



CONFERENCE

Forty-third Session

Rome, 1-7 July 2023

Evaluation of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022

Executive Summary

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2022 the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022) and designated the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as the lead agency to celebrate the Year in collaboration with governments, international organizations and relevant non-state actors.

The main objective of the IYAFA 2022 was to raise awareness of the role that small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers play in food security and nutrition, poverty eradication and sustainable use of natural resources – thereby increasing global understanding and action to support them. It also aimed to promote dialogue between different actors and enhance the voice of small-scale producers and their ability to influence policy and decision-making.

Celebration and promotion of IYAFA 2022 effectively brought the attention of diverse actors to the importance of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture through efforts that included a dedicated website, the development of a comprehensive communications and visual identity packages, the IYAFA 2022 Global Action Plan and strategic digital outreach. Throughout the Year FAO and stakeholders organized workshops, events and webinars across the regions and prepared a large number of publications to promote IYAFA 2022, communicate the important contributions of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture and further discussions on ensuring their long-term socioeconomic and environmental sustainability.

The IYAFA 2022 closing ceremony was held in a hybrid format on 31 March 2023, with the live event in Rome, Italy. The recommendations of the Year are a sound call to continue the momentum built during IYAFA 2022 beyond its official closure and have it mark the beginning of a new era of support for small-scale fisheries and aquaculture.

There is critical need to continue to support small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture as critical parts of healthy food systems. Particular attention is drawn to promoting their contribution to food security and nutrition, poverty eradication and sustainable use of natural resources and the support that is needed to promote and secure the long-term viability of these roles, in line with the principles of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines).

Suggested action by the Conference

The Conference is invited to:

- a) endorse the present evaluation report, recognizing the substantial achievements made at all levels during the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022;
- b) highlight the importance of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, FAO's *four betters* and Blue Transformation;
- c) encourage FAO Members and other relevant stakeholders to maintain the impetus of IYAF 2022 by making commitments and taking actions to promote small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers in line with the principles of the SSF Guidelines, in particular supporting future Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) summits.

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I. Background

1. Following the proposal by the Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries, the Seventy-second Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAF 2022), with FAO serving as the lead agency, in collaboration with other relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations (UN) system.
2. FAO hosted the IYAF 2022 Secretariat and established the IYAF 2022 International Steering Committee (IYAF 2022 ISC) in November 2020. The IYAF 2022 ISC was chaired by the Government of Peru's Ministry of Production and composed of regional representatives of Member Nations, UN organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs), research organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
3. The official launch of IYAF 2022 on 19 November 2021 commenced the celebrations to raise awareness of the contributions of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture to human well-being, poverty eradication and healthy food systems, promote dialogue between different actors and strengthen aquatic small-scale producers to partner with one another to make their voices heard and improve their ability to influence policy and decision-making processes.
4. It announced the IYAF 2022 key messages, goals and objectives and was attended by nearly 1 000 participants. The ceremony featured the FAO Director-General and ministers who emphasized the role of small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers in contributing to global food security, nutrition, livelihoods and environmental stewardship. It also included testimonials relating to the innovative capacity of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture in the context of sustainable development.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted both the preparation and implementation of IYAF 2022 celebrations. Despite these challenges, including the lack of a dedicated trust fund, IYAF 2022 celebrations effectively raised awareness of the critical role small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture play in efficient and resilient food systems among diverse actors, especially national administrations, NGOs, CSOs, intergovernmental bodies, media, private sector, educators, small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers and the public at large.

II. Outcomes

6. The IYAF 2022 Secretariat coordinated the celebrations in line with the IYAF 2022 Global Action Plan (IYAF 2022 GAP). The IYAF 2022 ISC provided guidance and assistance to the celebrations, including support to the establishment of regional committees, as well as the mobilization of political and financial support in their respective regions or areas of influence.
7. The overall expected outcomes of IYAF 2022 were organized into four categories:
 - a. Raised awareness
 - b. Strengthened science-policy interface
 - c. Empowered stakeholders
 - d. Enhanced partnerships
8. FAO coordinated a comprehensive promotional strategy for IYAF 2022, with the dedicated IYAF 2022 website serving as the central hub for information, such as the objectives and key messages, and resources in support of stakeholder engagement. All individuals and organizations promoting IYAF 2022 used the visual identity to increase impact with a unified representation, which was available in 15 languages. The Communications handbook and toolkit provided a comprehensive, action-oriented guide for supporters to celebrate IYAF 2022. It included information on the complete multimedia package, promotional materials, key messages, targeted messages for specific audiences and suggested actions for different actors to participate and elevate IYAF 2022. The materials were widely used in events, publications and through social media channels.

