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Promising developments in the NENA region in coherence with the blue growth vision

par : Piero Mannini, Lori Curtis, Alessandro Lovatelli, Karima Idjer Née Ghoul, Paula Anton, Khalil Ibrahim, Hussain Al-Muscatti, Amina Najd, Ahmed Samey M. Sadek, Cherif Tovellio



A number of developments undertaken in the region not only encompass the spirit of blue growth, but also have created platforms from which further blue growth opportunities can be developed. Some of the more notable developments include:

Unlocking blue growth potential with the Blue Growth Initiative in the Near East and North Africa

In September 2015, the UN's 193 Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framework to guide development actions of governments, international agencies, civil society and other institutions over the next 15 years with the ambitious aim of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Elements that form the very core of FAO's work – food security and nutrition, and sustainable management and use of natural resources – feature across the SDGs. An integrated approach across the multiple goals that addresses

all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) is crucial to achieving the 2030 Agenda. Several targets for SDG 14 ("Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development") are explicitly fisheries-related, while the others may have implications for fisheries.

In support of the new global agenda and responding to the growing international movement for action to support blue growth and food security in tandem, FAO launched the Blue Growth Initiative (BGI) in 2013. Through the BGI, FAO will assist countries in developing and implementing blue economy and growth agendas. The concept of a "blue economy" came out of the 2012 Rio+20

Conference. It emphasizes conservation and sustainable management, based on the premise that healthy aquatic ecosystems are more productive and a must for sustainable economies.

The thirty-third session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East and North Africa (9-13 May 2016) countries discussed the relevance of the BGI for the sustainable development of the region and endorsed the application of the FAO Blue Growth Initiative in the region and its components, including ecosystem services, economic growth, environmental benefits and social development both at the individual country as well as regional level.

The countries of the Near East and North Africa region occupy a geographical area of varied marine and freshwater ecosystems, spreading from the eastern Atlantic Ocean across to the North West Indian Ocean. Inland fisheries are mainly found in the countries which are part of the catchment systems of the Nile, Euphrates, and Tigris rivers, although smaller production is also associated with some lesser rivers and artificial water bodies. Aquaculture production in the region has increased substantially in the last two

decades, but remains mainly limited to only a few countries and a few species, mainly finfish.

The region's per capita apparent fish consumption averaged 10.3 kg in 2011¹ – still 40 percent less than the 18.9 kg global average, although it has increased by approximately 50 percent in the last 40 years. It is highest in Oman (27 kg), United Arab Emirates (24 kg) and Egypt (22 kg), and lowest in Iraq (3 kg), Yemen (3 kg) and Sudan (2 kg). The overall trade balance in fish products for the region was positive by a small amount in 2013 driven mainly by Morocco which comprised more than 50 percent of the region's fish product exports and re-exports², followed by Mauritania (10.9 percent), Iran (Islamic Republic of) (7.5 percent) and Yemen (6.5 percent). Additionally, in Libya, Morocco and Yemen, fish exports and re-exports comprised an important share of total agricultural trade,³ at 37.5 percent, 42.4 percent and 46.7 percent, respectively.

FAO's Blue Growth Initiative

The Blue Growth Initiative (BGI) was launched by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United

¹ - Statistics and Information Team, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department (FIAS)

² - In terms of value

³ - Excluding forestry products



Nations (FAO) to ensure that the people involved directly and indirectly in fisheries, aquaculture and fishing-related activities can enjoy the long-term and sustainable benefits derived from the oceans, seas, coastal areas and inland water bodies.

Guided by the fundamental principles of FAO and the sound principles of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its related guidelines, the BGI is guided by the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, environmental and social. In particular, it is a coherent framework for the sustainable and socio-economic management of aquatic living resources with an emphasis on efficient resource use in capture fisheries and

aquaculture, ecosystem services, trade livelihoods and food systems.

