

# Better Understanding Needed

**The Near East and North Africa Regional Consultation on SSF Guidelines focused on raising awareness and support for implementation of the guidelines.**

The Near East and North Africa Regional Consultation Workshop, ‘Towards the Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication’, was held in Muscat, Oman, during 7–10 December 2015. It was jointly organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries of the Sultanate of Oman, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). The workshop was attended by 40 participants from countries in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region—Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Tunisia—including representatives of governments, fisherfolk organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs), academia as well as representatives of regional and international organizations, NGOs and other relevant actors.

The overall objective of the workshop was to raise awareness and support the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) in the region. During the workshop, participants reviewed the situation and current status of small-scale fisheries in the region, shared experiences through regional and topical presentations and discussions, and made suggestions with regard to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in the region, including identification of priorities and recommendations for action.

The workshop noted the socio-economic and cultural importance of small-scale fisheries in the region. Small-scale fisheries contribute to livelihoods, food security, and local and national economies. Fish is very important for nutrition, especially for population groups with limited purchasing power, and small-scale fisheries are a main contributor to local fish supplies.

It is of great importance that the implementation of the SSF Guidelines be carried out within the framework of food security and poverty eradication and takes local needs into consideration. It was noted

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that small-scale-fisheries-dependent livelihoods go beyond fishing, and encompass social, economic and cultural values as well. The comprehensiveness of the SSF Guidelines was acknowledged and the need to take a holistic approach to small-scale fisheries governance and development was recognized.

## Women’s work

Women make significant contributions to small-scale fisheries, mainly in post-harvest processing and trading but also in other down- and upstream activities, although the rate of women’s participation varies from one country to another. Women also play an important role at the community and household level. However, women’s work is often

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invisible and hence not sufficiently recognized.

There are encouraging developments in the region with regard to reviews of policies and strategies, recognition of the socioeconomic dimensions of small-scale fisheries, and increasing emphasis on the participation of small-scale fisheries

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actors in decision making on resource management and development. However, challenges persist, including—with some differences between different countries—insufficient or weak organizational structures of small-scale fisheries actors, poor infrastructure facilities and services, heavily exploited fishery resources and a strong influence of demand on production, especially in the context of exports, and increasing risks from climate change and disaster impacts.

The regional consultation consolidated summary conclusions and recommendations on issues, challenges and opportunities in relation to the implementation of SSF Guidelines in the NENA region in a final plenary session. In addition to the summaries of each working group, the workshop agreed on a vision for the region for the SSF Guidelines implementation, the need for political support and on broad objectives and principles of a Regional Plan of Action and related next steps.

Key priority areas of actions to be considered further in national and regional implementation planning processes proposed by the workshop included:

**GOVERNANCE OF TENURE IN SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

- The small-scale fisheries sector is constrained by the lack of specific small-scale fishing areas and the

regulatory framework does not grant preferential access rights. Countries should develop or improve legislation, policies, strategies, plans and institutional structures to grant fair access and user rights for sustainable small-scale fisheries, both to men and women.

- Existing institutional frameworks do not always enable the participation of all relevant small-scale fisheries actors to achieve sustainable management. At the regional level, producer organization platforms and other appropriate mechanisms/organizations are needed to contribute to participatory decision making. These organizations need training and capacity development in relation to sustainable use and management of resources. At the national level, these organizations can play an important role in supporting the development and strengthening of fishers and fishworkers, including women, and their associations.
- Data and information necessary to support sustainable management of small-scale fisheries are often lacking or insufficient. The awareness of all stakeholders about the importance of data and information needs to be raised and the capacities to process and use data should be developed, including at local levels, so that small-scale fisheries actors can participate in data collection.

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK AND GENDER EQUALITY**

- Small-scale fisheries actors in the region, particularly deprived categories, women and migrants, are not always sufficiently organized to actively participate in fisheries management and policies. It is expected that increased participation could also contribute to create additional employment possibilities.
- Small-scale fishers and fishworkers, in particular women and deprived groups, often lack access to

social security protection. Better organization of small-scale fisheries actors and the provision of awareness raising and training on the benefits of social protection and on how to access these schemes should be provided.

- Safety at sea and other decent working conditions, including for women, are currently insufficient in small-scale fisheries. A regional workshop on decent working conditions (including safety at sea and occupational safety and health) should be organized with relevant partners. In this context, the impact of climate change on working conditions in fisheries should also be considered.
- In order to enable small-scale fisheries to be a driver for development, integrated approaches that reconcile environmental, social and economic development are needed. All countries in the region should use the SSF Guidelines as a reference framework when developing policies and strategies. Research, in particular on socioeconomic aspects, should contribute to improved conditions for small-scale fisheries.
- In general, the small-scale fisheries sector is often characterized by limited access to education and professional development opportunities, in particular for children and women. The implementation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) guidance on decent work should be promoted to support better professional development in the sector.

#### VALUE CHAINS, POST-HARVEST AND TRADE

- Small-scale fishers need to be empowered to reap more of the benefits of, and income from, the sales of their produce. Their marginalization should be eliminated and their self-esteem improved. At the national level, fisheries departments need to provide support, for example, through establishing better

marketing facilities following successful experiences of 'model fishing villages'. At the regional level, better coordination among governments is needed to negotiate trade agreements with importing countries, taking small-scale fisheries into consideration.

- The links between trade (demand) and production need to be better understood and considered. Adverse impacts of international trade on resource utilization and local food security should be avoided by creating awareness among middlemen and consumers on the resource implications of demand. Diversification of small-scale fisheries products should be promoted and the access of small-scale fisheries actors to knowledge on new markets and products should be facilitated.
- The organizational structures of small-scale fisheries actors need to be strengthened along the value chain to enhance their negotiating power with other segments of the market and allow them to get better returns from their production activities.
- The availability of trade-related information facilitating the access to domestic, regional and international markets needs to

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be improved. Appropriate links and networks for sharing and exchanging information should be strengthened, making use of relevant regional organizations and structures.

- There is a lack of adequate conditions and controls to ensure the quality and prices of fishery products. Small-scale fisheries actors need capacity development to improve their handling and marketing opportunities, based on international good

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Small-scale fishermen in Morocco. The small-scale fisheries sector is constrained by the lack of specific areas and the regulatory framework does not grant preferential access rights

practices to increase the value of their products.

- Investments are needed for small-scale fisheries in appropriate infrastructure and equipment, marketing facilities, financial support, as well as in the development of technical and human capacities for value addition and reduction of post-harvest losses. Small-scale fisheries actors should be supported with regard to the improvement of product quality and value addition.
- The context of food security and poverty eradication is essential and priority should be given to improved value added to the benefit of small-scale fishing communities and the improvement of their well-being, but also remembering the needs of consumers.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RISKS

- Climate change and disasters negatively affect small-scale fisheries in the region (for example, through sea level rise, changes in water temperature and salinity, damage to infrastructure by storms, red tides and human-induced pollution, such as chemical discharge). Studies to better understand the impact of climate change and disasters at the regional level are needed, and

the small-scale fisheries sector needs to be included in national climate change adaptation strategies.

The workshop confirmed the importance of small-scale fisheries in the region as a contributor to poverty alleviation, food and nutrition security, and socioeconomic development, and that the SSF Guidelines will be an important tool for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries governance and development.

**For more** 

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