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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Thirty-first Session

Rome, 9-13 June 2014

DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FOURTEENTH SESSION OF THE COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE, BERGEN, NORWAY, 24–28 FEBRUARY 2014

Executive Summary

This document contains highlights of the topics discussed at the fourteenth session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade and summarizes its main recommendations. The full report is available as document COFI/2014/Inf.7.

The Committee is invited to:

- endorse the report of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade; and
- provide guidance on the follow up to the issues raised in the report.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The fourteenth session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade was held in Bergen, Norway, from 24 to 28 February 2014 at the invitation of the Government of Norway. The report of this session is available as document COFI/2014/Inf.7. The paragraphs numbers indicated in the following sections are those from the report.

MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE SESSION

REPORT ON TRADE-RELATED ACTIVITIES IN FAO

2. The Sub-Committee underlined the importance of FAO's work in capacity-building for developing countries, and urged FAO to continue providing technical support to facilitate market access, value addition, post-harvest and food safety issues. (Para. 10)
3. The Sub-Committee welcomed the better integration of FAO's fisheries related work with that of other FAO technical departments. Members also supported the growing collaboration of FAO with other international organizations, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank (WB) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). (Para. 12)
4. The Sub-Committee referred to the important contribution in regional capacity building carried out by the FISH INFONetwork and encouraged FAO to continue its support and coordination of this Network. The Sub-Committee also referred to the usefulness of the GLOBEFISH project in providing analysis and information on trends in international fish markets. (Para. 13)
5. Some Members commended the work of FAO on economic analysis and modelling in the fish and food sectors in order to obtain a better understanding of their potential future perspectives. Particular reference was made to the inclusion of a specific chapter on fish in the annual "OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook" publication, and the work recently published in the "Fish to 2030" publication and to the FAO "Food by 2030" study. (Para. 14)
6. The Sub-Committee welcomed further integration and cooperation between the Secretariats of the FAO Sub-Committees on Fish Trade and on Aquaculture. The forthcoming projects and activities reported in COFI:FT/XIV/2014/2 were supported by the Sub-Committee. Members indicated the need for a greater focus on the role of aquaculture in international markets and trade. FAO was also requested to take into account the differences and peculiarities between aquaculture and capture fisheries in its work and documents. (Para. 15)
7. The Sub-Committee encouraged FAO to continue the work on reducing post-harvest losses. (Para. 16)
8. The Sub-Committee supported the growing attention being given to gender issues in FAO projects, both in dedicated activities as well as in integrated parts of projects, and in the inclusion of gender as a cross-cutting Strategic Objective in the new FAO Strategic Framework starting in 2014. (Para. 17)
9. The Sub-Committee congratulated FAO for its work on the Fish Price Index, underlining the value of demand, supply and price studies for fisheries policy makers. (Para. 18)
10. The Sub-Committee welcomed FAO's increased collaboration with the Statistics Division of the United Nations (UN) and the work carried out to have more specific fisheries and aquaculture related questions in population and agricultural census. (Para. 19).
11. The Sub-Committee expressed its support to the work of FAO related to the improvement of the Harmonized System of Classification (HS) for fish products and the continued collaboration with the World Customs Organization (WCO). Members encouraged FAO to continue this work and made suggestions on possible areas of improvement, including the utilization of Taxonomic Serial Numbers to complement the HS, a better breakdown for species which need to be monitored more precisely, such as sharks and rays, and the distinction of farmed and wild origin in trade data. (Para. 20)

12. Some Members expressed concern regarding the budgetary situation and the availability of an adequate budget to effectively accomplish fisheries related activities, and on the consequent need for more extra-budgetary resources. Furthermore, the importance for FAO to remain in close contact and effectively continue to collaborate with Member countries was highlighted. (Para. 21)

ROLE OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (SO) WITHIN THE FAO REFORM PROCESS

13. Members also stressed the importance of the results-based framework and the development of relevant performance indicators. (Para. 22)

