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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

Eleventh Session

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PROGRESS TOWARDS THE GUIDELINES FOR SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE (GSA)

Executive Summary

In 2018, the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) endorsed the recommendation of its Sub-Committee on Aquaculture made in 2017 that FAO should develop global Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA) to guide government authorities and policy-makers in their efforts of promoting the implementation of Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and enable aquaculture to effectively participate in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, at its Thirty-fourth Session, COFI requested FAO to “consider guidance for concrete actions for the sector – according to national contexts, capacities and priorities – on the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and on climate change adaptation and mitigation”. In response to these requests, FAO has developed the GSA. The development of this document followed extensive consultations with experts and Members. This paper provides details on the background, process and status of the preparation of the GSA.

Suggested action by the Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee is invited to:

- Note the progress made towards the development of the GSA;
- Review and comment the draft GSA;
- Advise on the next steps to take towards the completion and eventual approval of the GSA;
- Invite resource partners to provide extra-budgetary funds to support the Secretariat in the finalization of the GSA and its implementation.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Ninth Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) held in Rome, Italy, from 24 to 27 October 2017 recognized the growing global significance of sustainable aquaculture development and its potential contributions to global food security and nutrition, as well as to the achievement of a wide range of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets. The Sub-Committee further recognized the increasing need for implementation of best practices in aquaculture in many countries and regions, and recommended that FAO should develop global Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA).¹
2. The purpose of the GSA is to provide practical guidance to government authorities and policy-makers in their efforts of promoting the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and enable aquaculture to effectively participate in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Guidelines will further help FAO Members to enhance their capacity development programmes for the sustainable management of the sector.^{2,3}
3. Highlighting the importance of aquaculture for food security and nutrition, improved livelihoods, poverty alleviation, income generation, job creation and trade, particularly for small-scale producers, and noting the potential of sustainable aquaculture to help meet the growing demand and fill the gap in global fish supply while recognizing the growing need for implementation of best practices in aquaculture, COFI, at its Thirty-third Session held in Rome, Italy, from 9 to 12 July 2018, endorsed the recommendation of the Sub-Committee that FAO should develop guidelines for sustainable aquaculture to provide guidance to the sector.⁴ The purpose of this paper is to share the progress made towards the implementation of this recommendation and to seek the Sub-Committee's guidance on the way forward.

STATUS

4. In response to the recommendation of the Sub-Committee to develop the GSA, as endorsed by COFI 33, the FAO Secretariat organized the first "Expert Consultation on the development of the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture" in Rome, Italy, from 17 to 20 June 2019,⁵ the report of which is provided as Session Background Document COFI:AQ/XI/2022/SBD.2.
5. The Expert Consultation produced a methodology for developing the GSA including making use of existing guidelines; a methodology and criteria for selecting case studies aimed at providing lessons learned; a methodology for identifying lessons learned; a list of thematic modules which GSA should cover; and an updated roadmap for the production of GSA.⁶
6. The Secretariat presented the outcome of the work of the Expert Consultation at the Tenth Session of the Sub-Committee held in Trondheim, Norway, from 23 to 27 August 2019. The Sub-Committee commended FAO's work on the Guidelines and provided guidance on the way forward,

¹ FAO Committee on Fisheries. 2018. *Report of the Ninth Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, Rome, Italy, 24–27 October 2017*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No. 1188. Rome, Italy. www.fao.org/3/i8886t/i8886T.pdf

² FAO Committee on Fisheries. 2019. *Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, Tenth Session, Trondheim, Norway, 23-27 August 2019*. Special event on better management practices and guidelines for sustainable aquaculture development. www.fao.org/3/na137en/na137en.pdf

³ For additional information see Information Document COFI:AQ/XI/2022/INF.9.

⁴ FAO Conference. 2019. *Forty-first Session Rome, 22-29 June 2019*. Report of the Thirty-third Session of the Committee on Fisheries (Rome, 9-13 July 2018). www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/bodies/Conference_2019/MX970_23/MX970_C_2019_23_en.pdf

⁵ With the financial support of the Kingdom of Norway and the Korea Maritime Institute.

