



### **FAO working with partners for improved fish safety, quality and market access**

30 September 2013 – International seafood trade, worth over US\$128 billion, is an ever-growing industry with major markets, like the European Union, USA and Japan, accounting for over 65% of imports. As global demand for fish products continues to increase to meet population growth and dietary changes, so do market opportunities – especially for exporting countries.

Fisheries and aquaculture contributes to food and nutrition security, alleviates poverty and generates wealth. World fish food supply has outpaced global population growth and annual fish consumption keeps reaching new highs. Fish and fishery products continue to be among the most-traded food commodities worldwide, providing developing countries with massive opportunities for economic growth.

Yet, seafood exporting countries must meet very stringent requirements. Compliance with such requirements - both regulatory (covering mainly food safety, quality and trade practices) and non-regulatory (covering aspects like sustainability, environment, and social aspects) - can often lead to increased costs and reduced margins, compromising access to markets and potential prosperity. In this context, it is vital to foster dialogue, discussion and interaction among all the main trade players: producers, certifiers, importers and those involved in standard setting and implementation.



The 10th [World Seafood Congress](#), on this week, is the global forum to promote such an exchange. Co-organized by FAO and UNIDO (the Industrial Development Organization of the United Nations), with the International Association of Fish Inspectors (IAFI) and Marine Institute of Canada, it aims to highlight innovation in seafood and provide opportunities for maximum participation by all economies involved in seafood trade – including developing economies. This year’s event, titled *“Creative Solutions for Global Challenges”*, will feature sessions on food safety and inspections modernization, seafood sustainability, seafood innovation, profitable seafood markets and global export and trade.

“In the past 30 years the world of seafood has changed dramatically and this change has accelerated, particularly over the past 10 years. All of this brings with it new issues to be resolved and a greater awareness of problems that could become public health issues if left unabated,” states Chris Leftwich, President IAFI. “The World Seafood Congress allows us to bring people up to speed on the changes that are taking place and provides an excellent opportunity for inspectors and quality controllers from the developing countries to converse and interact with inspectors from the developed countries. This helps to build up the knowledge base of all those involved in seafood inspection or quality control.”



Building on new and existing partnerships between IAFI members and all seafood professionals and specialists to benefit global seafood trade, FAO shares its expertise and global standard-setting while learning about emerging innovation, local and regional best practices and connecting with participants across a broad range of sectors.

“Currently there are multiple certification schemes covering similar aspects, making compliance for exporters – especially developing countries – difficult, costly and even confusing,” says Lahsen Ababouch, Director in the [FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department](#) and keynote speaker at this year’s Congress. “Here, FAO has a key role in facilitating a more harmonized approach by using benchmarks and establishing standards such as the Codex standards, the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and technical guidelines on ecolabelling and aquaculture certification,” adds Ababouch.

Representatives from regulatory bodies in major importing and exporting countries, from non-regulatory certification bodies, seafood processing industry, academic institutions and international organizations will participate in high-level expert panels, debates and workshops. This fosters the exchange of ideas to identify solutions leading to sustainable economic development for developing economies.

“UNIDO values this partnership with FAO and IAFI which allows maximizing the development impact of our programmes in fisheries development and seafood trade,” says Philippe Scholtès, Director of the UNIDO Agri-business Development Branch and Officer-in-Charge of UNIDO’s Programme Development and Technical Cooperation Division. “The Congress brings together global leading actors in fisheries and inspection, providing an excellent platform to exchange on good practices on food safety compliance and, more generally, on innovative approaches in seafood trade, sustainability and ultimately the improvement of livelihoods of many people, in particular in developing countries. This is also what we at UNIDO stand for,” continues Scholtès.

Indeed FAO has been facilitating this process since 1969 when it organized the 1st International Conference on Fish Inspection and Quality Control. Heather Manuel, director, CASD and program chair, WSC, adds, “This will mark the third time the World Seafood Congress has been held in Canada and first time for Newfoundland and Labrador. This conference is opening international networks that are invaluable to the institute as well as Canada’s seafood and aquaculture industries.”

