

# Making SSF Secure

The 32nd Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) held elaborate discussions in July 2016 on Agenda Item 9: Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries

At the invitation of Fábio Hazin, Chairperson, Committee on Fisheries (COFI), Audun Lem, Deputy Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Economics Division (FIP), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)—assisted by Nicole Franz, Fishery Planning Analyst, of the same Division—introduced the Agenda Item 9: Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries (COFI/2016/7) on Wednesday, 13 July 2016—the third day of the 32nd Session of COFI. He said the instrument Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) complements the

especially by applying the principles of the SSF Guidelines. Along with governments, effective participation of SSF actors, as well as others, was vital in the implementation of the Guidelines. The proposed SSF Global Strategic Framework (SSF-GSF), in this context, was to complement the FAO Umbrella Programme for the Promotion and Application of the SSF Guidelines (hereafter, Umbrella Programme) and to strategically promote a common vision and implementation approach by all partners. It would, in particular, promote full and effective participation of SSF actors in the SSF Guidelines implementation and also encourage participation by other actors, under the overall implementation responsibility of governments, he observed. The SSF-GSF could also monitor progress in regard to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 14.

Lem drew attention to various initiatives for implementing the SSF Guidelines, including the FAO-supported experience-sharing of implementation and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-supported initiatives for strengthening the SSF actors towards implementing the Guidelines. Small-scale fishing community organizations played a role in providing valuable feedback, he said. Translating the SSF Guidelines into action and mainstreaming them into policies and programmes were not easy processes, he observed. The Committee was invited to share information on initiatives in support of the SSF Guidelines implementation. The Committee was further invited to advise on mobilizing extra-budgetary

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Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and it represents the first-ever international instrument dedicated entirely to small-scale fisheries (SSF).

The SSF Guidelines propose a holistic approach, he said. They reflect the importance of extending livelihood support to fishing communities, uphold human rights standards and articulate the FAO perspective on human rights, he added. The agenda paper COFI/2016/7 reported, on the one hand, progress towards implementing the SSF Guidelines and recommended, on the other, the need for further developing the Global Assistance Programme (GAP) in a participatory manner,

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resources through the Umbrella Programme, and on steps to be taken in developing the SSF-GSF, especially its structure.

Speaking on behalf of the African Union (AU)—a Union of 54 Member States from Africa and the Southern Indian Ocean—Kenya said 60 per cent of AU fish production originates from SSF. Attention was drawn to the 2015 Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa that seeks application among its membership of the SSF Guidelines at the national level towards attaining food security and poverty reduction goals. Specifically referring to Kenya, it was observed that the SSF Guidelines were to be integrated at all levels into policy and legal formulations and into development of management measures, starting from the Beach Management Units (BMUs).

Whilst supporting SSF-GSF, South Africa informed the Committee that fishing rights in South Africa are currently confined only to large-scale fishers. The 2012 Policy for the SSF subsector addresses inequalities and promotes equitable access to food security, poverty alleviation and

socioeconomic development. A new framework is being created in South Africa to allocate fishing rights to SSF communities within a rights-based approach to fisheries.

Morocco said the SSF subsector employs 60,000 people and is socially important. Towards restructuring the subsector, to implement protected areas and to improve safety of workers, a national plan for coastal SSF is currently being developed. SSF Guidelines and SDGs are important tools to keep track of the impact of SSF on the environment, it was observed.

Algeria drew the attention of the Committee to a regional conference hosted by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the FAO on SSF in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, where a panel was dedicated to discussing the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in the region. A working group, as a result, has been set up to facilitate implementation with the participation of fishworker organizations, mainly toward fostering co-operation, improving socioeconomic conditions and diversifying livelihoods.

ALESSIA PIERDOMENICO / FAO



The 32nd session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), FAO, Rome, Italy, 11 - 15 July 2016. COFI noted the proposal by GRULAC to establish an International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture to improve small-scale fisheries

Afghanistan said SSF are important for nutrition and eradicating rural poverty, and should remain a top priority under the Blue Growth initiative of FAO. It advocated wider availability of the Guidelines in different languages. The Umbrella Programme and the SSF-GSF should go hand in hand, it was observed.

Bangladesh supported Afghanistan's position and also sought FAO's assistance in implementing the SSF Guidelines at the national level. Malaysia said 58 per cent of its fisheries workforce comprised small-scale fishers and it would like effective operationalisation of the Guidelines.

Indonesia drew attention of the Committee to a Southeast Asian regional consultation workshop on the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in Bali on 24-27 August 2015, which was a collaborative effort of Indonesia, FAO and SEAFDEC. It also updated the Committee about the development of a Southeast Asian Regional plan of action for implementing the SSF Guidelines focusing, inter alia, on policy coherence and capacity development. At the national level, Indonesia is developing a national plan of action on SSF management.

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The Sultanate of Oman welcomed the SSF Guidelines and told the Committee that it had jointly hosted a Near East and North Africa Regional Consultation Workshop for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines from 7 to 10 December 2015 in Muscat with GFCM and FAO. The Workshop was attended by participants from 25 countries.

