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منظمة  
الأغذية والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

## EUROPEAN INLAND FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE ADVISORY COMMISSION

### Thirty-Second Session

**Pula, Croatia, 9 - 11 October 2024**

### Main decisions and recommendations from the FAO Regional Conference for Europe and Fisheries Bodies

#### Executive Summary

This document provides a summary of topics discussed at regional and international fora of FAO relevant for the EIFAAC Membership.

- 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC), Rome, Italy, 14-17 May 2024;
- 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee of Fisheries (COFI), Rome, Italy, 8 – 12 July 2024;
- 46<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), Split, Croatia, 6–10 November 2023; and
- 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission, Baku, Azerbaijan, 19-20 December 2023.

The Commission is invited to discuss the outcomes of these regional and international fora and their implications for the work of EIFAAC.

This document is accompanied by the following information documents:

EIFAAC/2024/Inf.7 - Report of the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe.

EIFAAC/2024/Inf.8 - Report on the work of EIFAAC for the 34<sup>th</sup> Regional Conference for Europe.

EIFAAC/2024/Inf.9 - Report of the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee of Fisheries.

EIFAAC/2024/Inf.10 - Report of the 46<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean.

EIFAAC/2024/Inf.11 - Report of the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission.

EIFAAC/2024/Inf.12 - FAO Blue Transformation Roadmap

## 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC)

1. The Thirty-fourth Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC), hosted by the Republic of Moldova, was held at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 14 to 17 May 2024. The Regional Conference was attended by 214 participants, including eight Ministers, ten Deputy Ministers and State Secretaries, and representatives from 53 Members. Three Member Nations, four United Nations (UN) organizations, four intergovernmental organizations, and eight representatives of civil society organizations were in attendance, along with four private-sector companies and representatives from two institutions in the research and academia sector.
2. The EIFAAC Secretariat had prepared report ERC/24/14 Rev.1, Report on the work of the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC), which is available as [EIFAAC/2024/Inf.8](#). The agenda item 21 on EIFAAC was dealt with through written correspondence.
3. Official statements under the written correspondence procedure, as received by the ERC Secretariat were uploaded [here](#). Statements were received from Czechia, the European Union (on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States, Moldova, Montenegro and Türkiye), Germany, North Macedonia and Serbia. The EIFAAC Secretariat is grateful for the efforts made by the Operational Focal Points of these EIFAAC Members in preparing and submitting the formal statements to ERC 34.
4. The Regional Conference reviewed document ERC/24/14 Rev.1, Report on the work of the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC).

### The Regional Conference:

- a) affirmed the importance of EIFAAC as a platform for cooperation and exchange in the areas of inland fisheries and aquaculture, and as a contributor to the Blue Transformation of aquatic food systems for future food security, nutrition and resilient livelihoods throughout Europe and welcomed the outcomes of the Thirty-first Session of EIFAAC;
  - b) welcomed the increase of EIFAAC to thirty-eight Members, with North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Slovenia joining in the period 2022-2024;
  - c) invited Members to implement FAO's initiative to better link Regional Fishery Bodies (RFB) and Basin Management Organizations for scaling up cooperation towards sustainable inland capture fisheries in the context of food security and nutrition, ideally with a case study;
  - d) called upon Members to commit adequate staff time of EIFAAC operational focal points and national fisheries and aquaculture scientists and managers to EIFAAC committees and projects to strengthen collaboration within the EIFAAC network;
  - e) acknowledged the efforts of EIFAAC to develop guidance to mitigate the effects of cormorant predation on fish, fisheries and aquaculture, as well as EIFAAC's work on management of aquatic invasive species and the preparation of fish stocking guidelines;
  - f) emphasized the need to intensify efforts towards conserving and managing migratory species for the sustainability of related sectors; and
  - g) recommended strengthening North-South cooperation between FAO's RFBs in joint projects, especially with regard to Integrated Water Resources Management in Agriculture.
5. The Regional Conference called upon FAO to:
    - a) continue mobilizing resources among Members to produce the highly needed scientific advice for policymaking, management of inland fisheries and aquaculture, and for achieving Blue Transformation in Europe; and
    - b) make a firm commitment to ensuring adequate staff time to the EIFAAC Secretariat.

