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منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Thirty-sixth Session

8-12 July 2024

DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE 16-19 MAY 2023

Executive Summary

This document summarizes the main outcomes of the Twelfth Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI:AQ XII). The report is available as document COFI/2024/INF/8.

Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- (i) endorse the report of the Twelfth Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture and consider the recommendations therein;
- (ii) adopt the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (available as COFI/2024/INF/7) and note their relevance for the implementation of the Blue Transformation roadmap; and
- (iii) provide guidance on the follow-up to the matters raised.

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

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Twelfth Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI:AQ) was held in Hermosillo, Mexico, from 16 to 19 May 2023. It was attended by 36 Members of FAO, by representatives from one specialized agency of the United Nations and by observers from seven intergovernmental organizations.
2. The Twelfth Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture was chaired by Mr Edgar Lanz from Mexico. The Sub-Committee elected Mr Dawood Alyahyai (Oman) as Chairperson of the Drafting Committee. The Drafting Committee included Brazil, China, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

II. OUTCOMES OF THE SESSION

Implementation of the recommendations of the past sessions of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture

3. The Sub-Committee commended the work implemented during the intersessional period, supported FAO's efforts to promote aquaculture and expressed appreciation of FAO's work in global capacity development activities.
4. The Sub-Committee highlighted the importance of aquaculture to food security and nutrition, livelihoods, economic development and public health as well as aquaculture's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
5. The Sub-Committee welcomed FAO's Blue Transformation Roadmap and noted that there are other important issues not included in the Blue Transformation Roadmap for FAO to address, such as public perception of aquaculture as a constraint on sustainable expansion and the use of an Ecosystem Approach to Aquaculture and appreciated the White Paper on Asia-Pacific Aquaculture Transformation.
6. The Sub-Committee recommended that the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA) inform the future programmatic work of FAO in implementing the Blue Transformation Roadmap.
7. The Sub-Committee commended FAO's contributions towards the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022 (IYAFA 2022); the Sub-Committee expressed concern that small producers faced challenges in participating meaningfully in IYAFA 2022 and recommended that small-scale aquaculture be prioritized by FAO in its intersessional work.
8. The Sub-Committee appreciated the publication of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GPA) and efforts made toward its implementation, noted the continued development of the global information system for aquatic genetic resources and appreciated proposed indicators for monitoring and implementation of the GPA, the forthcoming guidelines on *ex situ* conservation and stocking programmes.
9. The Sub-Committee appreciated FAO's work on biosecurity and aquatic animal health, including through the Progressive Management Pathway for Improving Aquaculture Biosecurity (PMP/AB) and the activities of the Technical Working Group, and encouraged its continued

implementation. The Sub-Committee stressed the importance to work closely with partners on aquatic animal health, including the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), and with the FAO Chief Veterinary Office.

10. The Sub-Committee recognized FAO's work on antimicrobial resistance (AMR), welcomed the designation of FAO Reference Centres on AMR, and encouraged continued activities on One Health and the finalization of the guidelines on AMR monitoring.

11. The Sub-Committee recognized aquaculture as an important topic for international cooperation and encouraged FAO to make use of South-South and triangular cooperation. The Sub-Committee noted the Global Sustainable Aquaculture Advancement Partnership (GSAAP) as a mechanism to exchange experiences and facilitate innovation and help implement the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA).

12. The Sub-Committee welcomed the publication of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022–2031, and requested FAO develop guidance on climate change mitigation and adaptation for aquaculture, noting that unfed aquaculture can produce aquatic foods with a low environmental and carbon footprint.

Progress towards the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture

13. The Sub-Committee commended FAO for the preparation of the draft Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA), particularly noting the open, inclusive, and transparent consultation process and participatory approach.

14. The Sub-Committee recognized that the GSA complements and supports FAO's efforts to back the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and constitutes a valuable guide for achieving the sustainable development of the aquaculture sector. The Sub-Committee noted that the vision, objectives, scope, and guiding principles of the GSA are a strong statement to how aquaculture should develop and innovate to promote global food security and nutrition and support the SDGs.

15. The Sub-Committee approved the revised final version GSA and endorsed its submission to the 36th Session of COFI for adoption, including an executive summary [The final GSA including the executive summary are presented as COFI/2024/INF/7].

16. The Sub-Committee requested FAO to coordinate an evaluation process of GSA implementation, and update the GSA, as appropriate, six years after adoption by COFI and again at regular intervals.

17. The Sub-Committee called on FAO to raise awareness of the GSA, promote good practices, seek innovative and sustainable sources of funding to provide technical assistance and advice to Members in the implementation of the GSA, and explore all platforms to support the implementation of the GSA.

18. The Sub-Committee requested FAO to finalize the document of the case studies with input from the Bureau prior to publication, and ensure the document establishes clear linkages to relevant sections of the GSA.

Special event on women in aquaculture – challenges and opportunities

19. The Sub-Committee voiced strong support for FAO’s work on gender mainstreaming in aquaculture.
20. The Sub-Committee called for the development and implementation of more prominent actions, including global, regional and national initiatives toward the improvement of gender equality and women’s empowerment in aquaculture.
21. The Sub-Committee recognized that gender inequalities in aquaculture persist, including the gender wage gap and the triple burden faced by women. The Sub-Committee noted that it is in the interest of sustainable aquaculture development that these inequalities are urgently redressed through the adoption of innovative Gender Transformative Approaches (GTAs).
22. The Sub-Committee acknowledged that socio-cultural expectations, socio-economic dynamics, and power dynamics contribute to the roles that men and women have in aquaculture. The Sub-Committee noted that oppressive socio-political systems restrict women’s rights and continue to restrict the advancement and potential of women, and these oppressions must be addressed through an intersectional lens. The Sub-Committee encouraged raising awareness of and addressing the social, cultural, economic, and political barriers to women’s empowerment.
23. The Sub-Committee called upon FAO to encourage and assist Members in compiling and disseminating reliable gender-disaggregated statistical data on aquaculture, including through the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries questionnaire and regular provision of information in “The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems Report” and “The State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture”.
24. The Sub-Committee urged FAO to develop a roadmap to improve the involvement of women in aquaculture and promote gender equality and equity. The Sub-Committee requested FAO to explore the creation of a member-based working group on Women in Aquaculture, which could meet during the inter-sessional period to support this roadmap, building on existing resources, and explore the creation of a network of women in aquaculture.