14. The Sub-Committee welcomed the opportunity for more inter-departmental synergies and a closer integration of fisheries priorities into wider natural resource management, economic development, food security and nutritional policies. The Sub-Committee also stressed the need to maintain a strong technical focus with a clear foundation in science when carrying out the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department's programmes. To this end, some Members welcomed the FAO Global Initiative on Blue Growth in support of food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable management of aquatic resources and its linkage to the Rio+20 commitments and other global initiatives. (Para. 23)

FISH TRADE AND HUMAN NUTRITION

15. The Sub-Committee encouraged FAO to assist Member Countries in their efforts to increase fish consumption, particularly among the most vulnerable. (Para. 24)

16. The Sub-Committee highlighted the need for more knowledge on the nutritional composition of locally available seafoods from the aquatic environment, including aquatic plants and by-products from processing of fish and other seafood. (Para. 25)

17. The Sub-Committee acknowledged that exporting high-value fish generates income that could be used to purchase greater quantities of fish with a lower economic value but with a similar or higher nutritional value. (Para. 26)

18. Many Members raised concerns linked to issues related to food safety. (Para. 27)

19. The Sub-Committee highlighted the need for increased research on alternatives to replace fishmeal and fish oil, enabling more fish for direct human consumption. The high prices of fishmeal and fish oil are a great challenge in this regard. FAO should assist Member countries on how to meet this challenge from a nutrition and food security perspective. (Para. 28)

20. The Sub-Committee also highlighted the potential of making more fish available for human consumption through reduced post-harvest losses, improved use of by-products and retention of by-catch. (Para. 29)

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN FISH TRADE

21. The Sub-Committee highlighted the importance of information sharing and indicated the need for FAO to continue the monitoring and analysis of international fish trade and developments in supply, demand, prices and consumption. The role of the FISH INFONetwork and GLOBEFISH as providers of analysis and information in the fisheries sector was also noted. (Para. 32)

22. The Sub-Committee highlighted the crucial role of developing countries in production and trade of fish and fishery products, as well as the needs of the small-scale sector. The Sub-Committee stressed the need to create a conducive environment for a more equitable participation of developing countries and, in particular, of the small-scale sector in regional and international trade. (Para. 33)

23. The Sub-Committee asked FAO to continue providing technical capacity-building to the developing countries on trade and marketing related issues. (Para. 35)

24. The Sub-Committee emphasized the importance of a transparent, robust and harmonized trading system, with measures applied in a transparent, consistent and non-discriminatory manner in accordance with WTO rules. (Para. 36)

25. The Sub-Committee supported FAO's work on the value-chain analysis of international fish trade conducted from 2009 to 2012. Further analysis of the relationship between stakeholders in the value-chain, including how prices and margins vary according to the relative position in the chain, would be beneficial. (Para. 37)
26. Many Members underlined that enhanced dialogue and consultation among countries would benefit international trade. (Para. 38)
27. Some Members raised concerns over the use of all fisheries subsidies and underlined FAO's important role in providing specialized technical expertise to the WTO, in particular for the fisheries subsidies negotiations. Some other Members highlighted that the use of only certain types of subsidies are of concern. Some Members requested the continuation of fisheries subsidies to enhance their capacity building and production in fish trade. (Para. 39)
28. The Sub-Committee supported the collaboration between FAO and other international organizations such as OECD, WB and WTO. The Sub-Committee further noted the importance of having fish more integrated with agriculture in economic analysis. (Para. 40)

REPORT ON THE EFFECTS OF ECOLABELLING SCHEMES ON FISHERIES

29. The Sub-Committee expressed concerns about a range of issues relating to ecolabelling schemes, including their potential to create trade restrictions and generate increased costs. (Para. 41)
30. The Sub-Committee noted the importance of FAO's cooperation with WTO and other intergovernmental organizations in providing technical advice on eco-labelling schemes and their impact on international seafood trade. (Para. 42)
31. The Sub-Committee recognized the role of the *FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine and Inland Capture Fisheries* (FAO Guidelines) in sustainable fisheries management. Some Members called for the need to continue working on their improvement. Some Members noted the possible benefit of using the Guidelines to evaluate overarching management systems, including for coastal small-scale sub-tropical and tropical fisheries. (Para. 43)
32. Many Members called upon FAO to provide technical assistance for developing countries in meeting market access requirements for fisheries certification and in improving national capacity for sustainable fisheries management. (Para. 44)
33. The Sub-Committee agreed that more research is needed on the impact of eco-labels on the sustainability of fisheries and economic returns to producers. (Para. 45)

BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES ON TRACEABILITY

34. The Sub-Committee appreciated the consultant's report which provides a comprehensive review of traceability within the current regulatory and non-regulatory standards in relation to food safety, sustainability and legality. Some Members indicated that there was no consensus in COFI for the Secretariat to present a draft best practice guidelines on traceability. (Para. 47)
35. The Sub-Committee noted that traceability is a widely used tool in different sectors. Some Members recommended that further work in this area should focus on ensuring the legality of fish. (Para. 48)
36. The Sub-Committee agreed that the consultant's report lacked a gap analysis and many Members recommended that the Secretariat convene an expert consultation to undertake this work. (Para. 49)

THE UN FISHERIES RESOLUTION ON SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES: CATCH DOCUMENTATION SCHEMES

37. Some Members noted the usefulness of catch documentation schemes in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and highlighted the need for technical assistance and capacity building in the implementation of such schemes. (Para. 51)

38. The Sub-Committee took note of an offer to finance an expert consultation on catch documentation schemes in line with terms of reference to be agreed by COFI for such work. The Sub-Committee took note of the following principles to apply to catch documentation schemes: a) be in conformity with the provisions of relevant international law; b) not create unnecessary barriers to trade; c) equivalence; d) risk-based; e) reliable, simple, clear and transparent; and f) electronic if possible. The Sub-Committee reiterated that cost-benefit considerations should also be undertaken before the introduction of any new catch documentation scheme. (Para. 52)

REVIEW OF MARKET ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

39. The Sub-Committee expressed support for FAO to continue to work in close cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) and various Codex Committees dealing with fish related issues. (Para. 54)

40. The Sub-Committee supported the development of technical guidelines by FAO/WHO for the implementation of Codex Code of Practice in relation to bivalve Maximum Residue Limits and sanitation programmes. (Para. 55)

41. Many Members called upon FAO to provide technical assistance to developing countries, especially to small-scale fisheries, for ensuring food safety based on Codex standards, guidelines and code of practice. (Para. 56)

42. Many Members emphasized the coordination role of FAO to improve dialogue between importing and exporting countries in order to ensure compliance with food safety requirements that support international trade. (Para. 57)

43. Many Members noted that private standards could become potential trade barriers and called upon FAO to continue cooperating with Codex within the framework of WTO's Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement. (Para. 58)

THE SMALL-SCALE SECTOR AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

44. The Sub-Committee underlined the importance for FAO to further work in support of small-scale fisheries, including technical assistance. The Sub-Committee noted in particular the importance of the development and implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication which are expected to be endorsed during COFI in June 2014, as well as the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security. (Para. 59)

45. The Sub-Committee acknowledged that priority areas for support by FAO under the new SOs framework include improvements in production processes; enhancements of working conditions to achieve decent work, including through social protection systems, and capacity development, both of small-scale fisheries actors and of responsible government authorities and institutions. (Para. 60)

46. The Sub-Committee underlined the importance of enabling small-scale operators to access and share information, to organize and to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes and value-chain dynamics for a more equitable distribution of benefits from national, regional and international trade. (Para. 61)

47. The Sub-Committee encouraged the sharing of national experiences on small-scale fisheries development among Member countries. (Para. 62)

48. The Sub-Committee emphasized that small-scale fisheries communities require technical support and training in post-harvest issues, so as to reduce post-harvest losses, value addition, processing and transportation technology and minimizing the impact of climate change and encouraged FAO to provide technical assistance in these areas. (Para. 63)

49. The Sub-Committee recognized the socio-economic and cultural importance of women in the post-harvest sector and recommended that FAO and other international organizations provide assistance to maintain and improve their role. (Para. 64)

50. The Sub-Committee recalled the importance of resource management systems which balance the livelihood needs and functions of small-scale fishing communities with the sustainable use of the resources and recognize the rights of the producer and management tools better suited to the biological and practical aspects of managing small-scale fisheries. (Para. 65)

