

COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES
Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management
First Session

Written Correspondence Procedure: 22 November – 22 December 2023
Virtual Plenary Sessions: 15 – 18 January 2024

INFOFISH STATEMENT

Introductory Remarks

Firstly I would like to join in congratulating the Chair on your appointment and we would like to wish you all the very best over the course of your tenure. I would also like to acknowledge FAO COFI and this Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management and thank you for our participation here at the convening of this First Session as an observer. INFOFISH would like to also acknowledge, thank and congratulate FAO for the extensive work carried out in the areas of sustainable aquaculture, the promotion of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture and the wide-ranging normative work at the global level including the Blue Transformation and that as a regional organization, INFOFISH very much supports these activities.

INFOFISH is an intergovernmental organization that was initially set up by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 1981 and is hosted by the Government of Malaysia providing marketing and technical advisory support to the fishery industry in the Asia Pacific region and beyond. Since it was established, the organization's expertise and grasp of global fisheries market situations have been instrumental in achieving this mission and fulfilling its mandate while maintaining a close rapport with the global fishery industry over these 40 years.

Over the past 40 years we have partnered and collaborated with FAO and other international agencies for activities such as the FishVet Dialogue, the Tilapia Health Dialogue, workshops on Biosecurity, the GSA, the series of events celebrating the IYAFA 2022 both in Asia and in the Pacific, as well as the opportunity to share on the Women in Aquaculture in Asia at the COFI SCA 2022 in Mexico.

As concerning the FAO COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management and its first session, I would like to say thank you for the opportunity to convey this statement and to share reflections on the following agenda items as follows;

Agenda Item 2: Current fisheries management practices with special consideration for Small Scale Fisheries

In speaking to our INFOFISH member countries in what is a very diverse Asia Pacific region, it is appreciated and acknowledged that Small Scale Fisheries (SSF) is a very important part of local livelihoods and industry for member countries, as it is also recognised so globally. SSF is where small fisher folk or coastal and inland communities, continue to be able to harness and elevate benefit from local fish and fishery resources and their surrounding environment. As well this is

a vitally important subsistence, semi-subsistence and industry in terms of food security, poverty alleviation, livelihoods, derived socio-economic benefit and sustainable development for households, communities and the country at large. SSF has the significant potential to improve and transform communities for the better if harnessed responsibly and sustainably, and also where effective market value chain linkages can be drawn, encouraged and maintained.

This is an industry/segment which is very much bottom-up in terms of sourcing supply occurring largely at the small fisherfolk or community level and where INFOFISH is very supportive of FAO COFI's agenda and the call by many member countries to progress the adoption of the voluntary guidelines on Small Scale Fisheries, the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and an improvement in fisheries management systems overall, with the view to encourage sustainable development as consistent with SDG 14. We also join in encouraging and supporting FAO COFI interventions in continuing to foster greater participation in both the informing and adoption of these guidelines, codes and systems, this includes national strategies, as well as the cascading of this to more local levels of governance and to the community level. This in acknowledging and appreciating the diverse contexts and environs under which small-scale fisheries or small-scale fisher folk effectively live and operate.

The call for customised education, training and experiential learning on SSF guidelines are also important and an integrated approach alongside technical en-skilling or up skilling could be beneficial in the advocacy and embracing of these guidelines. In this regard we would acknowledge that greater partnership and participation at all levels is very necessary. This is a part of where INFOFISH has strived to contribute interventions in supporting training, as well as in using our programs, publications and platforms to ensure that all voices are heard and that we continue to support advocacy for sustainable small fisheries for all stakeholders across the market value chain. This includes how we can also work in support of and in collaboration and partnership with member countries, industry, institutions and regional organisations in disseminating information, creating awareness and promoting and fostering dialogue on SSF.

