

Committee on Fisheries
28th Session

Intervention of Civil Society Organizations – the World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP), the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), and the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC).

Agenda Item 6: Decisions and Recommendations of the Fourth Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, first and foremost, Civil Society organizations, the WFFP, the ICSF and the IPC, question the underlying rationale of industrial and other intensive aquaculture systems, which are often the cause of social conflicts, particularly where their rapid expansion is both uncontrolled and brutal; where chemicals and other substances harmful to human and environmental health are widely used with few controls; where the sustainability of food production is put at risk by transforming food crops of the many into cash crops for the benefit of a few; and which direct fish away from human needs towards industrial needs.

Mr President, particularly in the case of industrial shrimp aquaculture, you are probably aware of the intense opposition expressed by local communities across Latin America, Asia and Africa, who have formed community based regional networks to protest against the uncontrolled and chaotic expansion of this destructive industry, and against its certification as sustainable. Similar concerns have been expressed about salmonid aquaculture in more temperate zones. We are pleased that the concerns of these organizations can be expressed here. We hope their voices will be heeded here and in other such events dealing with this issue.

Secondly, we would like to inform you that the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers has recently commissioned a report on animal genetic resource issues and the commercial application of such in aquaculture. We would briefly like to share some of the main recommendations with you now.

Taking note of the attempts to develop aquaculture in Africa, we would like to highlight the need to protect the rights of smallholders to produce fingerlings and in particular the rights of local small and independent hatcheries to produce fingerlings for polyculture. Attempts should be made to prevent genetic losses in aquaculture by maintaining large number of independent hatcheries. Emphasis should be on promoting fish species that do not need external feeds, such as is the case of multi-trophic aquaculture. In particular, integrated agriculture and aquaculture systems should be promoted, using local feed resources. Introduction of genetically modified tilapia and other fish species should be prevented. Standards to monitor and screen aquafeeds for the presence of genetically modified organisms should be developed and applied. The emphasis should be on expanding cost-effective extensive and semi-intensive farming techniques.

While developing policies and plans for aquaculture development with an ecosystem perspective, sufficient recognition should be afforded to the ecosystem services provided by aquaculture (including recycling solid wastes, water processing and recycling, disease control etc). There should be sufficient emphasis on controlling pollution and preventing overfishing so as to protect natural spawning and fry grounds of cultured fish.

Under technical guidelines on certification in aquaculture consideration should be given for developing guidelines for a seed certification system. Also social standards are required to address issues such as dispossession, indebtedness, ensuring local availability of fish, protecting working and living conditions of aquaculture farm workers. The ICSF had raised such issues previously, but we are concerned that, so far to our knowledge, little has been done to address such concerns.

Systems and standards also need to be developed for detecting and controlling the presence of genetically modified fish (e.g. use of methyltestosterone for producing genetically male tilapia), for genetic traceability, etc

With regards to governance in aquaculture, the use of DNA markers for traceability and for the protection of intellectual property should be regulated. The compliance costs of smallholder farmers organizations with international food safety regulations should be looked into. Attempts should be made to extend insurance coverage to aquaculture smallholders. There should also be regulatory regimes established for offshore aquaculture in the EEZ

While establishing **biosecurity framework for aquaculture** it should be ensured that indiscriminate introduction of exotic species are not be permitted; that long term effects on biodiversity, disease risk or potential environmental impacts should be looked at. Biosafety measures should not be used as a pretext to promote production of, and trade in disease-free GM fish.