III. RECOGNIZING AND ENHANCING THE CONTRIBUTION OF ALGAE TO GLOBAL AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT

25. The Sub-Committee noted the growing interest in seaweed aquaculture and its potential to contribute to global food production through low environmental impact farming practices. It further noted the livelihood and income generating opportunities associated with seaweed farming.
26. The Sub-Committee noted that for further expansion of algae production, additional support and investment is required to identify suitable farming areas and integrated farming opportunities beyond the nearshore to reduce competition with other economically important resource users.
27. The Sub-Committee noted concerns on food safety in seaweed utilization as human food particularly concerning bioaccumulation of toxic elements and requested FAO to review this issue.
28. The Sub-Committee noted that with further expansion new challenges are emerging, including disease outbreaks, that require timely attention. Furthermore, the need to improve farmed strains to

enhance specific and desirable traits using appropriate and known genetic applications will become increasingly important.

29. The Sub-Committee indicated that market-related challenges, including eating habits and food product development, constrain the growth of seaweed aquaculture and requested FAO assist with creating awareness of the benefits of seaweed consumption, particularly in Africa.

30. The Sub-Committee noted that capacity building and specific training development along the entire seaweed value chain is required, noted the need for enhancing international and regional cooperation and technical exchanges and requested FAO to continue with its technical assistance.

31. The Sub-Committee drew attention to the need to safeguard against risks from non-native seaweed species and requested FAO to collect and share experiences of seaweed introductions for farming purposes.

32. The Sub-Committee encouraged FAO to provide guidance to Members in regard to access market-based mechanisms to incentivize seaweed farming since it delivers ecosystems services, maintains healthy local marine ecosystem functioning, and contribute to addressing climate change impacts.

33. The Sub-Committee noted the potential of the use of seaweed as feed ingredients and requested FAO to provide technical support.

34. The Sub-Committee encouraged FAO and Members to expand further its work on data collection specific to seaweed aquaculture production and trade.

IV. PROGRESS REPORTING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES (CCRF) PROVISIONS RELEVANT TO AQUACULTURE AND CULTURE-BASED FISHERIES IN THE CONTEXT OF BLUE TRANSFORMATION

35. The Sub-Committee thanked FAO for the update on the implementation of the Blue Transformation roadmap and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) Questionnaire for Aquaculture.

36. The Sub-Committee reaffirmed its support of the core global objectives and targets of the Blue Transformation Roadmap and welcomed its aim of transforming global aquaculture into a more productive, efficient, climate smart and socially and environmentally responsible food system for better production, better nutrition, better environment and better life, leaving no one behind.

37. The Sub-Committee recognized that the CCRF remains a cornerstone for responsible practices in fisheries and aquaculture and re-emphasized that the accompanying Questionnaire is the key tool to monitor its implementation, measure progress towards development of responsible aquaculture practices in the context of implementing the Blue Transformation roadmap and identify gaps needing intervention.

38. The Sub-Committee noted with dissatisfaction the significant decline in responses to CCRF Questionnaires in 2021 and encouraged all Members to respond in order to allow the monitoring of the implementation of the CCRF and the Sustainable Development Goals.

39. The Sub-Committee appreciated FAO's current efforts to determine the cause of the decline in Members' participation in completing the most recent CCRF Questionnaire, explore options for addressing this issue and improve Members' responsiveness including assistance and training.

40. The Sub-Committee recommended FAO invite Members to nominate a National Focal Point to liaise regularly with the Secretariat regarding any issues with the CCRF Aquaculture Questionnaire. The Sub-Committee also encouraged Members to ensure effective communication between National Focal Points and FAO.

41. The Sub-Committee welcomed an update of the CCRF Questionnaire to include emerging and strategic issues, noting that the core of the Questionnaire should remain true to the topics covered by the CCRF, and that the update should also take into consideration the need to monitor and report on the implementation of the GSA.

42. The Sub-Committee underlined the importance of keeping the CCRF-Aquaculture Questionnaire as the sole reporting instrument to the Sub-Committee, including on the implementation of the GSA, and of avoiding the creation of new tools for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the GSA.

43. The Sub-Committee noted the willingness of Members to participate, voluntarily, in the review and the design of a new web-based CCRF Aquaculture Questionnaire.

44. The Sub-Committee recommended that the GSA be mainstreamed in FAO's programmatic work in aquaculture.

V. ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE THIRTEENTH SESSION OF THE COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

45. Ms Burcu Bilgin Topçu of Türkiye was elected Chairperson of the Thirteenth Session of the Sub-Committee. Indonesia was elected first Vice-Chair. Mexico, Senegal, and United States of America were elected Vice-Chairs. Oman and Fiji informed that nominations for the Bureau for the Near East and Southwest Pacific regions would be sent after regional consultation.

VI. DATE AND PLACE OF THE THIRTEENTH SESSION

46. The Sub-Committee warmly welcomed the kind offer of Türkiye to host its Thirteenth Session.