Agenda Item 3: Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the context of effective fisheries management

For INFOFISH member countries IUU fishing remains a matter of deep concern, for the sustainability of fish and fishery produce and products. INFOFISH as such is very supportive of agenda items that concern the broad spectrum in combating IUU fishing. In a recent high level dialogue on greater sustainability, industry engagement and enhancing value retention in the Blue Pacific Continent held on the margins of the 8th Pacific Tuna Forum (PTF) in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, representatives of government and industry called for 'a renewal of commitment to combat IUU fishing and implementation of Port State Measures and the Voluntary Guidelines on Transshipment, to strengthen implementation of catch documentation schemes as well as monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) initiatives. At the same time, to improve the sharing of relevant catch information and transparency to forge greater engagement, understanding and cooperation at all levels of the supply chain in the tuna industry'.

While this call was made within the context of a Tuna Forum, the call was encompassing in terms of a collective call in addressing IUU fishing and its net affect on the marine ecology, as well as ensuring the sustainability of the industry and livelihoods of small fisher folk at the community level. In terms of considerations and interventions it would be understood that these are well shared by FAO COFI and its member countries, and INFOFISH would be very supportive of such endeavours. This includes also from a trade and market perspective, in terms of informed consumer behaviour in the purchasing of fish and fisheries produce that are eco-labelled and certified in terms of being caught in a sustainably and responsibly manner, as also a part of ensuring that the market supply chain also supports the filtering out of such IUU fishing produce and the markets that support such illegal sourcing and trade. This also comes back to national legislation and capability in terms of enforcement. The capacity building and empowering of local communities and agencies, as well as national, regional and international partnerships and cooperation are also recognised as essential drivers in striving to combat IUU fishing at all levels.

Overall IUU fishing is an area of advocacy and dialogue that INFOFISH continues to put forward in all its programs and platforms in ensuring that all voices are heard across the market supply chain and in ensuring that this agenda continue to remain at the fore as an industry concern and in supporting the advancement of partnership and cooperation in addressing this. The 18th INFOFISH World Tuna Trade Conference & Exhibition (May 20 – 22, 2024), as a case in point will provide another opportunity under the theme ‘Advancing Blue Transformation, Sustainable Development and Innovation through the Global Tuna Industry’, for the industry at all levels and on all fronts to come together on key industry issues such as IUU fishing. As we continue to encourage dialogue and advocate for, partnership and cooperation from the small fisher folk to industry, policy makers and regional organisations are particularly important and integral in progressing coordinated and effective action on IUU fishing, ensuring resource sustainability, the vibrancy of the ecosystem, contributing to global food security, livelihoods, community building and benefit to all stakeholders across the market supply chain. This includes considerations on traditional methods of conservation and fishing management, alongside the integration of technology in better informing small scale fisheries as an industry/segment and the SSF Guidelines that FAO COFI as an important global intergovernmental forum, alongside many other regional/international partners and stakeholders continues to champion and advocate in fostering sustainable development.

Agenda Item 5: Climate Change and fisheries management

The adoption of a precautionary approach to fisheries management is welcomed and is of course a hand in hand approach to addressing climate change. Climate change and the threat of rising sea levels pose significant threats to our planet and people, aquatic ecosystems and fisheries. This is an industry that many people derive their sustenance and livelihood from and where mechanisms that support climate resilience, adaptation and innovation are greatly encouraged at all levels of governance and industry, when it comes to small scale fisheries in particular. This includes a policy and regulatory environment that supports ‘blue

transformation' in terms of a greener or bluer industry, food security, poverty alleviation and the fostering of resilient industries and communities. From a trade and market perspective, this speaks to the integration of technology; product diversification and maintaining sustainable supply chains over the longer term in a changing environment.

Concluding Remarks.

Thank you once again Chair for this opportunity to share this statement and to add to the reflections being shared at this FAO COFI Sub Committee on Fisheries Management first session. Once again we wish you all the very best in your tenure as Chair and wish all the FAO COFI member countries all the very best as you continue to advocate for the implementation of the voluntary guidelines on SSF, the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and an improvement in fisheries management systems overall. INFOFISH looks forward to further opportunities to work in support of FAO COFI in this endeavour.