

Intervention by the International Pole and Line Foundation – Agenda item 2.2 Inland and marine small-scale fisheries management

Good morning/afternoon to all and thank you Chair.

The International Pole and Line Foundation works with small-scale tuna fisheries globally that use low impact fishing gears such as pole & line, handline and troll lines. We promote the social and environmental benefits of these fisheries and the contributions these fisheries make to deliver progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Article 6.6 of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries specifically promotes selective and environmentally safe fishing gears and practices, recognising the contribution that fisheries using such gears make to maintaining biodiversity, to conserving population structures and to protecting aquatic ecosystems.

Today, as this First Session of the Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management considers the particular challenges and opportunities associated with small-scale fisheries, the International Pole and Line Foundation seeks to raise awareness of the inter-relationship between fisheries management and market support for small-scale fisheries.

The adoption of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Small-Scale Fisheries* and the declaration of the *International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture* in 2022 has raised the profile of small-scale fisheries and highlighted the ongoing struggles these fisheries face in accessing equal market opportunities. Certification standards or ecolabelling schemes are supposed to provide information to consumers about the most sustainable seafood choices. In reality, these certification standards often 'tend to marginalize' small-scale fisheries' operators, which 'do not have the requisite financial, technological or human resources to meet such requirements'.

In 2005, COFI adopted the FAO Guidelines for the *Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries* to provide minimum substantive requirements and criteria for these ecolabelling schemes and standards. The Ecolabelling Guidelines, which were last updated in 2009, only address small-scale fisheries in a superficial way.

SDG 14b specifically requires access to fishing opportunities and markets for small-scale fisheries. What we see in practice is that heavily subsidized, large industrial fisheries often outcompete small-scale fisheries on the back on certification schemes that give them preferential market access.

The FAO Ecolabelling Guidelines should be aligned with the FAO's vision of a 'world free from hunger and malnutrition, where food and agriculture contribute to improving the living standards of all, especially the poorest, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner'. Given the current barriers of ecolabelling certifications for small-scale fisheries, the International Pole and Line Foundation urged the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, at its 19th Session in Bergen, Norway, to include a revision of the ecolabelling guidelines among its priority action items.

Today, the International Pole and Line Foundation calls on the Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management to integrate considerations of market access into its work supporting fisheries management suited to the needs and circumstances of small-scale fisheries. Moreover, we recommend this Sub-Committee to investigate the inter-relationship between management practices designed for small-scale fisheries and the requirements of ecolabelling certification schemes, so that the FAO Ecolabelling Guidelines may be revised to fully address the varied contexts of small-scale fisheries.

Thank you for your attention.