9. Diverse celebratory and promotional events were organized globally, regionally and nationally by FAO and its partners. Many webinars, conferences, trainings, panel discussions, exhibitions, and forums fostered synergies and enhanced visibility through co-organization with various partners. These events amplified the messages of IYAFa 2022 and benefited from the strengths of multi-stakeholder partnerships that involved governments, small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture organizations, research centres, educational institutions, media, governments, non-state actors, and civil society. Two hundred and sixty-eight confirmed events were posted on the IYAFa 2022 website.

10. At the close of IYAFa 2022, participants in the Year reported on the publications they had completed. A total of 249 publications celebrated, promoted or mentioned IYAFa 2022 in 17 languages, including articles, videos, declarations, calls to action, press releases, policy briefs, books, infographics, and technical reports.

11. To contextualize the celebrations and inspire action-oriented promotion throughout 2022, two regional and 12 national launches echoed the IYAFa 2022 global launch messages.^{1, 2} These events were attended by key government and stakeholder leaders and served as a platform to showcase the unique perspectives, challenges and solutions in their respective regions and countries.

12. A Small-Scale Fisheries Summit on 2-4 September 2022 was organized by the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) Working Group on Fisheries, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the Small-Scale Fisheries Resource and Collaboration Hub (SSF Hub) with support from FAO. The Summit brought together participants with a focus on fostering legitimate engagement and dialogue among small-scale artisanal fishers and fish workers, key supporters, partners and decision-makers in the days before the 35th Session of FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI). Attendees shared stories of their challenges while collaborating to build a common vision around crucial topics relevant to small-scale artisanal fisheries. They also forwarded actionable solutions for a new era of support for small-scale artisanal fisheries and the communities that depend on them.

13. COFI 2022 emphasized small-scale fisheries throughout the meeting and report, including the activities related to the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFa) and recommended that a SSF Summit be held biennially before COFI.

14. IYAFa 2022 also provided the opportunity to share initial findings of the Illuminating Hidden Harvests (IHH) study, a global initiative of FAO, Duke University, and WorldFish to gather and disseminate evidence about the specific benefits, interactions and impacts of small-scale artisanal fisheries and fish workers. Evidence from the IHH will help inform all levels of decision and policy-making processes and empower small-scale artisanal fishers and fish workers to advocate on their own behalf.

15. Numerous IYAFa 2022 activities focused on revealing the human side of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture. People and place-based story telling initiatives featured the women, men and youth in the small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture and provided a vehicle for the direct voice of small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers to be amplified and recognized. Contributions to this body of work include the FAO developed "My Story", where 12 stories in all UN languages presented stakeholders and supporters as they explored relevant topics, highlighted the successes of regional initiatives and recommended solutions to drive supportive actions for small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture.

16. The success of IYAFa 2022 was enhanced by the role of partnerships. The Year celebrated and promoted the establishment of several new international and regional partnerships, and the continued growth and strengthening of existing ones and the success of the Year is greatly thanks to

¹ Regional launches: Latin America and Caribbean Region on 19 November 2021; Pacific Region on 31 March 2022

² National launches: in Uganda in November 2021, in Ghana, Jamaica, Tanzania, Turkiye, and Uzbekistan in March 2022, in Tajikistan in April 2022, in Malawi and Zambia in May 2022, in Namibia in June 2022 and in Madagascar and Uruguay in July 2022

the uptake of IYAFA supporters and other organizations and individuals across all stakeholder groups around the world.

17. IYAFA 2022 furthered the direct voices of small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers and their supporters throughout its celebrations and provided impetus for the development and opportunity for the promotion of collective statements, declarations and calls to action to drive forward unified activities and commitments. These also informed the IYAFA 2022 recommendations, ensuring that small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers drive future action.

18. The recommendations are high-level messages to advise supportive action in line with existing commitments, in particular the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, which was strongly called for throughout IYAFA 2022.

