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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE

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MINIMUM SUBSTANTIVE REQUIREMENTS AND CRITERIA FOR MARINE AND INLAND CAPTURE FISHERIES ECOLABELS

SUMMARY

Following a request by the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), this document provides a summary of progress to develop further the minimum substantive requirements for the Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries and for the Proposed Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Inland Capture Fisheries. Background information is presented first, followed by the main points raised during the Expert Consultation.

The Sub-Committee on Fish Trade is invited to endorse the changes proposed to the existing Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries, to schedule another Expert Consultation to finalize, for approval by the next COFI meeting in 2009, the Proposed Guidelines for The Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Inland Capture Fisheries, incorporating changes made to the existing Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries.

The Sub-Committee is also invited to recommend that a joint Expert Consultation be approved by COFI 2009 to develop a combined set of guidelines for marine capture and inland capture fisheries for approval by COFI 2011.

INTRODUCTION

1. Following Expert and Technical Consultations in 2003, 2004 and 2005, FAO produced technical guidelines on the ecolabelling of fish and fishery products from marine capture fisheries. Those guidelines were adopted by the 26th Session of COFI in 2005. In adopting the guidelines, the 26th Session of COFI recommended that “FAO should review and further develop general criteria in relation to “stock under consideration” and serious impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem (paragraph 27 of the Guidelines)”. In 2006, FAO held an Expert Consultation on the development of similar guidelines for inland capture fisheries. The recommendation from the 26th Session of COFI was subsequently endorsed by the 27th Session of COFI in March 2007, where it was agreed that FAO undertake further work in relation to the minimum substantive requirements and criteria for both marine and inland capture fisheries.
2. Following this request by the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Committee on Fisheries, the Expert Consultation on the FAO Guidelines for Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Capture Fisheries was convened by FAO in Rome on 3-5 March 2008. The Expert Consultation reviewed the existing marine and inland capture fisheries guidelines and formulated recommendations to COFI to address COFI’s request on “stock under consideration” and “minimum substantive requirements”.

POINTS RAISED DURING THE EXPERT CONSULTATION WHICH REQUIRE ACTION

3. The Expert Consultation recommended amendments to the Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries and to the Proposed Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Inland Capture Fisheries. These are included as appendix E (marine) and F (inland) of the report of the Expert Consultation (COFI:FT/XI/2008/Inf.6) with changes marked on the existing text for easy reference.
4. In addition, the Expert Consultation made a number of other related recommendations:
 - Enhancement of fisheries is common in inland fisheries and it is increasingly used in marine fisheries. The full spectrum of practices in enhancement ranges from no enhancement in pure capture fisheries to highly controlled aquaculture systems. There is no agreed boundary to determine when a fishery should cease to be considered a capture fishery. Such a boundary needs to be agreed in order to avoid confusion in the future.
 - Species introductions can and are likely to have major impacts on aquatic ecosystems. In this context there is an urgent need for FAO to review and strengthen the existing technical guidelines on species introductions¹.
 - The Expert Consultation agreed that further guidance on assessment of fisheries in data poor situations is necessary, including application of risk assessment methods in such situations. The Expert Consultation recommended that FAO develop technical guidelines on the application of risk assessment methods in the context of ecolabelling of data poor fisheries.
 - Ensuring reliable chain of custody is a critical issue in ecolabelling. The Expert Consultation recommended that this aspect would benefit from further refinement and that this work could be done in the context of ongoing work in COFI’s Sub-Committee on Trade relating to traceability.

¹ FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries. 2 Precautionary approach to capture fisheries and species introductions. FAO, Rome. 1996. 54pp.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE SUB-COMMITTEE

5. The Sub-Committee is invited to endorse the changes made to the Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries.
6. The Sub-Committee may wish to consider requesting the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department (FI) to schedule another Expert Consultation to finalize the proposed Guidelines for The Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Inland Capture Fisheries, incorporating changes made to the existing Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries. If the Sub-Committee makes such a recommendation it could also consider the source of funds to hold the Consultation which is not currently scheduled in the Department's work programme.
7. The Sub-Committee may also wish to consider recommending to COFI that a joint Expert Consultation be approved by COFI 2009 to develop a combined set of guidelines for marine capture and inland capture fisheries for approval by COFI 2011.