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منظمة  
الأغذية والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

# COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

## SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE

### Eighteenth Session

**Written Correspondence Procedure: 8 April to 8 May 2022**

**Virtual Plenary sessions: 7, 8, 9 and 20 June 2022**

**RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND PROGRESS IN FAO NUTRITION  
AND FOOD LOSS AND WASTE PROGRAMMES**

## INTRODUCTION

1. A sustainable food system (SFS) is one that delivers food security and nutrition for all so that the economic, social and environmental bases for the provision of food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised.<sup>1</sup> Diverse aquatic food systems play a vital role in nutrition, food security and livelihoods, contributing to sustainable food systems.
2. SFSs deliver food security and nutrition through multiple pathways, which consider the availability, accessibility, stability, utilisation and sustainability of foods produced, as well as the agency (capacity and decision-making) of actors in the food system. One such pathway for ensuring the availability and accessibility of foods is through reduced food loss and waste (FLW), which also contributes to a more stable and sustainable food supply. FLW can be described in quantitative or qualitative terms, in the case of the latter referring to the nutrients lost throughout the supply chain. When considering highly perishable foods, such as aquatic foods, the nutrient loss may start from the point of harvest if not correctly handled and stored.
3. Solutions to FLW will provide economic benefits, positively impact food and nutrition security, improve efficient usage of natural resource, and reduce environmental impacts and waste streams. Solutions, however, will require action by either the public or private sectors, preferably both. Policymakers and the public sector require solutions that are not only economically rewarding, but also generate benefits for society. Actors in the value chain may require incentives if they are to change many business as usual practices. Such action is required in order to create a secure business environment, with sustained support towards promoting effective loss reduction and enforcement of rules that deter irresponsible practices. Therefore, solutions to FLW require the involvement of different stakeholders from within and without the fisheries and aquaculture sector.
4. Such a multi-dimensional approach to FLW prevention or reduction should be tailored to ensure that it fits the socioeconomic, business and political context. This requires a multi-stakeholder approach, with consideration for policy changes, the use of appropriate technology, skills and knowledge, the availability of services and infrastructure, the regulatory environment, social and gender equity, as well as good linkages with and knowledge of markets.

## FAO WORK ON NUTRITION AND FOOD LOSS AND WASTE IN RECENT YEARS

5. Eradicating hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition and FLW reduction are high on FAO's agenda. FAO has led several initiatives, studies and discussions on nutrition and FLW.

### *2014 Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)<sup>2</sup>*

6. The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) was jointly organised by FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO) from 19 to 21 November 2014. The ICN2 endorsed the Rome Declaration on Nutrition<sup>3</sup>, committing countries to eradicate hunger and prevent all forms of malnutrition worldwide – particularly undernutrition in children and anaemia in women and children, among other micronutrient deficiencies – and reverse the trend in obesity. It aimed to increase investments in food systems to improve people's diets and nutrition. It was agreed that adequate food and nutrition security was the key challenge that governments and international development communities need to address.
7. The background paper "Maximising the contribution of fish to human nutrition"<sup>4</sup> was prepared for the ICN2, highlighting the ability of fisheries and aquaculture to address the challenges faced in

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<sup>1</sup> [fao.org/3/ca2079en/CA2079EN.pdf](http://fao.org/3/ca2079en/CA2079EN.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [fao.org/about/meetings/icn2/en/](http://fao.org/about/meetings/icn2/en/)

<sup>3</sup> [fao.org/3/ml542e/ml542e.pdf](http://fao.org/3/ml542e/ml542e.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [fao.org/3/i3963e/i3963e.pdf](http://fao.org/3/i3963e/i3963e.pdf)

eradicating hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. If supported and developed in a regulated and sensitive manner that is both environmentally and socially responsible, fisheries and aquaculture have great potential to support food systems. National and global development policymakers increasingly recognise the role of fisheries and aquaculture, and there is a clear need for a more proactive and concerted effort by the sector. At the global level, the ongoing work on the Post-2015 Development Agenda<sup>5</sup> provides an excellent opportunity to reiterate and establish the importance of fisheries.

8. With dramatic rises and increased volatility in food prices, there is a risk that the diets of the poor will become even less diverse and more dependent on starchy staples. Therefore, there is a renewed emphasis on the production, access, distribution, and utilisation of common, micronutrient-rich foods. Fish, especially nutrient-rich small fish, can play a vital role in improving human nutrition, but this will require changes to government policies, investment in infrastructure and support for research. Adequate means must be found to reduce post-harvest losses in fisheries and aquaculture, better utilise processing waste and make use of the large quantities of available small pelagic fish for direct human consumption. International organisations such as FAO, bilateral agencies such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through Feed the Future and Department for International Development (DFID), the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) through its research programmes, governments, non-government organizations (NGOs) and the private sector have all initiated programmes and interventions that give fish a platform to contribute to human nutrition. These should be further strengthened and coordinated.