6. The adopted Report of the 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe is available as [EIFAAC/2024/Inf.7](#) , and contains also ERC 34 views on the latest report of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish).

### **36th Session of the Committee of Fisheries (COFI)**

7. The Committee on Fisheries (COFI) held its Thirty-sixth Session from 8 to 12 July 2024. The session was convened in hybrid modality. The session was webcast and the recording would be made available in the webcast archive on the FAO internet site. The session was attended by 107 Members of the Committee, observers from 19 other FAO Members, the Holy See, by representatives from 7 specialized agencies of the United Nations and by observers from 39 intergovernmental organizations, and 36 international non-governmental organizations.
8. The adopted report is made available as EIFAAC/2024/Inf.9.
9. Agenda items that were of major relevance to EIFAAC included the following:
10. DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE, 16-19 MAY 2023

The Committee:

- a) endorsed the report of the Twelfth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI:AQ);
- b) highlighted the importance of aquaculture to food security and nutrition, livelihoods, economic development and human health, and its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals;
- c) adopted the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA) and noted their relevance to the implementation of the Blue Transformation roadmap;
- d) encouraged FAO to raise awareness of the GSA, promote good practices, and seek funding to provide technical assistance and support in their implementation;
- e) requested FAO to prioritize attention to small-scale aquaculture through capacity building, means of commercialization and biosafety practices;
- f) appreciated FAO's work on biosecurity, aquatic animal health and antimicrobial resistance (AMR), including the designation of FAO Reference Centres for Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), and noted continued activities in the context of One Health;
- g) called for more prominent actions toward the improvement of gender equality and women's empowerment in aquaculture, and called on FAO to encourage and assist Members in compiling and disseminating disaggregated data;
- h) recognized the need to build diversified sustainable agrifood systems and food sources through multiple approaches while noting the opportunities associated with sustainable seaweed aquaculture, and requested FAO to support sustainable seaweed aquaculture with technical assistance and capacity building;
- i) noted the importance of monitoring implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and called on FAO to use the results from the FAO Expert Workshop to revise the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries Aquaculture Questionnaire;
- j) encouraged the Secretariat to continue work on developing and disseminating case studies in line with the GSA;
- k) welcomed the kind invitation of the Government of Türkiye to host the Thirteenth Session of the COFI:AQ in Antalya, Türkiye (7-11 April 2025).

## 11. INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

The Committee:

- a) recognized the need to consider fisheries and aquaculture in the context of integrated water resources management (IWRM) approaches;
- b) welcomed the suggested priority actions on fisheries and aquaculture for IWRM, recommended further refinement of the goals and requested FAO to integrate inland fisheries and aquaculture in related work areas, including in global, regional, basin-level and national development agendas, and invited FAO to enhance partnerships and mobilize resources to design and implement these priority actions;
- c) recognized the significant contributions of inland fisheries and aquaculture to food security, nutrition and sustainable livelihoods, and emphasized the importance of taking an ecosystem-based approach to their management including disease management and addressing AMR;
- d) acknowledged the importance of multi-sectoral and participatory management approaches in IWRM that promote sustainable resource use, support biodiversity, and advance climate resilience, and encouraged FAO to support Members to enhance capacities to manage inland fisheries and aquatic environments.

## 46th Session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)

12. The forty-sixth session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the thirteenth session of the Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF) were held in Split, Croatia, from 6 to 10 November 2023 and attended by delegates from 20 contracting parties and three cooperating non-contracting parties. Representatives from 13 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the GFCM Secretariat as well as invited experts were also in attendance.
13. The adopted report is made available as [EIFAAC/2024/Inf.10](#).
14. During the session, progress in work related to fisheries, aquaculture, compliance and other strategic activities was reviewed. In relation to the management of fisheries and compliance in the GFCM area of application, 24 recommendations were adopted, dealing with:
  - a) the establishment of a fisheries restricted area in the Gulf of Lion;
  - b) the definition of a minimum conservation reference size for giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Strait of Sicily, in the Ionian Sea, in the Levant Sea, as well as for blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea;
  - c) the management of European eel and red coral in the Mediterranean Sea;
  - d) the establishment of a regional management plan for fishing capacity;
  - e) international joint inspection and surveillance schemes outside waters under jurisdiction in the Mediterranean and in the Adriatic Sea;
  - f) the establishment of a catch documentation scheme for coral in the Mediterranean Sea and for turbot in the Black Sea;
  - g) the extension of management measures and plans for turbot, piked dogfish and sprat fisheries and of the research programme on rapa whelk in the Black Sea;

