



COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE

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SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES: VALUE CHAINS, POST-HARVEST OPERATIONS AND TRADE

Executive Summary

Small-scale fisheries actors engage in many different types of markets at global, regional and national levels, but can face challenges in securing market access and eliciting benefits to support sustainable livelihoods. This document raises key issues and challenges faced by small-scale fishers and fishworkers in obtaining market access and reports on selected work undertaken by FAO to promote and improve market access by enhancing value chains, post-harvest operations and trade in small-scale fisheries.

Suggested action by the Sub-Committee

- Recognize the importance of value chains, post-harvest operations and trade at global, regional and national levels to enhance the contribution of small-scale fisheries towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular, SDG14.b;
- Share national experiences towards enhancing value chains, post-harvest operations and trade in small-scale fisheries, highlight opportunities as well as challenges faced by small-scale fishers and fishworkers in reaching new markets with their products;
- Provide guidance on priority activities to be undertaken by FAO in line with the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), the achievement of SDG14.b (particularly in connection with facilitating market access for small-scale fishers).



INTRODUCTION

1. Small-scale fisheries, encompassing all activities along the value chain in both marine and inland waters, play an important role in food security and nutrition and provide an opportunity for poverty eradication, equitable development and sustainable resource use. According to estimations, small-scale fisheries contribute about half of global fish catches and employ more than 90 percent of the approximately 120 million people engaged in fisheries (primary and secondary sectors). An estimated 97 percent of these fishworkers live in developing countries. About half of those working in the small-scale fisheries sector are women, mostly engaged in marketing and processing.¹

2. Small-scale fisheries tend to be overlooked, both with regard to resource management and from a broader social and economic development perspective. Many small-scale fishing communities experience high levels of poverty. The SSF Guidelines were developed in a participatory way to address governance issues and were endorsed by the 31st Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2014. The SSF Guidelines recognize the right of fishers and fishworkers, acting both individually and collectively, to improve their livelihoods through trade at global, regional and national levels, and by enhancing value chains and post-harvest operations.

3. Fish and fishery products are among the world's most traded food items in value terms². Small-scale fisheries actors engage in many different markets, from informal local to high-value export markets, and face challenges in securing market access and eliciting benefits to support sustainable livelihoods. Challenges regarding market access include insufficient market information, knowledge and capacity constraints of individuals and organizations, high incidences of post-harvest losses and a lack of access to financial services³.

4. The importance of addressing these inherent challenges is explicitly recognized by target 14.b⁴ of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets. Governments have an essential role to play in enhancing value chains, post-harvest operations and trade to facilitate market access for small-scale fishers and fishworkers, which will contribute to efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in general, and enhance food security and poverty reduction in fishing communities specifically.

5. Chapter 7 of the SSF Guidelines⁵ – value chains, post-harvest and trade – contains recommendations for enhancing market access. Based on these recommendations, the following sections cover key issues and discuss challenges faced by small-scale fishers and fishworkers in obtaining market access. It also highlights selected work undertaken by FAO to address these challenges by improving value chains, post-harvest operations and trade in small-scale fisheries.

BUILD CAPACITY OF INDIVIDUALS, STRENGTHEN ORGANIZATIONS AND EMPOWER WOMEN

6. The small-scale fisheries post-harvest sector and its actors play a central role in the value chain, but they are not always included in relevant decision-making processes. Their participation is often hampered by limited organizational capacity. The establishment and development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), cooperatives and other forms of associations of post-harvest fishworkers, and adequate capacity development at all stages of the value chain, can improve both access to markets and

¹ Hidden harvest: The Global Contribution of Capture Fisheries.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/515701468152718292/pdf/664690ESW0P1210120HiddenHarvest0web.pdf>

² SOFIA 2018. <http://www.fao.org/3/i9540en/i9540en.pdf>

³ Exploring Sustainable Development Goal 14.b and its Proposed Indicator 14.b.1- FAO Workshop Proceedings.

<http://www.fao.org/3/ca0140en/CA0140EN.pdf>

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg14>

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4356en.pdf>

their possibilities to participate in relevant decision-making processes, contributing to fair distribution of benefits, enhanced livelihoods and food security.

7. Women play a central role in the post-harvest sector but can face constraints and often have unequal access to usable assets, technology, finance, education and services⁶. The compound effect is that women have limited influence over decisions that are critical to their livelihoods. Capacity development and empowerment initiatives need to cater to the needs of women and be designed to ensure that they can benefit from market opportunities.