⁶ COFI:AQ/XI/2022/SBD.2

including organizing regional consultations where all regions are represented. Further, the Sub-Committee encouraged Members to contribute to the development of the GSA by sharing their experiences in these consultations.⁷

7. Seven regional consultations were held for Africa, Asia, Latin America, Pacific and Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Near East and North Africa, and Europe and North America.⁸ Each regional consultation brought together government appointed representatives, international organizations, research institutions, academia, civil society as well as fishery and aquaculture regional bodies. The regional consultation for Africa was held physically in Bamako, Mali, from 29 to 30 November 2019, whereas all other regional consultations had to be convened virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

8. Participants to the regional consultations: (i) shared current national and regional governance instruments for sustainable aquaculture development including policies, legal and regulatory frameworks, and practices; (ii) reviewed these instruments and thematic modules suggested by the Expert Consultation and identified their strengths and weaknesses, as well as related challenges and opportunities; (iii) selected regional priority areas from the list of thematic modules suggested by the Expert Consultation and based on the outcome of point (ii) above; and (iv) proposed case studies highlighting lessons learned relevant to their respective regions.

9. The regional consultation for Africa brought together 38 participants including 36 government representatives from 28 countries. The region's highest priority areas identified are: (i) governance and planning for aquaculture development, and (ii) sustainable aquaculture and agenda 2030. Participants also identified⁹ the following additional priority areas for the region: (i) certification requirements/guidelines for service providers (feed, seed, fish farm); (ii) guidelines to manage aquaculture farms; (iii) access to water and land; (iv) carrying capacity in cage aquaculture and water usage, including conflict management; (v) best management practices along the aquaculture value chain; (vi) genetic management of strains; (vii) usage of supplements; (viii) regulation on trade issues; (ix) economic and environmental management, and; (x) building resilience in aquaculture.¹⁰

10. The regional consultation for Asia, which was held from 30 November to 2 December 2020, recorded 32 participants including 25 government representatives from 16 countries out of the 26 invited. The regional priority areas identified are: (i) governance and planning for aquaculture development; (ii) better management practices in aquaculture; (iii) sustainable feed, and; (iv) aquaculture value chains, consumers, markets and trade. Moreover, the Consultation identified the following additional priority areas for the region: (i) maximize the use of Information Technology systems, digital innovation and satellite mapping, and; (ii) utilize the Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence to develop more efficient and inclusive traceability systems.

11. For Latin America, the regional consultation was held from 9 to 11 December 2020. Twenty-six participants, including 22 government representatives from 13 countries out of the 19 invited, attended the meeting. The latter identified the following regional priority areas: (i) sustainable aquaculture and agenda 2030; (ii) governance and planning for aquaculture development; (iii) biodiversity and genetic

⁷ FAO Committee on Fisheries. 2019. *Report of the Tenth Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, Trondheim, Norway, 23–27 August 2019*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No. 1287. Rome, Italy. www.fao.org/3/ca7417t/CA7417T.pdf

⁸ With the financial support of Korea Maritime Institute and Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea.

⁹ FAO. 2020. *Report of Regional Consultation on the development of Guidelines of Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA), Bamako, Mali, 29–30 November 2019*. Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No. 1319. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0280en>

¹⁰ FAO. 2020. *Report of Regional Consultation on the development of Guidelines of Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA), Bamako, Mali, 29–30 November 2019*. Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No. 1319. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0280en>

resources; (iv) Better Management Practices in Aquaculture; (v) water management; (vi) biosecurity, aquatic animal health and animal well-being. Furthermore, the Consultation noted financing of micro-, small- and medium-scale aquaculture farms, as well as Research and Development for new technology adoption, certification and traceability as additional priority areas for the region.

12. Concerning the regional consultation for the Pacific and the Caribbean regions, which was held from 23 to 25 February 2021, 33 participants including 27 government representatives from 16 countries out of the 23 invited were recorded. For the Pacific region, the priorities identified include: (i) sustainable aquaculture and agenda 2030; (ii) governing and planning aquaculture development; (iii) biodiversity and genetic resources; (iv) Better Management Practices in Aquaculture; (v) sustainable feed; (vi) specific farming systems; (vii) aquaculture value chains, consumers, markets and trade, and; (viii) aquaculture statistics and information. The Caribbean region agreed on the following as regional priorities: (i) management of genetic farmed resources, and biosecurity; (ii) education programme and research on the adoption of new technology and farming systems; (iii) integration of new technology through marketing, social media and digitalization (smart digitalized early warning system); (iv) data collection analysis, management and monitoring, and; (v) farmer organization for a better business management, and access to collective feed import and finance. The region further noted that incentive programmes for micro local feed production were a priority for them.