The Republic of Korea welcomed SSF-GSF and said the FAO secretariat should evaluate the implementation of the SSF Guidelines by COFI members.

Japan, whilst commending the development of the SSF Guidelines,

was keen on a regional approach to implementation, considering that SSF are diverse across regions. Working together with FAO regional bodies was essential in this context. Japan apprised the Committee that it is collaborating with the Southeast Asian Development Center (SEAFDEC) to develop regional initiatives for the implementation of the Guidelines.

Brazil, speaking on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) of 33 States, drew attention to the multidimensional nature of the SSF subsector, including its cultural heritage and social inclusion facets. While supporting the development of SSF-GSF in accordance with FAO rules and procedures, and agreeing that FAO is the 'custodian' UN agency for SDG 14, the GRULAC was of the view that monitoring SDGs is the role of the high-level political forum.

Speaking on behalf of the Central America Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization (OSPESCA)—an organization comprising eight States—Panama spoke of a new regional policy to integrate fisheries and aquaculture and a programme to disseminate and implement the SSF Guidelines. The policy, the Committee was informed, was developed with the full and effective participation of civil society organizations (CSOs), the Confederation of Artisanal Fishers of Central America (CONFEPESCA), governments and the FAO subregional office. Panama also drew attention to a proposal of the Central American Integration System (SICA)—the economic and political organization of eight Central American States—to initiate consultations and formalities for establishing an International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture. The Committee was informed that the proposal was welcomed by the 34th FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico from 29 February to 3 March 2016.

### **Dynamic approach**

Costa Rica stressed adopting a dynamic approach to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, with a holistic view of the environmental, economic and

social dimensions of SSF. The proposed SSF-GSF, would, it was observed, allow for the application of the SSF Guidelines by adopting a cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial approach. Costa Rica encouraged COFI to endorse SSF-GSF, especially to serve vulnerable and marginalized fishing communities. The Bahamas commended the SSF Guidelines and the proposed SSF-GSF.

Chile observed that the SSF Guidelines applied to its national context, especially to improve fisheries management, to reduce pressure on fish stocks, to help diversify SSF as well as to adapt to climate change. It is currently consolidating a new fisheries-management system and strengthening institutions to enhance the competence of small-scale fisheries. SSF are also important to counter cyclical fluctuations in economic activities in coastal areas.

St.Kitts and Nevis supported the implementation of the SSF Guidelines to manage multigear/multispecies SSF, to prevent the continued collapse of the marine ecosystem and to reduce poverty.

Norway said it is a real challenge to see the SSF Guidelines implemented. Norway hoped its financial support to regional workshops and the Umbrella Programme would improve living conditions of fishers. The Guidelines should get incorporated into relevant fisheries and socioeconomic instruments and should lead to the development of participatory decision-making processes. Norway saw fishers and fishworkers as drivers of change and observed that others could supplement and strengthen implementation programmes. It sought more details on the purpose and role of SSF-GSF, especially in regard to how the proposed new mechanism can help the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

The representative of the European Union (EU) said the EU and its member countries pay great attention to the SSF Guidelines and they were keen to promote and apply the Guidelines to artisanal fishing communities, especially to maintain viability of coastal areas. The EU framework of co-operation and development policies

at the regional and national levels would include the SSF Guidelines, the Committee was informed. The EU said it saw value in developing SSF-GSF to complement the Umbrella Programme.

The Russian Federation said the SSF Guidelines are a key step forward for a socially important sector and it supported the SSF-GSF.

Canada drew attention to its small-scale, owner-operator types

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of fishing operations and their contribution to sustainable fisheries and sustainable development. Canada supported the SSF Guidelines and encouraged their implementation and capacity building also in developed countries, in collaboration with CSOs, NGOs and the academia.

The United States strongly supported the SSF Guidelines, welcomed the SSF-GSF and was keen on it being developed in the same inclusive spirit as in negotiations to develop the Guidelines.

Other countries spoke about the importance of SSF in their national context. These included Somalia, Cambodia, India, Iran, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Guyana.

Somalia drew attention to lack of infrastructure leading to post-harvest losses in the SSF subsector, lack of experience and skills as well as poor fishing capacity preventing exploitation of underutilized fish stocks, and conflicts with foreign illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing undermining the livelihoods of local small-scale fishers.

### **Food security**

Cambodia drew attention to the important role of SSF in food security and nutrition. To ensure that natural fisheries resources benefit the poor rather than the elite, Cambodia adopted fisheries reforms in the year

2000 to contribute to livelihood and food security of the poor. Under a rights-based management regime, Cambodia converted individual rights to collective rights through a top-down approach, establishing community fisheries organizations, to benefit millions of small-scale fishers. Cambodia is the only country where aquarian reforms have been introduced, backed by an elaborate legal structure and a governance framework. The transition from individual to collective rights, the Committee was informed, helped making responsible use of living resources in a sustainable manner.