8. Despite these challenges, there have been encouraging developments. For example, the African Network of Women Fish Processors and Traders (AWFISHNET) is part of the African Union-led efforts to support the organization of non-state female actors to take a more active role in decision-making efforts in fisheries. On behalf of its members, AWFISHNET seeks to ensure the equitable participation of women at all levels of decision-making, to improve welfare and income, working conditions, the viability, sustainability and growth of the women's enterprises, and to enhance product competitiveness and access to national, regional and global markets.

9. Often fishing communities in different areas around the globe face similar problems. Fishery learning exchanges (FLEs) bring together representatives from different communities to share knowledge and expertise and build capacity around a specific topic. FLEs have demonstrated the ability to translate acquired knowledge into the adoption of successful practices in multiple small-scale fisheries, even catalysing change at the institutional level. FAO, together with partners, developed Fisheries Learning Exchanges: A short guide to best practice⁷, which provides guidance on the development, implementation, and evaluation of the FLEs.

REDUCE POST-HARVEST LOSSES AND ADD VALUE TO SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES PRODUCTION

10. Post-harvest fish losses occur in value chains throughout the world. Not only do losses constitute lost income to fishers, processors and traders but they contribute to food insecurity – a loss of fish means less fish available for the consumer⁸.

11. Accurate assessments of post-harvest loss in small-scale fisheries is a challenge, as much of the catch is unrecorded and trade is often informal. It has been estimated by FAO that 10 percent of the world fish catch (in live weight equivalent) is lost due to poor handling, processing, storage and distribution. The dispersed nature of many small-scale fishing operations makes it difficult to derive definitive estimates of post-harvest losses, but evidence suggests that in some developing country situations it could be as high as 25 percent of total landings⁹. Quality loss because of poor handling is the most pervasive form of loss in small-scale fisheries¹⁰.

12. Where appropriate, value addition should be promoted, alongside robust fishery management systems, to improve livelihoods and prevent overfishing. Sustainable practices along the value chain can help avoid loss and waste by combining traditional, cost-efficient methods, with innovation and new technology. For this, small-scale fisheries actors need access to financial services, including credit and

⁶ FAO Committee on World Food Security - Policy Recommendations - Connecting Smallholders to Markets.

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-bq853e.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/3/i9601en/I9601EN.pdf>

⁸ FAO has developed a dedicated website for Food Loss and Waste in Fisheries Value Chain aiming to provide easy access to information for a variety of potential end users, to inform decision making related to its prevention and reduction.

<http://www.fao.org/flw-in-fish-value-chains/en/>

⁹ Post-harvest losses in small-scale fisheries: case studies in five sub-Saharan African countries.

<http://www.fao.org/3/i1798e/i1798e.pdf>

¹⁰ Post-harvest fish loss assessment in small-scale fisheries: A guide for the extension officer was developed by FAO as a tool to guide fisheries extension workers and other development practitioners on ways in which to assess post-harvest fish losses and plan reduction interventions. <http://www.fao.org/3/i2241e/i2241e.pdf>

microfinance, savings services, as well as payment and remittance services. Fisherfolk organizations and their members, with some exceptions, lack the capacity to effectively communicate and interact with financial service and insurance providers. They also often lack other applicable skills needed for business management, which would enhance the viability of the enterprises and organizations and could make the sector more attractive to investors. To address these challenges, FAO, in cooperation with partners, developed Guidelines for micro-finance and credit programmes in support of small-scale fisheries in Asia¹¹.

FACILITATE SUSTAINABLE TRADE AND EQUITABLE MARKET ACCESS

13. Trade in fishery products can have a positive effect on food security, both through higher availability of fish for human consumption and through higher income generated through trade, though it is important to note that sustainable resource management practices are a necessary pre-condition for sustainable trade¹². Unequal power relations often exist between different actors along the value chain, and as a result, small-scale fisheries actors can be vulnerable to disadvantageous contracts, and unfair conditions and practices. Training and capacity development of individuals and organizations on market functions, literacy and numeracy can facilitate and better prepare small-scale fisheries actors to engage with and compete in formal markets.

14. Formal markets, be they domestic, regional or global, present particular opportunities and challenges for small-scale fisheries by providing the potential to earn a higher value per unit, and engagement with actors who can facilitate access to financial resources, capacity building and training as part of their investment in the value chain. Complex frameworks of rules and regulations govern fisheries value chains, and a variety of trade policies implemented by countries, including tariffs, subsidies and non-tariff measures, have a significant influence in shaping fisheries production and trade, particularly in relation to market access. Small-scale fisheries actors can face challenges in meeting these regulations and standards, especially when considering capacity and knowledge constraints of small-scale fisheries actors in developing countries.

