

The enormous potential for aquaculture in Africa

Concept Note

Submitted by:

- **Government of Iceland**
- **Government of Madagascar**
- **African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)**
- **The Aquatic Blue Food Coalition of the UN FSS**
- **Global Action Network for Sustainable Food from the Oceans and Inland Waters for Food Security and Nutrition, under the UN Nutrition Decade**

Venue: Sheikh Zayed Centre, FAO headquarters

Date: Monday, 3 July 2023

Time: 12:30-14:00

Importance: The launch of the Blue Transformation programme of FAO last year highlighted the growth potential of sustainable aquaculture. With the imminent agreement on Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture the global community now has a roadmap for **all actors striving to secure sustainable medium and small-scale aquaculture, not the least where the need is most acute in the least developed countries**. The African continent has the fastest growing population of all the World's continents. This carries with it many opportunities and challenges including, amongst others, an adequate growth in the production of nutritious foods with low environmental impact, like aquaculture. In a workshop in January 2023 organized by the World Bank, Stanford University and the Aquatic Blue Food Coalition, with participation from GEF, FAO and a great number of leading stakeholders an initiative was launched to address this issue in a pragmatic way.

Background: The fastest growing food sector of the globe for the last few decades has been aquaculture. However, Africa as a continent has focused largely on capture fisheries and aquaculture development has lagged behind. There is a real danger of reduction in fish consumption on the African continent instead of it moving upwards to the global average. There are exceptions to this situation where there is a strong growth in aquaculture such as in Egypt and in some sub-Saharan African countries like Nigeria. These show that Africa has potential for strong aquaculture development and suggest how could it be developed within the large waterbodies and along the extensive and varied coastlines.

With many fish stocks moving to the poles or to deeper and cooler waters due to climate change new fish supply for a growing population has to come from aquaculture. It is therefore time to take action, use the knowledge we have, add new knowledge onto what we already have and move African aquaculture further in the next decade than it moved in the last one. A 2.5 percent share of the Global production, which only grew by less than half a percentage point in the last decade, is not enough. This needs to be done in a nature positive, inclusive, evidence-based and holistic manner. It needs to include the production and value chain services upstream and downstream as well as enabling infrastructure and socioeconomic policies. Leading agencies like FAO need to work hand in hand with national and regional authorities, the financial and private sectors, value chain actors, bilateral supporters, and civil society and NGOs.

The Action: The organizers of this event plan to sensitize the FAO members to this opportunity in food production in Africa which is anchored in the food systems transformation dialogue. The event will include representatives from Africa and international experts and we invite Conference members to join in the process. The event is placed in the context of:

- Blue Transformation programme of FAO, with its ambitious goals for expanding production, productivity and value addition
- The prioritisation of aquaculture development as a key blue economy sector in Africa's continental policy frameworks
- the Gates/AID-funded research and initial investment in Africa, which is what started the Coalition's initial investigation, and
- the Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture with the subcommittee is expected to complete just in time for the Conference.

Conclusion: Aquaculture is a growth opportunity for food production in Africa and globally, guided by international consensus respecting bio-diversity and being climate friendly. This is a way to serve the people and provide more nutritious and nature positive food for a future of improved food and nutrition security. The FAO Conference would be a highly relevant and important venue for promoting and discussing this initiative.