***2014 Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture for food security and nutrition. A report by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security<sup>6</sup>***

9. The High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) report addresses the role and importance of fish in achieving food and nutrition security for all. The report presents a synthesis of existing evidence regarding the complex pathways between fisheries and aquaculture and food and nutrition security, including environmental, economic and social dimensions, as well as issues related to governance. The report provides insights on what needs to be done to achieve sustainable fisheries and aquaculture systems and to strengthen their positive impact on food and nutrition security.

10. The report presents several main findings, including acknowledging fish as a critical food source. The report also states that fish have received limited attention in food security and nutrition strategies, at the national level and in broader development discussions and interventions. Additionally, it highlighted the contribution of fish to the diets of low-income populations – including pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and young children – offering a vital means for improving food security and nutrition. The report recommends that fish deserves a central position in food security and nutrition strategies. Furthermore, the report advises supporting and promoting initiatives to minimise fish discards, post-harvest losses and waste in all stages of the fish value chain.

***2014 Food losses and waste in the context of sustainable food systems. A report by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security<sup>7</sup>***

11. This policy-oriented report from the HLPE presents a synthesis of existing evidence about the causes of food losses and waste. It suggests action to reduce these causes, in order to improve food and nutrition security and the sustainability of food systems. The aim of this report, given the diversity of contexts, is to help all concerned actors to reduce FLW by identifying the causes and potential solutions that may be implemented, individually or in a coordinated manner, by the relevant actors in the food system, including the public and private sectors, civil society, individual producers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers. Successful reduction of food losses and waste will save resources and improve

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<sup>5</sup> [fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/post-2015/14\\_themes\\_Issue\\_Papers/EN/Full\\_set\\_Englishrev\\_01.pdf](http://fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/post-2015/14_themes_Issue_Papers/EN/Full_set_Englishrev_01.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [fao.org/3/i3844e/i3844e.pdf](http://fao.org/3/i3844e/i3844e.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [fao.org/3/i3901e/i3901e.pdf](http://fao.org/3/i3901e/i3901e.pdf)

food and nutrition security, which are shared goals of the Zero Hunger Challenge and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

12. The HLPE recommends that States and international organisations better integrate food chains and food systems perspectives in food security and nutrition strategy and action. Reduction of FLW should be systematically considered and assessed as a potential means to improve agricultural and food systems efficiency and sustainability, moving towards improved food security and nutrition. Direct and indirect causes of FLW in a given system should be analysed to identify hotspots and take action.

***2017 Nutrition and food systems. A report by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security***<sup>8</sup>

13. The HLPE prepared a report on Nutrition and Food Systems in 2017 to analyse how food systems influence diets and nutrition. This report builds on previous frameworks, putting the recognised role of diets as a core link between food systems and their health and nutrition outcomes, highlighting the central position of the food environment in influencing food choices, and taking into account the impact of food systems on the three dimensions of sustainability, namely economic, social and environmental sustainability. The report recognises fish as a unique source of omega-3 fatty acids and emphasises the need to properly store perishable, nutrient-dense foods such as fish, meat, eggs and dairy products in order to prevent loss and waste. In addition, the report highlighted recommendations for moderate consumption of fish, taking into consideration trade-offs of increased fish consumption.

***2020 Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030. A report by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security***<sup>9</sup>

14. The 2020 report from the HLPE builds on the 2017 report to update conceptual and policy frameworks and emphasise the urgent need for strengthening abstract thinking around food security and nutrition, urging the prioritisation of the right to food and adoption of food systems that will put the world on track for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One of the most significant contributions of this report was the addition of the elements of agency and sustainability – the long-term ability of food systems to provide food in an economic, environmental, and socially sustainable way – as pillars of food security and nutrition and articulating that the right to food as a legal framework is fundamental for ensuring food security and sustainable food systems.

***The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) 2019. Moving forward on food loss and waste reduction***<sup>10</sup>

15. SOFA 2019 presents an in-depth analysis of the state of FLW at the global level. This report acknowledges the need to reduce FLW, offers new insights into what is known and what is not, and provides guidance on targeting interventions and policies depending on policymakers' objectives and available information. When considering actions and policy options, the report argues that FLW reduction should be seen as a way to achieve other goals, notably improved efficiency in the food system, food security and nutrition, and environmental sustainability.

