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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE

Ninth Session

Bremen, Germany, 10-14 February 2004

Agenda Item 8

OUTCOME OF EXPERT CONSULTATION ON ECO-LABELLING

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OUTCOME OF THE EXPERT CONSULTATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR ECO-LABELLING OF FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS FROM MARINE CAPTURE FISHERIES

Rome, Italy, 14-17 October 2003

1. The Expert Consultation was convened by FAO at the request of the 25th Session of COFI, Rome, 24 – 28 February 2003. FAO was instructed by COFI to submit the Report of the Expert Consultation to this Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade in order for it to take a decision on possible follow-up actions, such as the convening by FAO of a technical consultation.

The Expert Consultation was attended by twelve experts in their individual capacities, a resource person and FAO staff. The full Report of the Consultation is provided in COFI:FT/IX/2004/Inf.6.

2. The Consultation reviewed recent trends in ecolabelling as applied in the fisheries, forestry and agricultural sectors. The Secretariat made available materials produced by the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Standards Organization (ISO) and Codex Alimentarius which served as sources of references for the work by the expert group. The meeting was also informed about the inconclusive outcome on the subject of labelling at the 5th Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancún, 10 – 14 September 2003.

3. The Secretariat introduced two documents: A) Draft elements of international guidelines on principles and criteria for the ecolabelling of fish and fishery products from marine capture fisheries and B) Draft elements of international guidelines on procedural and institutional aspects for the ecolabelling of fish and fishery products from marine capture fisheries. The meeting expressed its appreciation for the quality of these drafts.

4. In the course of discussions both in plenary and small working groups, the meeting produced draft international guidelines for the ecolabelling of fish and fishery products from marine capture fisheries which are reproduced in COFI:FT/IX/2004/Inf.6, Appendix E. These draft guidelines incorporate aspects relating to the special requirements of developing countries and countries in transition to adopt ecolabelling of fish and fishery products. The Consultation stressed the importance of facilitating the adoption of ecolabelling by developing countries and countries in transition through appropriate measures and international support.

The Consultation recommended that work is also needed regarding guidelines for ecolabelling schemes that address fresh water capture fisheries.

The report of the Expert Consultation was adopted on 17 October 2003.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE SUB-COMMITTEE

5. The Sub-Committee is invited to express its view on the guidelines as reproduced in COFI:FT/IX/2004/Inf.6, and on follow-up actions needed, including the possibility of convening a Technical Consultation on (Eco)-Labelling. In this respect, the Sub-Committee may wish to take into account the following aspects:

- the highly technical nature of such ecolabelling guidelines;
- whether or not such guidelines should be formally adopted at the 26th Session of COFI in 2005;
- the desirability of facilitating the widespread participation by nominated experts from developing countries in a technical consultation, which implies the need for requesting extra-budgetary resources.