19. The resulting recommendations from the Year echoed the IYAFA 2022 GAP pillars:

- a. Environmental sustainability: Integrate biodiversity and sustainable use considerations for the sustainability of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture. Enable the active participation of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture actors in sustainable resource use, management and stewardship. Increase integration and recognition for traditional knowledge.
- b. Economic sustainability: Enhance and empower equitable, inclusive value chains. Elevate the role of sustainable practices that reduce food waste and increase income generation opportunities. Improve access to financial resources and markets. Strengthen small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture representation in decision making processes through self-organization and collective action in all stages of the value chain. Protect small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture in blue economy plans.
- c. Social sustainability: Secure social rights for small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers. Promote the development and strengthening of social protection systems in small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture, grounded in a human rights-based approach that considers culture and acknowledges local context, including traditional, local, and indigenous knowledge.
- d. Governance: Ensure inclusive, legitimate consultation and participation. Support the active, free, effective, meaningful and informed engagement of stakeholders in the processes and decisions that will impact them, including effective co-management or shared governance. Integrate the voices of small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers into relevant international processes.
- e. Gender equality and equity: Guarantee the equal participation of women. Recognize and elevate the role of women in all stages of the value chain and prioritize investments in supporting services. Support women as key stakeholders and agents of change that are important contributors to success and through their work, they empower themselves. Provide equitable opportunities and resources for engagement and leadership.
- f. Food security and nutrition: Recognize and support the contribution of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture to food security and nutrition. Strengthen the position of small-scale artisanal aquatic foods in national, regional and global food security and nutrition strategies. Promote the integration of aquatic foods from small-scale fisheries and aquaculture and their importance to local food systems into relevant decision-making processes.
- g. Resilience: Build resilient small-scale artisanal fisher and aquaculture communities. Recognize and address the vulnerabilities of small-scale artisanal fishing and aquaculture communities to climate change and other external shocks, especially women, youth and Indigenous People. Support the development and implementation of resilience strategies for small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers to resist, adapt and respond to environmental degradation, shocks, disasters and climate change.

20. In addition to the initial recommendations related to the IYAFA 2022 GAP pillars, a complementary proposal emerged strongly from the celebrations:

- h. Youth for Blue Transformation: Strengthen the role of youth to ensure future viability. Encourage intergenerational dialogue, knowledge sharing and mentoring in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture communities. Support the integration of generational change into planning processes to preserve the continuity of traditional fisheries, actions and livelihoods and at the same time encourage innovation.

III. Challenges

21. IYAFA 2022 faced a distinct set of challenges during its development and implementation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

22. Due to the need for financial support and global attention of the COVID-19 pandemic, IYAFA 2022 did not have a dedicated global trust fund, but the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and Norway designated some previously provided small-scale fisheries (SSF) funding to support IYAFA 2022 celebrations. The European Union (EU) provided dedicated funding for IYAFA 2022 activities in the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) region.

23. Further to this, while a portion of these funds were leveraged to support activities that also focused on small-scale artisanal fish farmers, small-scale aquaculture (SSA) has notably represented a much smaller portion of IYAFA 2022 initiatives than it would have otherwise in a year with specific extrabudgetary contributions. It is crucial to emphasize the need for securing sufficient resources in advance for future international years to carry out essential tasks dedicated to all key stakeholders of the Year.

24. Due to lack of funding available to mobilize resources and ongoing restrictions directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, many events were hosted either virtually or in a hybrid format. The improved ability and capacity of many organizations and stakeholders to adapt to a virtual format after several years of related COVID-19 restrictions, however, resulted in cost-effective events and ensured greater participation and inclusivity of stakeholders typically unable to attend in-person events due to lack of resources.

IV. Sustaining momentum beyond closure of IYAFA 2022

25. Participants in the global hybrid IYAFA 2022 Closing ceremony held on 31 March 2023 sounded the call for continued momentum of IYAFA 2022 and the beginning of a new era of support for small-scale fisheries and aquaculture.

26. FAO, governments, and all other stakeholders are encouraged to continue promoting the key messages and recommendations of IYAFA 2022 and to use and create opportunities and initiatives to follow up on them.

27. FAO will incorporate key themes and recommendations in the work of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI) and others, in particular in the context of the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the SSF Guidelines and the implementation of the FAO Blue Transformation roadmap.

28. FAO will organize and co-host the SSF Summit prior to COFI sessions as a participatory platform every two years, primarily for small-scale fisheries actors, to collectively support the advancement of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, as welcomed by COFI in September 2022.

29. FAO will strengthen the role and capacity building of small-scale aquaculture in the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture that FAO and members are currently developing.

30. FAO will follow-up on the recommendation of the 20th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) to prepare a study on the impacts of industrial fishing on the rights of Indigenous Peoples in regard to traditional fishing to be presented in 2024.

31. There are many other opportunities for IYAFSA 2022 follow-up: IYAFSA 2022 fell within the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028), the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) and the Agenda 2030, and its recommendations are aligned with the objectives of these observances.