India would like support from like-minded countries to build up expertise for ecolabelling of endemic species, caught by small-scale fishers, to enhance their access to the international seafood market.

Iran reported that it accounted for the largest number of small-scale fishers in the Near East. The subsector plays an important role in relation to employment, food security, coastal development and income for local population. Iran is training small-scale fishers to develop value-added products and also to improve their fishing practices, especially by substituting non-selective nets with selective hooks. It is promoting stocking of the Caspian Sea and encouraging marine farming to sustain livelihoods through better income.

Nicaragua reported that its human development plan integrates the SSF subsector. It is developing national policies to build institutional capacity also in the fisheries sector, especially to manage economic inputs like fishing equipment and fuel, and to manage output through better market access at the national and international levels.

Uruguay said it has SSF activities in the rural and urban areas and these are mainly export-led activities. There is legislation in place that allows small-scale fishers to access social benefits and health services through local councils. Subsidies are being eliminated and good practices are being promoted in the interests of the subsector. Uruguay was supportive of

establishing an International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture to promote good practices and to encourage participation in fisheries management.

Guyana said SSF are significant in the Caribbean region, especially for income generation. The national fisherfolk organizations—federated into the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations (CNFO)—are influencing policies and decisions in the region. New priorities to be addressed in the region are post-harvest practices, risk insurance and financing of port handling.

Of the 29 countries that took the floor on this Agenda Item, 11 spoke about SSF-GSF (South Africa, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, South Korea, Costa Rica, Brazil, Norway, EU, Russian Federation, the US and the Bahamas).

Five regional fisheries bodies also took the floor. The Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) of the East African Community welcomed the SSF Guidelines and recognized the application of the Guidelines also to inland fisheries. OSPESCA said it has developed a roadmap for implementing the SSF Guidelines. It encourages the participation of regional CSOs in the fisheries sector in its programmes and is keen to ensure mechanisms for participation of fishworkers in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. It also spoke in support of establishing SSF-GSF.

### Regional plan

SEAFDEC observed that different regions need different strategic approaches when it comes to implementing the SSF Guidelines. It is developing a regional plan, a regional approach and a regional programme at the level of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for implementing the SSF Guidelines. The regional programme is expected to be endorsed by the ASEAN high level in 2017. SEAFDEC will be approaching GAP for assistance. The Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (CSRP/SRFC) of seven West African States said it is fully committed to implementing the SSF Guidelines.

The Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network (RSN), comprising secretariats of around 50 advisory bodies and bodies with mandate for conservation and management of fishery resources—with their focus ranging from high-seas fisheries to coastal fisheries, inland fisheries and aquaculture—recognized the importance of SSF as well as the need to secure a cross-cutting approach that would reach a wider audience, to support the implementation of both SSF Guidelines and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security.

In a joint statement—facilitated by the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)—the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF), the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) and the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) welcomed the proposed SSF-GSF as a mechanism to complement and enhance the FAO Umbrella Programme. The proposed GSF, it was held, would provide a framework to oversee efforts at the national and regional levels to ensure co-ordination, co-operation and coherence in implementing the SSF Guidelines.

Summarising the discussion, at the invitation of the Chairperson, COFI, Lem of FAO Secretariat—assisted by Franz—made the following observations.

The Committee reconfirmed the important multidimensional SSF in terms of poverty reduction; food security and nutrition; social cohesion, stability and development; cultural values; income and employment generation; and overall living conditions and livelihoods. The Committee recognized the SSF Guidelines as a global consensus tool for achieving sustainable fisheries in both developing and developed countries, grounded in human rights.

The Committee reiterated continued collaboration towards implementing the Guidelines in

close collaboration with partners. The Committee called for further guidance to address the issues of eco-labelling, market access, benefit distribution and enhanced competitiveness in the context of the SSF Guidelines implementation. The Committee noted the progress made by members who shared information on relevant national and regional experiences in support of the SSF Guidelines implementation, not only in relation to the involvement and empowerment of SSF actors in relevant decision-making processes, but also in relation to specific technical and infrastructural support to SSF, including access to social services.

The Committee saw the scope for implementation going far beyond the fisheries sector. Support for mainstreaming efforts at all levels was seen important. There was confirmed commitment in supporting regional processes in this regard. FAO regional offices and regional fisheries bodies were to be involved in this process. The implementation was also seen as a key component in FAO's Blue Growth initiative and its global strategic plans. The Committee welcomed further development of the Global Assistance Programme into an Umbrella Programme and it agreed on the need for a complementary mechanism for a SSF-GSF in relation to the strategic aspects of the SSF Guidelines implementation, which should in particular ensure the full and effective participation of SSF actors. The Committee invited FAO to further spell out the purpose, role and structure of the SSF-GSF and to explore the potential role of the SSF-GSF in relation to progress monitoring, including under SDG 14.

The Committee noted the proposal by GRULAC to establish an International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture as an important opportunity to further consolidate efforts in relation to improving small-scale fisheries. 3

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