

Not a Small Focus

With a record participation, the Thirty-third Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) managed to integrate small-scale fisheries issues into almost all agenda items

The Thirty-third Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), held in July 2018, saw a record participation. There were 760 delegates representing member countries, and many representing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). Small-scale fisheries issues were integrated into almost all agenda items of the meet.

Soon after the presentation of the State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture Report 2018, Norway drew attention to how discussions at COFI on technical issues have become more intense of late, and to alleviate pressure on COFI, proposed establishing a new sub-committee on fisheries management. It sought inclusion of a paper on the proposed sub-committee to be discussed at the thirty-fourth session of COFI. The sub-committee, in the Norwegian view, would discuss matters related to policy development and principles, on the one hand, and address and review small-scale fisheries, especially the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), on the other. The proposed sub-committee was supported by Senegal, Japan, India and the United States (US).

Many delegations participated in the discussion on agenda item “small-scale and artisanal fisheries governance” (Agenda Item 8.2) in support of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. Speaking on behalf

of the African regional group, Côte d’Ivoire highlighted the importance of small-scale fisheries, particularly inland fisheries, for Africa.

Costa Rica said the highest incidence of poverty and diseases was in the indigenous territories along the Caribbean coast, and observed that adopting a human-rights-based approach would bring greater dignity to small-scale fishing communities, including indigenous peoples. Attention was drawn to a bill tabled in

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its Legislative Assembly, which hoped to strengthen small-scale fisheries, and sought support in effectively implementing the SSF Guidelines. Costa Rica welcomed the United Nations General Assembly resolution proclaiming 2022 the “International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture” (IYAFA).

Strong focus

The European Union (EU) said it is fully committed to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, and drew attention to the Mid-term Strategy (2017-20) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, which has a strong focus on small-scale fisheries. The EU said the small-scale subsector needed: better representation and

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participation in decision-making processes; strengthened support to women and secure equal participation of women in decision-making processes; a participatory mechanism for sharing of traditional knowledge; support and training to build capacity within small-scale fisheries; access to new technologies with a view to improving safety, as well as monitoring, control and surveillance; and fighting against illegal fishing. The EU further observed that tenure is a key feature of fisheries management,

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including transboundary resource management. The EU further drew attention to the High Level Conference on Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, to be held in Malta on 25 and 26 September 2018, which is expected to adopt a Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (RPOA-SSF). A Ministerial Declaration on the RPOA-SSF is expected to be signed at the end of the high-level event, setting forth SSF actions to be carried out over the next decade (until 2028) to strengthen and support sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

The Republic of Korea (RoK) referred to SDG 14 – in particular 14.b – on small-scale artisanal fisheries. RoK said it is co-organizing a conference with FAO – Tenure Rights and User Rights in Fisheries 2018: Achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, in Yeosu in September 2018. In the context of IYAFA, RoK supported developing an information baseline and assessing the contribution of small-scale and artisanal fisheries in marine and inland waters.

India supported implementation of the SSF Guidelines and recalled proposing a sub-committee on small-scale fisheries at the Twenty-ninth

Session of COFI in 2011. Implementing the SSF Guidelines would lead to improved access to resources and markets, better provision of social security and financial inclusion of the small-scale subsector, and would lead to inclusive governance. However, implementing the Guidelines in a federal and diverse country like India is a challenge. Several elements of the Guidelines are outside the purview of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, and calls for inter-ministerial consultation and co-ordination, it was observed. The governance of small-scale fisheries required achieving a fine balance between socio-cultural security, livelihood security and resource management.

Canada said inshore fishery is a social thread that keeps people together and brings prosperity to the coastal rural communities. Canada is developing a new legislation to strengthen the policy framework for sustainable inshore fisheries by paying attention to economic, social and cultural factors. The indigenous communities were to articulate their preferred means of fishing consistent with their cultural values and relief system. Canada would participate and support the Friends of the SSF Guidelines under the SSF Guidelines Global Strategic Framework (SSF GSF), and welcomed celebrating 2022 as IYAFA.

Vietnam said the SSF Guidelines principles are integrated into its legal framework, and requested FAO support to develop indicators to monitor the implementation of the Guidelines.

St. Kitts and Nevis informed the Committee about the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) integrating the SSF Guidelines into a regional protocol. Stakeholder awareness about the Guidelines, however, was to be improved.

Effective implementation

Japan said it is committed to the effective implementation of the SSF Guidelines and was of the view that FAO's work in relation to tenure and rights-based approaches to fisheries also gave an opportunity to implement the SSF Guidelines.

