



COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE

Nineteenth Session

11-15 September 2023

THE REVISION PROCESS OF THE ARTICLE 11 QUESTIONNAIRE OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES (CCRF)

Executive Summary

This document provides an overview of the efforts made towards implementing the recommendations of the 18th Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI:FT) involving the questionnaire on Article 11 of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and to further improve it.

Suggested action by the Sub-Committee

- Note the progress made towards implementing the recommendations of the 18th Session of COFI:FT involving the questionnaire on Article 11 of the CCRF related to post-harvest practices and trade.
- Provide feedback and comments on the revised version of the questionnaire.
- Suggest additional topics to be investigated through the questionnaire within the scope of Article 11 of the CCRF.
- Disseminate the questionnaire through the Regional Groups, highlighting the critical aspect of submitting timely responses.
- Designate a national focal point for the questionnaire after internal consultations at the government level.
- Provide guidance on how to continue to enhance the questionnaire reporting process.

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

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INTRODUCTION

1. Since 2012, FAO has measured the implementation of post-harvest practices and trade (Article 11 of the CCRF) involving aquatic products by distributing a biannual self-assessment questionnaire to Members.
2. The main objectives of this questionnaire are to assess the countries' compliance with the provisions on post-harvest practices and trade contained in Article 11 of the CCRF and to understand the progress, efforts and challenges in implementing these measures at national level. Furthermore, the questionnaire aims to provide Members with the opportunity to self-evaluate their performance concerning a variety of issues and measures related to post-harvest practices and trade, as well as practical information, tools and guidance to support the planning and decision-making process at the national level for a more effective response to the complex and rapidly changing challenges.
3. Six editions of the questionnaire for Article 11 of the CCRF have been conducted. The findings and results have always been presented in a dedicated working document discussed at each COFI:FT session, evaluating the progress, challenges and extent of implementation of measures related to post-harvest practices and trade.
4. Two significant modifications have been made to the reporting system and questionnaire over this period. In 2015, following the 14th Session of COFI:FT recommendations, the questionnaire reporting system was converted from an electronic format to an online system utilising the same web-based survey platform designed for the primary Committee on Fisheries (COFI) questionnaire. In 2022, a revised version of the questionnaire was adopted and presented at the 18th Session of COFI:FT following the recommendations of its 17th Session.
5. The purpose of the revised questionnaire was to update and clarify the questions, prevent the widespread use of "not applicable" responses, and reorganise and harmonise the sectional structure.
6. The revised structure of the questionnaire addressing Article 11 of the CCRF is divided into:
 - Section I – Food safety and quality (15 closed questions, one open question)
 - Section II – Post-harvest practices (9 closed questions, two open questions)
 - Section III – Responsible international trade (5 closed questions, one open question)
 - Section IV – Laws and regulations relating to fish trade (5 closed questions, one open question)
7. The COFI:FT Secretariat always makes substantial efforts to provide adequate support to Members during the questionnaire's live period, minimising eventual disruptions, such as those that might occur when new reporting systems and revised questionnaires are implemented.
8. The response rate over the past six editions demonstrates a high and constantly increasing Member interest and engagement.

COFI:FT Session	Response rate	Reporting system	Questionnaire
13th Session - 2012	22% of Members	Electronic format	2012 questionnaire
14th Session - 2014	60% of Members	Electronic format	2012 questionnaire
15th Session - 2016	73% of Members	Web-based platform	2012 questionnaire

COFI:FT Session	Response rate	Reporting system	Questionnaire
16th Session - 2017	77% of Members	Web-based platform	2012 questionnaire
17th Session - 2019	86% of Members	Web-based platform	2012 questionnaire
18th Session - 2022	87% of Members	Web-based platform	Revised 2022 questionnaire (rev. 1)
19th Session - 2023	No launch		
20th Session – 2025		New web-based platform	Revised 2022 questionnaire (rev. 2)

9. The questionnaire has always been launched 8 to 9 months before each COFI:FT session to allow adequate reporting time to Members during the questionnaire's live period, assistance from the COFI:FT Secretariat, accurate analysis of the results, and development of the corresponding working document to report to COFI:FT.

10. Given the short inter-sessional period after the 18th COFI:FT Session¹, the questionnaire was not launched for the current Session. Instead, this document reports on the progress towards implementing the major recommendations of the 18th Session of COFI:FT and the efforts to further improve the questionnaire.

11. Currently, the COFI:FT Secretariat is developing a new web-based platform to host the questionnaire and a revision of the questionnaire.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 18TH SESSION AND PROGRESS MADE

The Sub-Committee encouraged FAO to modernize the online reporting system and the questionnaire platform to increase the accuracy and reliability of the CCRF reporting system²

12. In 2013, the online reporting system containing only the primary CCRF questionnaire was developed. In 2015, the system was expanded to include two additional questionnaires dealing with post-harvest practices and trade (Article 11 of the CCRF) and aquaculture (Article 9 of the CCRF).

13. The architecture and information technology of the current web-based platform is now obsolete. The Secretariats of COFI, COFI:FT and the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI:AQ) are developing a new platform to host the three questionnaires to enhance the CCRF reporting system.

