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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Twenty-seventh Session

Rome, Italy, 5 - 9 March 2007

DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TENTH SESSION OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE

Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 30 May – 2 June 2006

SUMMARY

This document contains the highlights of the topics discussed at the Tenth Session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade and makes reference to its main recommendations. The full report is available as document COFI/2007/Inf.8. The Committee is invited to consider the recommendations of the Sub-Committee.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Tenth Session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade was held in Santiago de Compostela, Spain from 30 May – 2 June 2006 at the invitation of the Government of Spain. The report of the Session is available as document COFI/2007/Inf.8.

MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE SESSION

Status and important recent events concerning international trade in fishery

2. The Sub-Committee reiterated the important function of the Sub-Committee as the foremost international forum for discussion of fish trade matters. (para. 9)

3. The Sub-Committee highlighted the crucial role of developing countries in international fish trade and the need for continued technical assistance and capacity building on market access in general, and quality and safety in particular. FAO was also requested to undertake studies on domestic and regional fish trade and on the effects of regional and bilateral trade agreements on resource sustainability and trade. Members asked that the background paper prepared for this agenda item take on a more forward looking perspective. (para. 11)

4. The Sub-Committee renewed its support of FAO's work in the field of fish trade, in particular its role in providing technical assistance and capacity building on fish quality and safety, including risk analysis and traceability, and facilitation of products from developing countries in reaching international markets. (para. 14)

CITES issues with respect to international fish trade and status of FAO-CITES MOU

5. The Sub-Committee adopted the MOU between FAO and CITES. (para. 25)

6. It was agreed that an ad hoc Expert Panel should be convened to assess listing proposals made to the Conference of the Parties (CoP)-14 and for subsequent meetings of the CoPs. It was also agreed that the Sub-Committee should evaluate after each CITES CoP whether the Panel recommendations had been taken into account and, if not, why they had not been. (para. 26)

Technical guidelines for responsible fish trade

7. The Sub-Committee agreed that the current draft text of the guidelines was not ready for publication in its present form. The Sub-Committee agreed that an FAO Technical Consultation should be convened, where all relevant aspects of international trade in fishery products would be considered. The basis for the Technical Consultation would be an updated version of the technical guidelines, which will take into account the comments provided at the meeting. (para. 34)

Safety and quality requirements in international fish trade

8. The Sub-Committee expressed support for FAO's work in capacity building, technical assistance and training in developing countries and noted its support for the work of the relevant Codex Alimentarius Committees and other initiatives to promote international standards. (para.37)

9. The Sub-Committee supported future work by FAO to widen and expand the implementation of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP)-based safety and quality systems and use of risk assessment as the basis for the development of fish standards; to promote

equivalence and harmonization; to monitor the border sanitary and quality controls used to regulate, restrict or prohibit trade including their economic consequences. (para. 39)

Traceability and labelling in fish trade

10. The Sub-Committee recognized that it would be useful to develop a traceability application for small-scale fisheries. (para. 43)

11. Members requested FAO to continue its training activities on traceability of fish and fish products. (para. 45)

Harmonization of catch documentation

12. Many Members expressed their strong support for FAO to continue work in harmonizing catch documentation, highlighting the advantages of having a global harmonized system that could exchange information securely and efficiently. (para. 48)

COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade as international commodity body – commodity strategy

13. The Sub-Committee approved the new principles and guidelines of the commodity strategy. The Sub-Committee gave highest priority to the role of small-scale fisheries in international trade, the promotion of value added products in developing countries through assistance in technology transfer and better market information. (para. 51)

COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade as international commodity body and its relationship with the common fund for commodities

14. Two proposed project proposals “Technical Assistance for the Upgrading of the Small-Scale Fisheries and their Integration in International Trade” and “Enhancing Amazonian Seafood Products on the World Market” were approved by the Sub-Committee. (para. 57)

Fish trade and food security

15. The Sub-Committee agreed with the conclusions of a study on the impact of international trade in fishery products on food security that fish trade has had a positive impact on food security in developing countries. (para. 61)

16. The Sub-Committee emphasized that sustainable resource management practices are a necessary condition to ensure that trade remains sustainable. (para. 62)

Fish trade and small-scale fisheries

17. Members pointed out the increasing importance of small-scale fisheries trade and noted some of the challenges facing this sector including the multi-species, multi-gear nature of many small-scale fisheries especially in the tropics making it difficult to assess their contribution. (para.66)

Rehabilitation and reconstruction of fisheries in tsunami affected countries

18. The Sub-Committee insisted on the need for “building fisheries back better” giving appropriate attention to the restoration of the distribution and marketing chain, including the cold chain and safety and quality systems. It advised FAO to strengthen its assistance to support

exports from affected countries with reduced domestic absorption capacity within the frame of a responsible fisheries strategy. (para. 75)

ANY OTHER MATTERS

19. Members agreed that the Sub-Committee should organize further work in such a way that it remains the relevant forum for the consideration of developments and trends in international trade in fishery and aquaculture products and that it can contribute to the global policy debate, in particular with respect to (1) the promotion of sustainable trade in fishery and aquaculture products and (2) the reduction or elimination of trade in illegally harvested fish and fishery products. (para. 79)

DATE AND PLACE OF THE ELEVENTH SESSION

20. The German delegation confirmed its offer to host the eleventh session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade in 2008, as agreed at the 26th session of the Committee on Fisheries. The exact date would be determined by the Director-General in consultation with the Chairperson and in light of the international calendar of meetings. (para. 84)

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE

21. The Committee is invited to endorse the report of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade and provide guidance with regard to the above mentioned issues.