Due to the transboundary nature of many fishery and aquaculture resources in the region, grouping ecosystems with significant fisheries and aquaculture similarities and affinities is appropriate for this work. There are three distinctive aquatic ecosystems in the region:

- *oceanic upwelling systems* (Atlantic and North West Indian Ocean)
- *semi-enclosed and subtropical seas* (Mediterranean, Red Sea, Persian/Arabian Gulf)
- *inland water systems* (Nile, Euphrates-Tigris, Senegal rivers)

Promising developments in the NENA region in coherence with the blue growth vision

A number of developments undertaken in the region not only encompass the spirit of blue growth, but also have created platforms from which further blue growth opportunities can be developed.

Some of the more notable developments include:

formulating fisheries strategies and legislation (i.e. Mauritania, Morocco [Halieuts], Oman), including the establishment of statistical and socio-economic institutions (i.e. Algeria)	progress towards establishing a new regional fisheries management and aquaculture organization, including a draft Convention Agreement in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden	undertaking efforts to appraise fisheries resources in Oman and Iran (Islamic Republic of) and at the regional level of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) through cooperative surveys at sea
advancements in Saudi Arabia in the development of marine cage culture and hatcheries, and spatial mapping of the Red Sea coastline to identify and allocate potential aquaculture development sites	enacting important aquaculture rules and regulations and mechanisms in Oman to support private investment in the sector	promoting opportunities for fisheries ecotourism (recreational fisheries) in the Gulf
focusing on and integrating small-scale fisheries into national strategies by Oman and Algeria	taking a lead role in inland aquaculture production and technology transfer by Egypt	

Unlocking blue growth potential with the Blue Growth Initiative in the Near East and North Africa (NENA BGI)

The development objective of the NENA BGI is to value and restore the potential of the oceans, seas and inland waters through renewed sustainable and responsible approaches that reconcile economic growth and food security needs with the conservation of the region's aquatic resources. Regional consultations organized by FAO resulted in this list of strategic development priorities:

Continue improving fishery management practices

- and build the capacity of stakeholders to implement adopted measures.

Formulate and implement policies and practices to address overfishing

- including participatory and co-management approaches to enable the rebuilding and enhancing of fish stocks, including introducing management and conservation measures where needed and appropriate, and promoting the benefits of regional cooperation through RFMOs.

Address the needs of small-scale fisheries

- to safeguard their key role as a source of livelihoods across the region, including social protection, livelihood strengthening, safety-at-sea and inclusion in decision making.

Diversify fisheries

- through developing new fisheries (e.g. bivalve mollusc fisheries in the Mediterranean)

Optimize the post-harvest sector

- with particular emphasis on the reduction of waste and losses, and on identifying opportunities in the value chain for, e.g. increasing efficiency, addressing preservation challenges, introducing new fish products.

Identify areas to increase resilience of fisher livelihoods

- including livelihood diversification and increasing social protection.

Identify solutions to address environmental and technical constraints for the development and advancement ? of the aquaculture sector

- (marine and inland)

Progress with species diversification studies

- aimed at identifying suitable endemic aquaculture candidates.

Expand commercial mariculture

- to increase national fish production and to improve access to international markets through ? further fish exports

Support private investment in sustainable practices

- by introducing appropriate fish farming technologies, capacity building and enactment ? of rules and regulations

Supply high quality feed and seed material

Formulate risk management and bio-security strategies

- related to aquaculture development

The expected outcome include a rationalized and optimized fish supply chains because of better and more sustainable fisheries and aquaculture resources management through: enhanced fishery management, aquaculture development, improved post-harvest practices, support to efficient social and economic structures and frameworks, better trade opportunities and market access, and value addition throughout the supply chain. In particular and with a view to achieving:

- Improved management of existing species to maintain production, formulated management plans for diversified species exploitation in capture fisheries, and sustainably increased production from aquaculture. Ensuring optimal use of natural resources, adding value to existing and new products, and a focus on appropriate technologies and livelihoods sustainability are central to achieving these outcomes.
- Reduction of pressure on environmental resources, reduction of the environmental impacts of fisheries and aquaculture activities, improved uses of water, improved resilience to reduce the effects of climate change, and increased decision making and ownership with regards to natural resources by resources users and resource stewards.
- Enhanced, strengthened and improved resilience of existing livelihoods, and additional livelihood options identified in order to generate youth employment opportunities, reduced rural exodus, enhance social security systems, and improved diets of fishing communities and the general public.