries sector needs to be included in national development policies and plans. Such plans should also take the sustainability of resources into consideration.
- The workshop also suggested the following:
- The organization of a workshop, including both governments and the CSO community, on special needs of vulnerable groups in the small-scale fisheries sector focusing on issues such

- as gender, youth employment and child labour (a CSO of Tunisia offered to host such an event).
- The organization of additional consultation meetings at subregional and national level to increase the awareness of the need for sustainable governance and development of the small-scale fisheries sector and to provide inputs into the SSF Guidelines development process. Regional and national stakeholders are encouraged to take the initiative for organising such events, including identifying the necessary funding.
 - Discussions on the small-scale fisheries sector and the SSF Guidelines should be included in the agenda of relevant regional organizations. Other channels to increase the awareness of the importance of small-scale fisheries, such as public media and networking, should also be used.
 - Both governments and the CSO community of the region should ensure that they take an active role in discussions in international fora on the issue of small-scale fisheries. Increased experience sharing, within the region and internationally, is needed.
8. It was felt that the workshop had constituted an important opportunity to discuss the issue of small-scale fisheries among both governments and CSOs. This was much appreciated and it was hoped that this participatory and collaborative process will be continued.