***The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all***<sup>11</sup>

16. SOFI 2021 highlights that the commitments to end world hunger by 2030 have been delayed, with the COVID-19 pandemic hindering progress. After remaining virtually unchanged for five years, the prevalence of undernourishment increased by 1.5 percent, and the number of people facing hunger increased by around at least 118 million. The report also highlighted the need to shift to healthy and

<sup>8</sup> [fao.org/3/i7846e/i7846e.pdf](https://www.fao.org/3/i7846e/i7846e.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [fao.org/3/ca9731en/ca9731en.pdf](https://www.fao.org/3/ca9731en/ca9731en.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [fao.org/3/ca6030en/ca6030en.pdf](https://www.fao.org/3/ca6030en/ca6030en.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [fao.org/3/cb4474en/cb4474en.pdf](https://www.fao.org/3/cb4474en/cb4474en.pdf)

sustainable diets, in order to reduce health and climate change costs by 2030. There is evidence that supports the inclusion of fish and aquatic foods as having a positive impact on these objectives. The high cost of healthy diets and continuing high levels of income inequality have made healthy diets unaffordable for approximately 3 billion people, with the poor being the most acutely impacted.

## **FLW IN THE FAO SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE (COFI:FT) IN RECENT SESSIONS**

### ***COFI:FT/XIV/2014/4 Fish Trade and Human Nutrition***<sup>12</sup>

17. The paper reviews the role fish plays in human nutrition and examines the impact of trade on food security and nutrition.

### ***COFI:FT/XVI/2017/6 Reduction of Fish Food Loss And Waste***<sup>13</sup>

18. This document provides a global overview of fish FLW, reviewing recent developments in this area and summarises FAO's work to reduce fish FLW along the value chain at national and global levels. Information on the policy guidance being developed by FAO, as requested by the twenty-second session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI:32), is also presented.

### ***COFI:FT/XVII/2019/6 Quality and Safety Of Fish and Fishery Products***<sup>14</sup>

19. This document reviews recent developments in food safety related to market access for fisheries and aquaculture products, FAO activities on food quality and safety in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, FAO's work concerning scientific advice to the Codex Alimentarius Commission, support provided to Members to implement the Codex standards, and recent activities on fish FLW.

## **RECENT AND RELEVANT WORK AND ACTIVITIES OF THE FAO FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE DIVISION**

### ***Good Practices in the small-scale fisheries (SSF) post-harvest sector***<sup>15</sup>

20. A wide range of practices exist in Africa's post-harvest fisheries sector; these have either evolved organically or have resulted from development initiatives. In order to support long-term capacity building for women, the SSF Umbrella Programme conducted a review to identify post-harvest best practices that have been successfully adopted, and should be disseminated more widely to benefit women in terms of improved efficiency and capacity to produce safe fish and value-added fish products, ensure decent work, and increase fish consumption in communities.

21. Examples of improved practices were identified covering infrastructure, the adoption of new and enhanced technology for improved handling and processing, value addition and group work. Based on experience, guidance was developed to support future value chain development and loss and waste reduction initiatives in the post-harvest fisheries sector. Peer-to-peer learning has been highlighted as an essential mechanism for capacity building and information dissemination. Its formalisation to promote wide-scale uptake of improved practices will be addressed in subsequent activities.

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<sup>12</sup> [fao.org/cofi/29401-083ff934c3ccfd8576005d8d0c19b04d6.pdf](https://www.fao.org/cofi/29401-083ff934c3ccfd8576005d8d0c19b04d6.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/COFI/FishTrade/uploads/6e.pdf](https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/COFI/FishTrade/uploads/6e.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [fao.org/3/nb252en/nb252en.pdf](https://www.fao.org/3/nb252en/nb252en.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> [fao.org/3/cb7918en/cb7918en.pdf](https://www.fao.org/3/cb7918en/cb7918en.pdf)

***Food Loss and Waste in Fish Value Chains website<sup>16</sup>***

22. In July 2016, at COFI 32, the importance of reducing FLW, particularly in fish value chains, was highlighted. COFI supported the development of FAO technical guidelines addressing the causes of and remedies for FLW. The Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries agreed to support the process financially and collaborate with FAO to develop a web-based resource that gathers essential information on FLW from a fish value chain approach. A website platform was designed to disseminate FLW information, including its causes and solutions at crucial stages of the value chain. Since its launch in May 2019, the website has received over 67 000 visitors from 222 countries and territories. The goal is to facilitate the dissemination of useful information, supporting the development of sustainable solutions to FLW in fish value chains.

