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# COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

## SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

### Twelfth Session

Hermosillo, Mexico, 16–19 May 2023

## PROGRESS TOWARDS THE GUIDELINES FOR SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE (GSA)

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Thirty-third Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) endorsed, in July 2018, the recommendation made by the Ninth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI:AQ) in October 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 the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and enable aquaculture to play a prominent role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In response to this request, a draft GSA was prepared following extensive consultations with experts and Members. The Eleventh Session of COFI:AQ reviewed the draft GSA and recommended finalizing it before the Twelfth Session of the COFI:AQ through a Task Force mechanism. This Working Document provides an update on the process and status of the revision of the GSA.

### Suggested action by the Sub-Committee

#### The Sub-Committee is invited to:

- Note the progress made towards the finalization of the GSA since the Eleventh Session of COFI:AQ;
- Review and comment on the updated draft GSA;
- Provide guidance on the next steps towards adoption of the GSA; and
- Invite Members and Resource Partners to provide extra-budgetary funds to support the promotion and implementation of the GSA.

*Documents can be consulted at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)*

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Ninth Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI:AQ) 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. COFI:AQ further recognized the increasing need for the implementation of best practices in aquaculture in many countries and regions and recommended that FAO should develop global Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA).<sup>1</sup> The Thirty-third Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) held in Rome, Italy, from 9 to 12 July 2018, endorsed this recommendation.<sup>2</sup>

2. The purpose of the GSA is to provide practical guidance to government authorities and policymakers in their efforts to implement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and enable aquaculture to play a prominent role in the realization 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.<sup>3</sup>

3. In response to the recommendation by the Ninth Session of COFI:AQ, as endorsed by COFI33, FAO drafted the GSA following extensive consultations with experts and Members<sup>4</sup> and presented them to the Eleventh Session of COFI:AQ, which was held virtually in Rome, Italy, from 24 to 27 May 2022.

4. With the aim of having the GSA adopted at its Twelfth Session, the Eleventh Session of COFI:AQ recommended FAO to finalize the draft GSA following a three-step process: (i) FAO to revise the draft GSA based on recommendations of the Eleventh Session of COFI:AQ; (ii) FAO to share the revised draft with all Members for written inputs; (iii) FAO, together with the COFI:AQ Bureau, to establish a dedicated Task Force, comprised of interested Members including representatives from each region, in order to finalize the draft GSA prior to the Twelfth Session of COFI:AQ.

5. This Working Document aims to share the progress made towards the finalization of the GSA since the Eleventh Session of COFI:AQ and seek the Sub-Committee's adoption or guidance regarding the next steps, if any, towards adoption of the GSA.

## STATUS

6. To address the recommendation of the Eleventh Session of COFI:AQ, which was endorsed by the Thirty-fifth Session of COFI,<sup>5</sup> FAO produced a revised draft of the GSA in all official languages<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.fao.org/3/i8886t/I8886T.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> 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). C 2019/23. [www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/bodies/Conference\\_2019/MX970\\_23/MX970\\_C\\_2019\\_23\\_en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/bodies/Conference_2019/MX970_23/MX970_C_2019_23_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> 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. COFI:AQ/X/2019/8. [www.fao.org/3/na137en/na137en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/na137en/na137en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> FAO Committee on Fisheries. 2022. Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, Eleventh Session, Rome, Italy, 24–27 May 2022. Draft Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture. COFI:AQ/XI/2022/INF.9. [www.fao.org/3/cb9500en/cb9500en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb9500en/cb9500en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> FAO Committee on Fisheries. 2022. Report of the Thirty-fifth Session of the Committee on Fisheries, Rome, Italy, 5–9 September 2022. [www.fao.org/3/nk497en/nk497en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/nk497en/nk497en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> The revised draft GSA was uploaded in the GSA website. Source: FAO. 2022. Draft Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture. Preliminary copy. [www.fao.org/in-action/gsa/resources/detail/es/c/1622024/](http://www.fao.org/in-action/gsa/resources/detail/es/c/1622024/)

and sent it to Members for written inputs. Moreover, together with the COFI:AQ Bureau, FAO invited all Members to express their interest in joining a Task Force to finalize the draft GSA prior to the Twelfth Session of the Sub-Committee and, subsequently, nominate one representative to participate in its meeting.

7. Forty-one (41) Members, including eleven (11) from Africa, seven from Asia and Pacific, eleven (11) from Europe and Central Asia, eight (8) from Latin America and the Caribbean, three (3) from Near East and North Africa and one (1) from North America, expressed their interest to join and nominated representatives to the Task Force.<sup>7</sup>

8. A meeting of the Task Force was held virtually from 9 to 11 January 2023. It was attended by seventy-four (74) participants<sup>8</sup>, including twenty-one (21) from Africa, eighteen (18) from Asia and Pacific, fourteen (14) from Europe and Central Asia, eleven (11) from Latin America and the Caribbean, eight (8) from Near East and North Africa and two (2) from North America.

9. The Task Force meeting discussed, section by section, the revised draft GSA produced by the FAO Secretariat, along with the written inputs provided by FAO Members. The Task Force produced recommendations, including a structure to follow, to guide the Secretariat towards the finalization of the GSA prior to the Twelfth Session of COFI:AQ.

10. The Secretariat updated the draft GSA based on the Task Force recommendations and decisions. The resulting updated draft GSA are provided as Information Document COFI:AQ/XII/2023/INF.8.

11. Further, at its Eleventh Session, the Sub-Committee requested an update on the case study preparation discussed during the regional consultations and to regularly update the GSA website.

12. In this regard, a total of 40 case studies that supported the development of the GSA, are under finalization. They will be included in a separate publication entitled “Background document for the development of the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA)”<sup>9</sup> for reference of good practices. The website dedicated to the GSA is being regularly updated.

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<sup>7</sup> Representatives of the Task Force were appointed by Members.

<sup>8</sup> Many Members appointed more than one person, sometimes four, to the Task Force.

<sup>9</sup> The forthcoming publication titled “Background document for the development of the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA)” will consist of twelve chapters; namely: 1. Sustainable aquaculture and the 2030 Agenda, 2. Governing and planning aquaculture development, 3. Biodiversity and genetic resources, 4. Better Management Practices in aquaculture, 5. Sustainable Aquafeeds and Feeding, 6. Water Abstraction and Waste Management, 7. Biosecurity and aquatic animal health (provisional), 8. Innovations and technological developments, 9. Aquaculture value chains, trade and market access, 10. Aquaculture statistics and information, 11. Climate change and aquaculture resilience and 12. Capacity development, extension and research.