14. The CCRF reporting system is composed of two modules. The first module is only accessible to FAO administrators. It contains the administrative functions for the questionnaires' lifecycle (questionnaire launch, management of deadlines and extensions, notifications, management of e-mail messages, list of contacts, storage, and extraction of raw data). The second module comprises the questionnaire platform, Graphic User Interface (GUI) and functionalities. Respondent Members can access the second module using their unique credentials.

15. The new web-based platform was finalised in June 2022, and modules' prototypes are now available for testing and validation. The new platform has been designed to retain the basic functionality of the previous one while being a more agile solution, allowing for future changes and enhancements to the questionnaire, ensuring long-term sustainability, and meeting the requirements for confidentiality, security and usability.

16. The COFI:FT Secretariat, along with an FAO full-stack developer and a software architect, is presently testing, refining, and validating the two modules of the COFI:FT questionnaire platform.

¹ The 18th COFI:FT Session took place in two distinct phases: the Written Correspondence Procedure from 8 April to 8 May 2022 and the virtual plenary sessions on 7, 8, 9 and 20 June 2022.

² Paragraph 26 of <https://www.fao.org/3/cc1513t/cc1513t.pdf>

17. The next edition of the COFI:FT questionnaire will be launched using the new web-based platform.

The Sub-Committee underscored that the questionnaire responses should be seen as a platform for action, addressing the challenges Members face in implementing Article 11 of the CCRF³

18. The questionnaire responses enable the identification of potential areas of support, as they are regarded as a platform for action for the activities of FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI) to the benefit of Members. The requirements and priorities identified in the questionnaire responses are considered and incorporated into both Regular Programme and donor-funded activities by developing a vast array of capacity-building and technical assistance programmes at the national, regional and global levels. COFI:FT/XIX/2023/Inf.7 details NFI trade-related activities.

19. The Article 11 questionnaire contains closed-ended and open-ended questions, allowing for more detailed and accurate information collection. Notably, the open-ended questions provide the opportunity to report on additional topics, insights, or challenges not addressed by the closed-ended questions, thereby maximising the potential of the questionnaire reporting system and the quality and completeness of the information provided by Members.

20. The responses to the questions, received in the six FAO official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), are analysed and summarised in a dedicated COFI:FT working document to encourage discussion and the sharing of issues and testimonies related to post-harvest practices and trade of aquatic products, which may also reveal new challenges and emerging issues at the national, regional or global levels.

21. In this regard, Members are encouraged to provide as much information as possible in response to the open-ended questions within each topic when filling out the questionnaire. Furthermore, issues involving gender, cultural and social dimensions, inclusiveness, small-scale production, climate change, research and development, innovation and any other emerging challenge within Article 11 of the CCRF can also be addressed in the open-ended questions.

22. The comprehensiveness of the responses provided, coupled with a high response rate, enables a thorough analysis and broad coverage, thereby facilitating the identification of potential areas of support by FAO.

The Sub-Committee requested that COFI:FT documents include, whenever possible, a trend analysis comparing the results over the years in the future⁴

23. Following the example of previous COFI:FT working documents, as soon as the new questionnaire is completed, a trend analysis will be produced whenever possible with the group of countries that responded to each edition, providing a historical overview of the implementation of Article 11 of the CCRF at an aggregated level.

EFFORTS TOWARDS FURTHER IMPROVING THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON ARTICLE 11 OF THE CCRF

24. After a first revision in 2022, the COFI:FT Secretariat is contemplating additional minor changes to the questionnaire to enhance it further, clarify specific questions and identify areas to report where further effort is required to promote more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable aquatic food systems. The revised questionnaire and response instructions are presented as COFI:FT/XIX/2023/Inf.10. The structure of the questionnaire remains unchanged, with four main sections that include a combination of closed and open-ended questions.

³ Paragraph 25 of <https://www.fao.org/3/cc1513t/cc1513t.pdf>

⁴ Paragraph 26 of <https://www.fao.org/3/cc1513t/cc1513t.pdf>

25. Several questions have been reworded to increase clarity, taking into account remarks received from Members during the last edition of the questionnaire. In addition, new questions have been added that explicitly address social issues and climate change adaptation and mitigation practices in the post-harvest sector.
26. Within the scope of post-harvest practices and trade, Members are invited to continue to provide feedback and comments on the revised questionnaire and suggest additional topics to be investigated. In addition to sharing comments and contributions in plenary, they can be sent to the e-mail address CCRF-FishTrade-Questionnaire@fao.org by 31 December 2023.
27. The COFI:FT Secretariat also intends to host a specific webinar in the first quarter of 2024 to detail the questionnaire, further improve the reporting process and the quality and accuracy of the responses received, and reduce the risk of bias resulting from misinterpretation.
28. The questionnaire may require contributions from many different departments, agencies, or institutions at the national level. Considering the FAO distribution process to Members, the questionnaire may be redirected at national level to one or more government institutions or staff depending on the structure of the country's government to address specific questions or topics. Therefore, considerable effort is required to coordinate national responses in some instances.
29. In this regard, Members are encouraged to designate a national focal point within the relevant government body to maintain regular communication with the COFI:FT Secretariat regarding any Article 11 CCRF-related issues. This focal point's contact details can be communicated to CCRF-FishTrade-Questionnaire@fao.org, with regular updates as needed.
30. For upcoming COFI:FT questionnaire periods, the COFI:FT Secretariat also would like to reiterate the role of regional groups in supporting the reporting process and fostering the submission of timely responses.