13. The regional consultation for Eastern Europe and Central Asia took place from 29 to 31 March 2021. It recorded 39 participants including 33 government representatives from 18 countries out of the 29 invited. For Eastern Europe, governance, economic and social sustainability, as well as disease control, animal health and animal welfare were identified as priorities. Besides, the region agreed on the following additional priority areas: (i) technical innovation, and; (ii) environmentally sustainable production. Better livelihoods and equitable development, genetic resource management, stock/feed management, seed production and feed supply, water quality management, and biosecurity and animal health came out as priorities¹¹ for Central Asia.

14. The regional consultation for Near East and North Africa was held from 6 to 8 April 2021. Thirty-seven participants attended, including 34 government representatives from 14 countries out of the 18 invited. The meeting identified the following regional priority areas: (i) biosecurity; (ii) capacity building; (iii) governance, and; (iv) spatial planning. They further indicated that zoning, insurance, feed, market and data were also important and identified finance as an additional priority area.

15. The regional consultation for Europe and North America occurred from 27 to 29 April 2021. It brought together 67 participants including 36 government representatives of 18 countries out of the 29 invited and one representative of the European Union.

16. Regional priority areas identified by Europe are: (i) governance and planning, including administrative simplification, spatial planning, access rights to land and water and monitoring; (ii) environmental interactions, including water management and protection, climate change, ecosystem services and biodiversity, ecosystem based-approach; (iii) biosecurity and animal welfare; (iv) capacity building and skills development, including bringing innovation to farmers and across the value chain, and education at all levels, and; (v) social perception and acceptability, including stakeholder involvement, local development and transparency. North America's priorities include: (i) ecosystem approach, spatial planning and zoning, technology for climate change impact mitigation and adaptation, and governance; (ii) alternative feed; (iii) biosecurity and aquatic animal health, and; (iv) innovation and technology.

¹¹ FAO. 2021. *Report of the Regional Consultation for Eastern Europe and Central Asia on the development of Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA). Virtual meeting, 29–31 March 2021*. Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No. 1352. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7504en>

17. At its Tenth Session, the Sub-Committee recommended *inter alia* that the GSA should be a dynamic document to be reviewed periodically.¹² In this regard, FAO Secretariat developed a web page dedicated to GSA. The web page provides the methodology, roadmap and timeline for the development of the Guidelines. Links to relevant news, events, and resources including multimedia, publications and strategic documents are also provided.¹³

18. At its Thirty-fourth Session, COFI requested FAO to “consider guidance for concrete actions for the sector – according to national contexts, capacities and priorities – on the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and on climate change adaptation and mitigation”.¹⁴

19. In response to this request, the Secretariat is developing an “Action-Oriented Guidance for Transforming aquaculture for greater contribution to achieve the SDGs. While the GSA will advise government authorities and policy-makers on what needs to be in place to achieve sustainable aquaculture, the Action-Oriented Guidance will advise policy-makers and practitioners on how to support the implementation of the GSA and the achievements of the SDGs.

20. The Secretariat organized, virtually, a Second Expert Consultation on the development of the GSA from 18 to 22 October 2021.¹⁵ The Consultation reviewed the first draft of the GSA and produced its current version. The report of the Second Expert Consultation is provided as Session Background Document COFI:AQ/XI/2022/SBD.3, and the draft GSA is provided as Information Document COFI:AQ/XI/2022/INF.9.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT

21. The Sub-Committee is invited to:

- Note the progress made towards the development of the GSA;
- Review and comment the draft GSA;
- Advise on the next steps to take towards the completion and eventual approval of the GSA;
- Invite resource partners to provide extra-budgetary funds to support the Secretariat in the finalization of the GSA and its implementation.

¹² FAO Committee on Fisheries. 2019. *Report of the Tenth Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, Trondheim, Norway, 23–27 August 2019*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No. 1287. Rome, Italy. www.fao.org/3/ca7417t/CA7417T.pdf

¹³ www.fao.org/in-action/gsa/en/

¹⁴ FAO. 2022. *Report of the Thirty-fourth Session of the Committee on Fisheries, Rome, 1–5 February 2021*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No. 1336. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb8322en>

¹⁵ COFI:AQ/XI/2022/SBD.3