***Food loss and waste reduction using multi-dimensional solutions approach***

23. The “Responsible use of fisheries and aquaculture resources for sustainable development” GCP/GLO/352/NOR project applies a multi-dimensional approach to reducing FLW in fish value chains in Colombia, Sri Lanka and the United Republic of Tanzania, by enhancing capacity in FLW solutions and developing and disseminating evidence based FLW knowledge products.

**FUTURE WORK**

24. In addition to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF)<sup>17</sup> and the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines)<sup>18</sup>, future work on nutrition and FLW reduction will be guided by the following policy frameworks:

***FAO’s Strategic Framework 2022–2031<sup>19</sup>***

25. Endorsed by the FAO Conference in June 2021, FAO’s Strategic Framework seeks to support the 2030 Agenda through transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life (known as the four betters), while leaving no one behind. It identifies 20 Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) to guide FAO in filling critical gaps and putting in place the conditions needed to drive change and contribute to the achievement of relevant SDG targets.

26. Most of the activities on nutrition and FLW reduction in the fisheries and aquaculture sector is associated with the following PPAs:

- BP (better production) 2 – Blue transformation  
More efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable blue food systems promoted through improved policies and programmes for integrated science-based management, technological innovation and private-sector engagement;
- BN (better nutrition) 1 – Healthy diets for all  
The right to adequate food established, transition towards healthy diets for national populations prioritised in integrated institutional, policy and legal environments that ensure and incentivise the engagement of consumers and the private sector;
- BN (better nutrition) 4) – Reducing food loss and waste  
Clear, specific and contextualised roadmaps to prompt and enable all actors in the food supply chain, the food environment and at consumer level to reduce FLW, to be put in place and implemented by governments and intergovernmental organisations.

<sup>16</sup> [fao.org/flw-in-fish-value-chains/en/](https://www.fao.org/flw-in-fish-value-chains/en/)

<sup>17</sup> [fao.org/3/v9878e/V9878E.pdf](https://www.fao.org/3/v9878e/V9878E.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> [fao.org/3/i4356en/I4356EN.pdf](https://www.fao.org/3/i4356en/I4356EN.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> [fao.org/3/cb7099en/cb7099en.pdf](https://www.fao.org/3/cb7099en/cb7099en.pdf)

***COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture***<sup>20</sup>

27. Endorsed by COFI 34, the COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture has the following targeted actions:

- ***Ensure*** that fish are fully considered in national, regional and global food security and nutrition strategies, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of food systems to eliminate hunger, address the triple burden of malnutrition and reduce diet-related diseases,
- ***Encourage*** the reduction of pre- and post-harvest loss and waste in the sector, including discards, by implementing internationally agreed standards through appropriate actions, including awareness building, education and training, according to national context, capacities and priorities, in particular, safety and quality standards, to improve fish processing, distribution and consumption, thereby also increasing the value of fish products in support of sustainable and inclusive ocean economies.

***Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction (CoC)***<sup>21</sup>

28. In 2021, the 42nd Session of the FAO Conference endorsed the CoC, developed through an inclusive process under the overall direction and guidance of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) Bureau. The CoC presents the actions and measures that countries, national and sub-national authorities, food supply chain actors, the private sector, producer organisations, civil society organisations, academic and research institutions, and other relevant stakeholders should consider in order to contribute to FLW reduction. The CoC also presents guiding principles that should be followed in implementing these actions and measures, as well as the role that FAO and other stakeholders will be expected to play in supporting its implementation. The multi-dimensional solution approach to address FLW in the fish value chains was duly captured by the CoC, as well as the impacts of FLW reductions towards more sustainable aquatic food systems and positive economic, social and environmental outcomes.

***Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSN)***<sup>22</sup>

29. In 2021, during the 47th Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), members endorsed the first-ever voluntary guidelines aimed at promoting policy coherence and reducing policy fragmentation between sectors that impact food systems and nutrition, including health, agriculture, education, environment, gender, social protection, trade and others. The guidelines contain a wide range of recommendations that promote transparent and accountable governance, sustainable food supply chains, broader access to healthy diets, food safety, nutrition education, gender equality and resilient food systems within humanitarian contexts. The guidelines also promote the sustainable use of aquatic resources as part of local agrobiodiversity and highlight its importance in offering a source of food and income.

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<sup>20</sup> [fao.org/3/ne472en/ne472en.pdf](https://www.fao.org/3/ne472en/ne472en.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> [fao.org/3/nf393en/nf393en.pdf](https://www.fao.org/3/nf393en/nf393en.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> [fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs2021/Documents/CFS\\_VGs\\_Food\\_Systems\\_and\\_Nutrition\\_Strategy\\_EN.pdf](https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs2021/Documents/CFS_VGs_Food_Systems_and_Nutrition_Strategy_EN.pdf)