FAO/GIULIO NAPOLITANO



The opening session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries, Thirty-third Session, 9-13 July 2018, Rome, Italy. Small-scale fisheries issues were integrated into almost all agenda items of the meet

Thailand spoke of its intention to formulate an action plan in support of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. Thailand drew attention to the 3rd World Small-scale Fisheries Congress to be held in Chiang Mai in October 2018 in collaboration with Too Big to Ignore (TBTD), a global research network.

Norway said there was little value if the SSF Guidelines were not implemented, and informed the Committee of its support to the FAO Umbrella Programme for the Promotion and Application of the SSF Guidelines, and to an updating of the Hidden Harvest study. The latter would improve statistics on small-scale fisheries. Attention was drawn to many types of conflicts facing small-scale fisheries across the world. It was hoped that the State of Fisheries and Aquaculture report of FAO could better reflect the state of small-scale fisheries as well. Norway highlighted the role of gender-equitable small-scale fisheries and the role of women in providing nutrition and food security. The SSF Guidelines offered a platform for women in fisheries, said Norway, and observed that small-scale fisheries organizations should be invited to participate in decision-making processes. Norway added that more countries should contribute to the Umbrella Programme.

South Africa said it now recognizes the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security and poverty alleviation. Although the small-scale fishers were earlier marginalized from the fishing rights allocation process, they now enjoy legal access rights after a recent amendment to the Marine Living Resources Act. This is regarded a major milestone. South Africa has several mechanisms to support small-scale fishing communities, including schemes to benefit small-scale fishing communities in regard to storage, processing and marketing of fish, and local labelling to market fish as environment-friendly.

Sustainable Development Goals

Argentina said the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.b recognizes the fundamental role of small-scale artisanal fisheries, and urged the Committee to continue its activities to disseminate the SSF Guidelines and to raise awareness. It welcomed observing 2022 as IYafa and supported participation of fishers in decision-making processes. The use of the term 'governance', however, was opposed by Argentina on the ground that it could only apply to an area under national jurisdiction. Neither the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, nor the 2001 International Plan of

Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, use the term governance, said Argentina, and sought replacing it with 'sustainable management'.

Chile welcomed the proclamation of 2022 as IYAFA. It sought reducing gender inequality in fisheries and promoting greater participation of women in fishing activities.

The US, while welcoming 2022 as IYAFA, urged FAO to develop a road map to IYAFA. Attention was drawn to gathering enhanced data on small-scale

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fisheries to better understand women's role as well as other diverse elements in small-scale fisheries. The US supported implementing the SSF Guidelines in a fair and effective manner, adopting a rights-based approach and recognizing the role of governance institutions. The US supported the FAO Umbrella Programme and informed the Committee that the SSF Guidelines have been incorporated into the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) country projects in Indonesia, Bangladesh and the Philippines. The updating of the Hidden Harvest study, said the US, could assist in better understanding and improvement of small-scale fisheries.

Senegal supported the statement made by Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the African regional group and welcomed 2022 as IYAFA. Governance of tenure in fisheries is a matter of concern for Senegal and it drew attention to its Maritime Fisheries Code (2015). It was hoped that the proposed sub-committee on fisheries management could also deal with small-scale fisheries issues.

Brazil was in support of SDG 14.b. Drawing attention to a growing trend in illegal fishing, It was keen to register and license all artisanal fishers, and agreed with Argentina's preference for using the term 'management' over 'governance'.

Indonesia said it supported 2022 as IYAFA and informed the Committee about hosting the Fifth Our Ocean Conference in Bali on 29 and 30 October 2018. Indonesia welcomed the SSF GSF and its willingness to be part of the knowledge-sharing platform, and highlighted access to resources, markets and gender equality as central to the SSF Guidelines. Inclusion of social and economic practices along the value chain and recognition of local wisdom were also to be recognized.

China said protection of the interests of small-scale fisheries will be given due consideration and said it is keen to co-operate with FAO and other member States to develop its small-scale fisheries in future.

Mexico said it was keen to eradicate poverty through sustainable management of fisheries resources, and it supported the SSF Guidelines.

The Norwegian proposal to establish a sub-committee on fisheries management, with a focus on small-scale fisheries, was discussed again under any other matters (Agenda item 14). Norway said the FAO secretariat, in close collaboration with the Bureau of COFI, should develop the proposal for the establishment of a new sub-committee. The proposal was to be circulated six months before the Thirty-fourth Session of COFI. The US reiterated its support. Argentina, Canada, Pakistan, Sudan, Namibia, the Russian Federation, Brazil, St. Kitts and Nevis, Mexico, Belize, Iceland, South Sudan and Guatemala also extended support to the proposal. 

For more

<http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofi/en/>

Thirty-third Session Committee on Fisheries, 9-13 July 2018, Rome, Italy

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6882e.pdf>

Report of the Thirty-second Session of the Committee on Fisheries, Rome, 11-15 July 2016