15. In addition to food safety, quality and regulatory requirements, efforts to improve the sustainability of seafood production practices using market-based approaches have been the focus of the sustainable seafood movement since the 1990s. The effect has been an increase in private sustainability and traceability requirements being placed on producers, and by extension, the government institutions that regulate them. Small-scale fisheries are often multispecies and deploy multiple gear types. Furthermore, they may encompass a mixture of subsistence and commercial fishing, with multiple landing sites and a wide range of catch distribution pathways. Compounding this complexity is the frequent lack of human and material capacity to address assessment, management and monitoring of fisheries¹³.

16. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are increasingly being used to overcome challenges related to resource assessment, capture, processing, documentation, and commercialization in small-scale fisheries. FAO has supported a number of conferences to promote innovation in ICTs to assist small-scale fishers and relevant stakeholders in their day-to-day operations, including ICT4Fisheries.org, an information and networking portal intended to promote broader, international cross-learning and collaboration among stakeholders, developing open source apps for small-scale fisheries across the globe.

¹¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5128en/CA5128EN.pdf>

¹² Responsible fish trade and food security. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-a0143e.pdf>

¹³ Review of ecolabelling schemes for fish and fishery products from capture fisheries. <http://www.fao.org/3/i1433e/i1433e00.pdf>

PROMOTE EQUITABLE MARKET ACCESS AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS BY ENHANCING SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES VALUE CHAINS, POST-HARVEST AND TRADE

17. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SSF Guidelines recognize the importance of enabling equitable access to markets for small-scale fishers and fishworkers. Target 14.b of the 2030 Agenda calls on States to “provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets”. Chapter 7 of the SSF Guidelines contains recommendations for enabling equitable market access for small-scale fishery actors. Together, these frameworks provide justification to improve value chains, post-harvest operations and trade and the basis for where to focus efforts, informed by a participatory process involving thousands of fisherfolk and their representatives from around the world.

18. FAO has provided support to operations and encourages the implementation of these frameworks, through the FAO Umbrella Programme for the Promotion and Application of the SSF Guidelines (FAO SSF Umbrella Programme), established in 2015. The FAO SSF Umbrella Programme has so far received support from the Governments of Norway and Sweden, and is structured around four interrelated components:

- Awareness-raising: knowledge products and outreach;
- Strengthening the science-policy interface: sharing of knowledge and supporting policy reform;
- Empowering stakeholders: capacity development and institutional strengthening; and
- Supporting implementation: programme management, collaboration and monitoring.

19. In a collaborative effort, the mechanisms integrated within the FAO SSF Umbrella Programme are currently being used to produce two studies, both planned to be published in 2020, to support the objectives of SDG14.b and the SSF Guidelines. A FAO technical paper featuring a series of case studies will examine good practices and successful initiatives consistent with the value chains, post-harvest operations and trade recommendations of the SSF Guidelines. The second study, *Illuminating Hidden Harvests*, aims to fill knowledge gaps and to highlight the role that small-scale fisheries play in achieving the SDGs. The study will also analyse the size and distribution of the economic benefits generated by selected small-scale fisheries value chains in diverse contexts. The results of this work may be used to inform future work by FAO and as the basis for further consultations and the development of required guidance.

20. Within the framework of the Agenda 2030, FAO acts as the custodian agency for SDG indicator 14.b.1 - progress by countries in adopting and implementing a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework, which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries. The indicator score is based on three questions from the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries questionnaire. FAO encourages and supports countries in ensuring participatory and meaningful reporting processes in this context.

21. In the context of supporting member countries in achieving and reporting on SDG14.b, FAO has developed an e-learning course¹⁴ and has organized two training workshops on exploring SDG14.b and its indicator 14.b.1: a global workshop from 28–29 November 2017, in Gaeta, Italy; and a Pacific regional workshop, from 9–11 April 2019, in Nadi, Fiji. These workshops sought to raise awareness of SDG14.b, the synergies between relevant regional frameworks and the SSF Guidelines, and to strengthen capacities to collect and compile relevant data and report on SDG indicator 14.b.1.

22. The United Nations General Assembly¹⁵ declared 2022 to be the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022). FAO is serving as the lead agency for IYAFA 2022 in close

¹⁴ The course, open to any participant, is available at <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=348>

¹⁵ Resolution 72/72 adopted by the General Assembly on 5 December 2017. <https://undocs.org/A/RES/72/72>

collaboration with relevant partners and bodies of the United Nations system. Countries and partners are encouraged to actively engage in and support the observance of this auspicious international year. IYFAFA presents an opportunity to share best practices in value chains, post-harvest operations and trade and promote equitable market access and sustainable livelihoods for small-scale fisheries actors.