

A Ripple Effect

Africa's shared vision of food security and nutrition, poverty eradication and sustainable natural resources finds voice in IYAFA

The message is clear: the role of fishers, fish farmers and fishworkers is central. They are custodians of aquatic resources for all. In scores of events and other engagements across Africa in 2022, conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and our valued partners, what has been at the very heart of the shared vision is the need for food security and nutrition, the eradication of poverty and the sustainable use of natural resources.

Many of the obstacles facing small-scale fisheries (SSF) in Africa are also found in other regions. Some, however, are unique to Africa and need innovative remedies at local and regional levels. Improving the global understanding of the problems faced by those involved in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture is key. For FAO and its partners, the way ahead for growth lies in exchanging knowledge and providing lessons about what works well and what needs further consideration.

The International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022) was a unique opportunity for collaboration, both large and small, to focus on the particular needs of SSF and aquaculture in Africa.

A much needed platform

IYAFA 2022 was celebrated as a unique platform to focus on the needs of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture in Africa. Numerous challenges and solutions related to artisanal fisheries and aquaculture in the continent were highlighted, especially through country and regional events. IYAFA 2022 emphasized the central role of fishers, fish farmers and fishworkers as custodians of aquatic resources. The year served as a springboard

for fostering future collaborations with Africa's fishing communities; showcasing FAO's fisheries and aquaculture projects in Africa; offering recommendations to support the artisanal fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the region, moving forward.

Regional co-operation for aquatic management of fisheries must be encouraged. This can be achieved through the establishment of effective monitoring, control and surveillance. Besides the development of improved conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources, the involvement of Regional Fishery Management Bodies and Regional Fishery Advisory Bodies would be key to addressing the stock management and regulations

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surrounding fishing gear practices. Small-scale operators will benefit from this protection.

To secure a sustainable future for African SSF, the exchange and sharing of knowledge to avoid past problems is vital; it will keep up the momentum beyond IYAFA 2022. Fishers and fishworkers are among the most vulnerable to disasters and climate change, apart from lacking secure tenure of fishing waters. Policies and actions should support building resilience to these threats for the sector's long-term continuity. Encouraging awareness and implementing guidelines to avoid overfishing, a palpable threat to the

This article is by Ndiaga Gueye (Ndiaga.Gueye@fao.org), Regional Senior Fishery Officer, Programme Manager, Fisheries and Aquaculture, FAO Regional Office for Africa, Ghana



The International Year of Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYafa) 2022 in Africa: Final report . Many of the obstacles facing small-scale fisheries (SSF) in Africa are also found in other regions
 Source: <https://www.fao.org/3/cc4939en/cc4939en.pdf>

community-led industry, will improve the maintenance of fish stocks, as will the implementation of a closed season for fishing activities.

Women make up around 40 per cent of the workforce in ssf production in Africa, not only in the post-harvest and

service sectors but also in subsistence fishing. They do most of the selling and marketing of fish products but are often constrained by high transportation costs and post-harvest losses, as well as gender inequality when it comes to earnings. It is important to

acknowledge that women and men involved in the sector are equals.