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- h) the extension of the fishing regime and the establishment of catch limits in 2024 for small pelagic stocks, as well as the implementation of a fishing effort for key demersal stocks, in the Adriatic Sea;
  - i) the mitigation of bottlenose dolphin depredation in small pelagic fisheries in the southern Alboran Sea;
  - j) vessel sightings and establishment of a list of vessels presumed to have carried out illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;
  - h) clarifying the application of compliance recommendations and establishing a compliance and capacity inventory to support the work of the Compliance Committee.
15. In addition, the Commission adopted 10 resolutions in relation to fisheries and aquaculture, dealing with: i) the deep-water fisheries restricted area and spatial management measures in the Cabliers coral mound area; ii) the mitigation of fisheries impacts on sturgeon; iii) a regional plan of action to monitor and mitigate interactions between fisheries and vulnerable species; iv) decarbonization of fishing activities and aquaculture; v) plastic use, waste management and climate resilience in aquaculture; vi) the restriction and prohibition of use of driftnets in the Mediterranean.
16. Finally, the Commission adopted its programme of work for the next intersession and approved its autonomous budget for 2024, amounting to USD 2 462 221, and its autonomous budget for 2025 and 2026, each year amounting to USD 2 462 221. The Commission also extended the mandate of its current Bureau for two additional years and endorsed the new Bureaus of the Compliance Committee and the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries.

### **8th Session of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish)**

17. The Eighth Session of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish) was held in Baku, Azerbaijan from 19 to 20 December 2023. The Session was attended by four Member States: Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Türkiye. Seven non-CACFish Member States were invited to attend and were present, namely: Georgia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Two agencies of the United Nations were also present: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).
18. The adopted report is made available as [EIFAAC/2024/Inf.11](#).
19. The Commission was briefed on the main decisions and recommendations of the respective FAO Regional Conferences, Committees and regional fisheries bodies. The Session witnessed interactive discussions about how the Commission could establish operational collaborations with the private sector and associations of fishers and fish farmers. There was a suggestion that the Commission strengthen its operational capacity through activities to be funded through external budgetary resources. The Commission echoed the need to increase the number of CACFish Members, and invited the participating non-CACFish Member States that were present at the Session to consider formally joining the Commission.
20. The Commission reviewed the key outcomes and main recommendations of the Sixth Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The Commission agreed on its workplan for the 2023–2025 intersessional period.




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## UN Development Agenda (SDG targets) and the FAO Strategic Framework

21. The FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 articulates FAO's vision of a sustainable and food secure world for all, in the context of the [Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development](#).
22. The ten targets of SDG 14 "Life below water" are wide-ranging and diverse, addressing fundamental issues for healthy and sustainable ocean economies, with specific objectives to reduce marine pollution, protect aquatic ecosystems, minimize ocean acidification, secure fisheries sustainability, develop scientific capacity relevant to fisheries and improve the implementation of international law pertinent to the sustainable use of oceans. The targets are also strongly interlinked, with progress in one area having strong implications for others. The underlying importance of sustainable development that considers environmental, social, and economic sustainability permeates the rationale of all the objectives, requiring action to be taken across multiple fronts in order to progress towards the targets.
23. FAO is the custodian agency for 4 of the 10 indicators for SDG 14. All indicators under SDG 14 for which FAO is the custodian agency are classified as Tier 1, indicating well-established and internationally applicable methodologies.<sup>1</sup> The four indicators are:
  - 14.4.1 Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels.
  - 14.6.1 Progress by countries in the degree of implementation of international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
  - 14.7.1 Sustainable fisheries as a proportion of GDP in small island developing States, least developed countries and all countries.
  - 14.b.1 Degree of application of a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries.
24. A summary by target and indicator on monitoring progress, a brief assessment of trends in the indicators, and a summary of further actions required to progress towards achieving the targets, is provided in a recent information document for COFI 36 (available here [COFI/2024/INF/20](#)).
25. The [FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31](#) seeks to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.
26. FAO is uniquely placed to directly contribute to the achievement of a number of SDGs organized around FAO's four aspirations ([better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life](#)).
27. Twenty Programme Priority Areas guide the programmes that FAO is implementing under the four betters in order to fill critical gaps and contribute to the achievement of the selected SDG targets. Programme Priority Areas are formulated as inter-disciplinary, issue-based technical themes, representing FAO's strategic contribution to specific SDG targets and indicators.
28. FAO also applies four cross-cutting/cross-sectional "accelerators", which are following: technology, innovation, data and complements (governance, human capital, and institutions). The accelerators are applied in all its programmatic interventions to quicken progress and maximize efforts in achieving the SDGs.

