

The Twelfth Session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI:FT) Buenos Aires, Argentina, 26 to 30 April 2010

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This was the first time that this Sub-Committee convened outside Europe. The Session was attended by 38 Members of FAO and by Observers from nine intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

During a special visit, the President of Argentina, Her Excellency Cristina Fernández de Kirchner addressed the meeting. The welcoming address was delivered by Mr Norbert Yauhar, Under-Secretary for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Ministry for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.

During the meeting, the Sub-committee discussed a number of issues of relevance to international trade in fish and fisheries products. Among these were the following:

Trade-Related Activities in FAO

The Sub-Committee appreciated the broad range of trade-related activities carried out by the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. In particular, delegates congratulated FAO for its role in obtaining improved fisheries classifications in the World Customs Organization, highlighting the need for accurate and detailed trade statistics for a wide range of purposes, including that of fisheries management.

The Sub-Committee underlined the importance of FAO's work in capacity-building for developing countries, in particular in relation to market access and value-addition for small-scale producers in developing countries.

Delegates noted the growing role of certification and related traceability schemes and the potential additional burden and cost this could place on developing country producers, especially the small-scale sector. Members encouraged further integration and cooperation between the Secretariats of the Sub-Committees on Fish Trade and on Aquaculture, highlighting the need for a greater focus on the role of aquaculture in international markets and trade.

Recent Developments in Fish Trade

Delegates highlighted the dynamic, mobile and global nature of the fisheries sector and the increased relevance of non-governmental stakeholders in the value-chain, especially at the post-harvest level. Members highlighted the importance of fish consumption and its many nutritional and health related benefits referring to a number of national policies and initiatives in this respect.



*President of Argentina,
Ms Cristina Fernández de Kirchner,
addressing the Session*

Members underlined the growing role of aquaculture in production, trade and consumption and the need to adequately reflect this in future work. The Sub-committee also underlined the importance of the ongoing negotiations on fisheries subsidies in the WTO.

Review of Market Access Requirements

The Sub-Committee expressed its support to the work of FAO in support of the Codex Alimentarius standard setting activities for fish and seafood safety, quality and traceability and for the technical advice, training and capacity building in developing countries to enable these countries to meet international market requirements by implementing good practices in fisheries and aquaculture to ensure the safety and quality of

fish products. The Sub-Committee reiterated the importance of Codex Alimentarius work to promote harmonization and the use of the best available scientific information for standard setting and certification.

Best Practice Guidelines for Integrated Traceability

The Sub-Committee agreed that traceability initiatives were useful tools to verify the integrity of the supply chain and noted that in the fisheries sector they are mainly used to help meet both food safety and sustainability objectives. Members agreed on the benefits of integrating traceability requirements but also recognized that the traceability requirements for food safety were somewhat different from those linked to sustainability.

Fish Trade and Food Security

The Sub-Committee underlined the importance of enhancing food security and the role of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in contributing towards that goal through fish consumption, employment and trade. It was noted that national, regional and global food security policies and funding frameworks often fail to include or integrate adequately the fisheries and aquaculture sector in the overall policy framework. Members welcomed the inclusion of food security in the G8 and G20 agendas, highlighting the need to address fisheries and aquaculture concerns under these programmes.

The Sub-committee noted the crucial role of aquaculture in future food security and the need to implement policies that promote sustainable aquaculture development on a global basis, including in regions where aquaculture production is today limited. Some Members further highlighted the need to ensure the quality as well as the integrity of aquaculture input factors such as seed and feed, and the crucial role of fish disease management.

The Sub-Committee stressed that in order to achieve national food security, institutional capacity building is often necessary, in addition to assistance of a more technical nature. Members welcomed the programmes available from national development agencies, international funding agencies and organizations in contributing towards enhanced food security but stressed the need to integrate sustainability and responsible fisheries and aquaculture in implementing these programmes. ■

