

# World Food Day: ICSF Statement in Support of Small-scale Artisanal Fisheries

16 October 2020

## [International Collective in Support of Fishworkers \(ICSF\)](#)

As the world grapples with the Covid-19 pandemic, World Food Day 2020 is marked by an unprecedented challenge to nutrition and food security. Prior to the spread of the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, [an estimated 690 million people](#), or 8.9 percent of the global population, were undernourished. Disruptions in food production and distribution due to lockdowns and other pandemic control measures may add an additional 132 million undernourished people in 2020. The last decade has also been marred by armed conflict, economic slowdown, and climate shocks and stresses that have increased food insecurity in many parts of the world. In this context, we welcome the award of the [Nobel Peace Prize for 2020](#) to the World Food Programme (WFP) for its efforts to combat hunger, for contributing to peace in conflict-affected areas, and for its actions to “prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict”.

World Food Day is also an occasion to fully recognize and support the contribution of sustainable small-scale fisheries and aquaculture to global nutrition and food security. This contribution is substantial.

[Fish provides more than 3.3 billion people](#) with 20 percent of their average per capita intake of animal proteins, and as much as 50 percent in several low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDC), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and among vulnerable Indigenous Peoples. Even more vital than protein, fish and other aquatic food provide essential vitamins, minerals, long-chain omega-3 fatty acids and other nutrients not found in plant-based foods or other animal proteins. These nutrients are particularly important for the sustenance of pregnant and nursing women, as well as for children. Stunting in early childhood is associated with low consumption of animal source foods (ASF), and [fish is a major part of young children’s ASF diets](#) in many parts of Africa and Asia.

Small-scale fisheries (SSF) are estimated to employ 90 percent of men and women directly involved in capture fisheries worldwide, and contribute to half of global fish catches. [Two-thirds of SSF catches are for direct human consumption](#). Women are crucial participants in the sector, particularly in preharvest, postharvest and processing activities. SSF thus play a dual role in nutrition and food security. First, it ensures that the millions of fishers, processors, traders, transporters, and many others employed in the SSF value chain – both marine and inland – are able to sustain themselves and their families. Second, it provides low income populations with a variety of aquatic foods that are not only affordable, but also culturally appropriate and sustainable.

SSF communities face many challenges in maintaining their livelihoods and their contributions to food security – particularly, inequitable access to resources and markets, and to health, education and other social services. The Covid-19 crisis has exacerbated these vulnerabilities. Alongside other major disruptions in production and trade, the impact of this pandemic on

fisheries is far from over. The restrictions on the movement of fishers and fishworkers, and the shortages of essential items have [intensified hunger and malnutrition in some areas](#). In many parts of the world, migrant workers in fisheries have lost their jobs and faced problems in returning to their families. In developing countries, women fish vendors and traders have frequently lost their livelihoods as markets closed and the demand for fresh fish declined. The coronavirus has also had other harmful impacts on women, as the burdens of household work and domestic violence have reportedly increased during lockdowns in some places.

As national and [transnational fishworker organizations](#) worldwide [have demanded](#), the universal human rights of all peoples, including small-scale fishing communities, should be protected and enhanced. This requires that fishers and fishworkers, and the sustainable food systems to which they contribute, be valued and supported; that they be provided with decent work, sanitation, health and diagnostic services; that their preferential rights to land and fisheries resources be protected; and that they have secure access to markets. Towards achieving these goals, it is pertinent that the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication be implemented at national and subnational levels with the participation of fishing communities.

The impacts of Covid-19 highlight the importance of integrating the universal right to food with the specific rights of fishing communities to their lives and livelihoods – consistent with the recommendation of the [UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food in 2012](#). It also reminds us of the connections between our food systems and health, sustainable development and human rights.

This year's Peace Prize underlines the need for international solidarity and multilateral cooperation to achieve the common goals of eradicating hunger and poverty, enhancing food security, protecting the environment and biodiversity, and securing human rights. Small-scale fishers and fishworkers, who provide the world with nutritious food, should be empowered to achieve these goals.