## Blue Transformation

29. One of the FAO Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) is on Blue Transformation. FAO's Blue Transformation Roadmap is made available as [EIFAAC/2024/Inf.12](#).
30. Blue Transformation is a targeted effort by which agencies, countries and dependent communities, use existing and emerging knowledge, tools and practices to secure and sustainably maximize the contribution of aquatic (both marine and inland) food systems to food security, nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all. It builds on existing successes while providing a framework to overcome sustainability challenges.
31. Blue Transformation acknowledges that aquatic food systems significantly influence human, animal and ecosystem health, including biodiversity, land and water use, climate, as well as other aquatic and land-based economic sectors. As such, their transformation requires a holistic and adaptive ecosystem approach, aimed at securing socially, environmentally and economically sustainable value chains that help secure livelihoods, foster an equitable distribution of benefits and support adequate use and conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems.
32. FAO's programme of work in fisheries and aquaculture under its strategic framework, for the period 2024 -2025, has been approved by COFI 36, and COFI highlighted the importance of Blue Transformation as a PPA and Roadmap, reflecting the Organization's vision to maximize the contribution of sustainable aquatic food systems to food security, nutrition and livelihoods.
33. FAO's Blue Transformation Strategy 2022-2030 provides a roadmap for FAO's work on aquatic food systems. The objectives and targets of the Blue Transformation strategy are the following:

 <b>AQUACULTURE</b>	 <b>FISHERIES</b>	 <b>VALUE CHAINS</b>
<p>Objective: Sustainable aquaculture intensification and expansion satisfies global demand for aquatic food and distributes benefits equitably</p> <p><b>Targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective <b>global and regional cooperation, planning, and governance</b> enhance aquaculture development and management</li> <li><b>Innovative technology and management</b> support the expansion of sustainable and resilient aquaculture systems</li> <li>Equitable <b>access to resources and services</b> delivers new and secures existing aquaculture-based livelihoods</li> <li><b>Aquaculture operations</b> minimize environmental impact and use resources efficiently</li> <li>Regular <b>monitoring and reporting</b> of the growth and the ecological, social and economic impacts of aquaculture development</li> </ul>	<p>Objective: Effective management of all fisheries delivers healthy stocks and secures equitable livelihoods</p> <p><b>Targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective <b>policies, governance structures and institutions</b> support fisheries</li> <li>Equitable <b>access to resource and services</b> enhances the livelihoods of fishers and fish workers</li> <li>Effective <b>fisheries management systems</b> address ecological, social and economic objectives, while considering tradeoffs</li> <li><b>Fishing fleets</b> are efficient, safe, innovative and profitable</li> </ul>	<p>Objective: Upgraded value chains ensure the social, economic and environmental viability of aquatic food systems</p> <p><b>Targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Efficient value chains</b> that increase profitability and reduce food loss</li> <li><b>Transparent, inclusive and gender-equitable value chains</b> support sustainable livelihoods</li> <li>Fisheries and aquaculture products access <b>international markets</b> more effectively</li> <li>Increased <b>sustainable consumption of sustainable aquatic food</b>, particularly in areas with low food and nutrition security</li> <li>Increased <b>access to healthy, safe and high quality aquatic food</b></li> </ul>