51. The Sub-Committee reiterated the need for better and cost-efficient disaggregated data and information with regard to small-scale fisheries, as well as the need to develop capacities to translate this information into appropriate and evidence-based small-scale fisheries policies which allow the sector to develop sustainably and to take full advantage of the benefits of trade. (Para. 66)

52. The Sub-Committee acknowledged the importance of user and access rights for small-scale fishers and welcomed the planned conference on tenure and user rights in fisheries, which will take place in Cambodia in February 2015. (Para. 67)

UPDATE ON THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES) RELATED ACTIVITIES

53. The Sub-Committee expressed support for FAO cooperation with CITES. Some Members suggested that the future work should emphasize building the necessary capacity in countries to enable them to implement the CITES requirements. Some Members indicated that they required assistance with the identification of shark species and products, with shark research and stock assessment necessary to issue Non-Detriment Findings (NDF) and with appropriate monitoring, control and surveillance activities to enforce shark fishing regulations and fight IUU fishing. Some Members requested a general review of FAO's work related to CITES in view of FAO's priorities. (Para. 69)

54. The Sub-Committee underscored the importance of the FAO Expert Advisory Panel for CITES and many Members requested funding from FAO Regular Programme. It was proposed to include this in the agenda of COFI. Many Members acknowledged the efforts by FAO to strengthen the Panel's ability to provide technical advice on issues related to fisheries management and fish trade. (Para. 70)

55. The Sub-Committee advised that with regard to the conclusion of CITES regarding the application of criterion B and the introductory text of Annex 2a of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) to commercially exploited aquatic species proposed for inclusion on Appendix II, it considered this issue to be settled with the adoption of CoP16 Doc. 71 (Rev.1) by CITES. (Para. 71)

56. Many Members pointed out that FAO, regional fisheries management organizations and coastal states are the appropriate bodies to manage commercially exploited aquatic species and, thus, CITES is not a substitute for fisheries management. Some Members noted that before any listing, CITES should undertake full consultation with the involved country governments. Many Members noted that good collaboration and consultation between CITES and RFMOs and range states was considered to be essential for the conservation of commercially exploited aquatic species. In this context, the Sub-Committee noted, among other things, the effective collaboration between national fisheries and CITES agencies as a way of improving sound decision-making in different international fora. (Para. 72)

57. The Sub-Committee encouraged FAO to continue working on technical advice for species listed under CITES, such as queen conch and sturgeons. (Para. 73)

58. The Sub-Committee strongly supported the elaboration of specific codes for sharks, rays and skates in the 2017 edition of the Harmonized System classification by the WCO and the Sub-Committee stressed the importance of this work for the improvement of shark trade data. (Para. 74)

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 11 OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES

59. The Sub-Committee acknowledged and welcomed the improved response rate. (Para. 76)
60. The Sub-Committee agreed with the adoption of the web-based questionnaire for reporting in order to align the fish trade questionnaire with the main COFI questionnaire on the same platform, but recommended that for the time being the questionnaire on fish trade remains as a separate questionnaire. (Para. 77)
61. The Sub-Committee agreed to a transitional period during which the Secretariat will accept both on-line and excel responses to the questionnaire in response to some of the difficulties raised by some Members. (Para. 78)
62. The Sub-Committee approved changes to the instructions in the formulation and compilation of the questionnaire as proposed by the Secretariat in order to improve clarity. (Para. 79)
63. The Sub-Committee encouraged FAO to use the results of the questionnaire as a basis for planning and implementing its activities. (Para. 81)

DATE AND PLACE OF THE FIFTEENTH SESSION

64. The Sub-Committee welcomed the kind invitation from the Kingdom of Morocco to host its fifteenth session. Modalities as well as the date and venue will be determined by the Director-General in consultation with the Chairperson and in light of the international calendar of meetings. (Para. 84)

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE COMMITTEE

65. The Committee is invited to:
- (a) endorse the report of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade; and
 - (b) provide guidance on the follow up to the issues raised in the report.