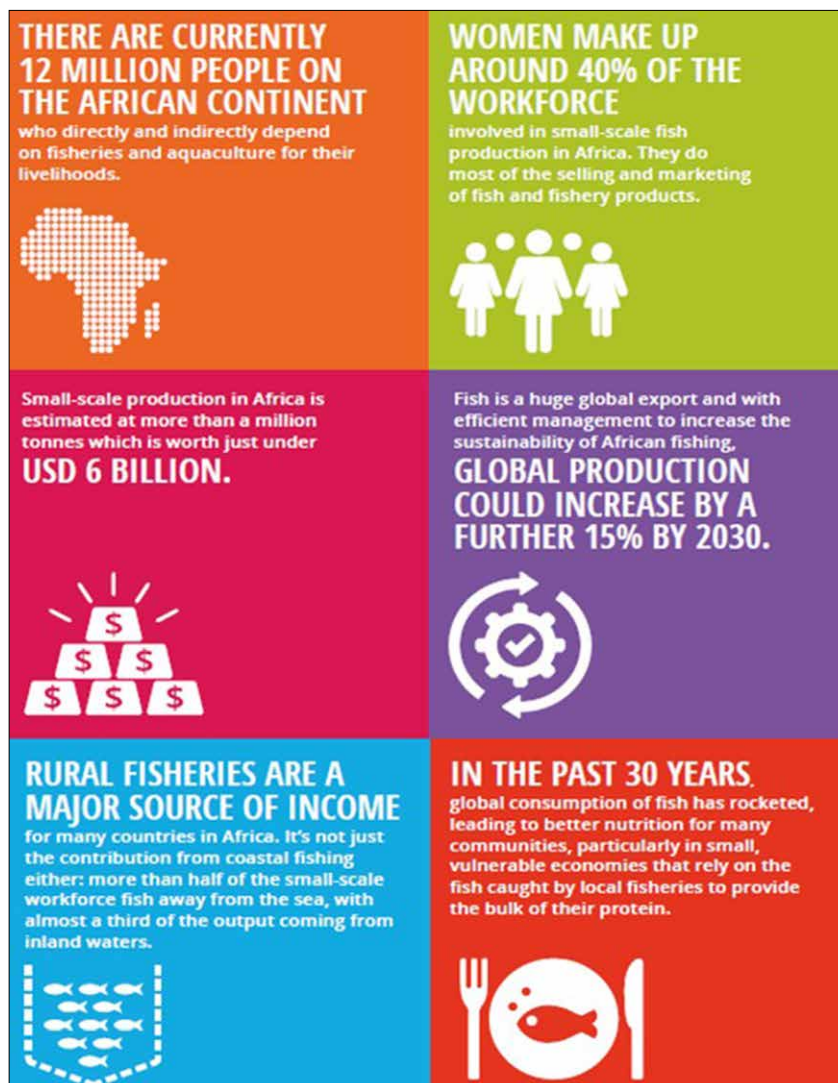
FAO wants to see that, beyond IYAFA, efforts continue to help develop and deploy technology and digital innovation to support women in all sectors. Besides being good news for the fishing industry, the women themselves will benefit as these moves promote equality and improve lives.

The promotion of academic research that looks at ways to safeguard access to aquatic resources for all is key. Overfishing of some fish species, such as tilapia on Lake Victoria, could result in the disappearance of certain species altogether. Fish and sea life are also at risk when lakes and seas become polluted with poisons. Regional co-operation must be encouraged to collectively fight illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing operations by establishing effective monitoring, control and surveillance.

Keeping the public informed about the benefits of small-scale fisheries for the wider population is important. Taking a fresh approach to organizing events can be just as effective as engaging audiences online to spread the word—examples include food tastings, cooking demonstrations and exhibitions. As a fisherwoman said, small actions can have big impacts like a ripple effect. She points out that fishers understand how to maintain a balance in the ecosystem. Any decisions made will affect their way of life and work.

FAO in Africa, and our partners, are calling on all those involved in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors to continue the momentum of the past year. Small-scale fisheries and aquaculture can benefit from a new era of support because despite being small in scale, they are big in value.

As custodians of shared resources, the small-scale fishers themselves have a fundamental role in responsible management and sustainable use of aquatic resources and ecosystems. Effective participation in any decision making process will ensure their traditional knowledge is maintained, that it helps shape laws and policies. Improving access to markets and infrastructure will safeguard the provision of aquatic products that



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are both affordable and of good quality. With all sides holding on to those strong principles, the path forward can be that of resilience. 📌

For more

The International Year of Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) 2022 in Africa: Final report

<https://www.fao.org/3/cc4939en/cc4939en.pdf>

Africa Workshop: IYAFA 2022-Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries, 15-18 February 2023

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/africa-workshop-iyafa-2023/>