

166th Session of the Council

Report of the 34th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (1-5 February 2021)

The 34th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) was held from 1 to 5 February 2021 in a virtual manner.

Dr QU Dongyu, Director-General of FAO, inaugurated the meeting and delivered a statement.

The first substantive item on the Agenda was Agenda item 4, *Status, trends, emerging issues and innovative responses to ensure responsible and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture: Building back better*. The Committee:

- a) commended FAO for the 2020 State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) publication. Requested FAO to consider, in future SOFIA reports, methodological improvements to better reflect the regional status of fish stocks recognizing efforts to rebuild stocks, and increasing the number of stocks with assessments, while ensuring the integrity of the time series. Recommended a robust and participatory peer review process, and to share the report with Members well in advance of publishing;
- b) endorsed the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture to renew its commitment to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, recognize the transformations in the sector since the endorsement of the Code, and refocus priorities to secure the long-term sustainability and resilience of the sector; and
- c) called on FAO and COFI Members, consistent with the COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, to bring fisheries and aquaculture fully into the discussions during the preparation of the United Nations Food Systems Summit.

Under Agenda item 5 and 6, the Committee:

- d) recommended further development of the Global Integrated Sustainable Aquaculture Programme (GISAP);
- e) supported the need for an FAO Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) for 2021–2025, based on robust scientific evidence and risk analysis, including training and the capacity building needs of Members;
- f) recommended the further development of a draft Global Plan of Action for Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
- g) welcomed the further development of the voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture in 2021 as a tool towards further development of national policies for the aquaculture sector and requested FAO to consider guidance for concrete actions for the sector – according to national contexts, capacities and priorities – on the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and on climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- h) requested FAO to continue providing technical support in the framework of negotiations on fisheries subsidies carried out in the World Trade Organization (WTO);
- i) requested FAO to continue supporting Members in the development and implementation of national plans of action to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing;
- j) expressed strong support for FAO's scientific advice to the Codex Alimentarius Commission, reiterating the need for appropriate funding; and

Under Agenda item 7, *Contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the Committee:

- k) emphasizing the importance of accurate data to support decision-making, and the relevant function of FAO in collecting, analysing and disseminating statistics, requested that FAO continue to assist Members in strengthening statistical capacity and delivery of data, especially in data-poor situations, as well as in integrating innovative technologies;
- l) welcomed the Draft Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition and appreciated its comprehensive consultative development process and requested FAO's support in capacity development, and stressed the need to strengthen gender equality, and gender and youth empowerment issues within the strategy; and
- m) noted the importance of sustainable and inclusive ocean economies, the further implementation of the FAO Blue Growth Initiative in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and

requested additional information on the proposal for a voluntary Blue Ports Network for the development of coastal areas in collaboration with Members and relevant organizations.

Under Agenda item 8, *Supporting small-scale and artisanal fisheries*, the Committee:

- n) requested increased work in relation to support for small-scale and artisanal fisheries and to intensify support to Members; and
- o) expressed its commitment to the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) in 2022 and recommended promoting the importance of small-scale and artisanal fisheries and aquaculture in relevant events.

Under Agenda item 9, *Combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing*, the Committee:

- p) stressed that further efforts are needed to address the challenges faced in combatting IUU fishing;
- q) recognized the role that the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels, and Supply Vessels plays in the implementation of the PSMA and other international instruments and initiatives, and called for the further development of the Global Record;
- r) called upon FAO to proceed with developing draft voluntary guidelines for the regulation, monitoring and control of transshipment, and to convene an expert consultation to review the draft; and
- s) commended FAO for the work in developing the FAO Technical Guidelines on Methodologies and Indicators for the Estimation of the Magnitude and Impact of IUU fishing, and called for FAO to keep progressing on the development of these technical guidelines.

Under Agenda item 10, *Developments in global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture*, the Committee:

- t) commended FAO on its work on achieving sustainable fisheries and aquaculture and requested FAO to continue strengthening such work;
- u) requested FAO, within its mandate, to continue providing technical advice and relevant information in the process of deliberation on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ);
- v) underscored the central role of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and Regional Fisheries Advisory Bodies (RFABs), within their sphere of competence, in the implementation of international fisheries instruments; and
- w) requested FAO to further strengthen international cooperation on occupational health and safety issues in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and to promote decent work for fishers and fish workers.

Under Agenda item 11, *Addressing climate change and other environment-related matters in fisheries and aquaculture*, and Agenda item 11.1, *Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across fisheries and aquaculture*, the Committee:

- x) requested FAO to enhance technical guidance on mainstreaming climate adaptation and mitigation in fisheries management and aquaculture development;
- y) welcomed the Action Plan for the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors (2021–2023);
- z) noted the relevance of other effective area based conservation measures (OECMs) to achieving a number of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and global biodiversity targets, and requested that FAO produce and disseminate practical guidelines to support Members in their identification and implementation;
- aa) requested that FAO continue to work with CITES and related fora, to help ensure that decisions made in these fora and their implementation are based on the best scientific information available and relevant technical information; and
- bb) noted the important role that RFABs, RFMOs and other regional initiatives play in mainstreaming biodiversity in the conservation and sustainable use of aquatic resources, and requested FAO to strengthen its support to them in this arena.

Under Agenda item 12, *Enhancing COFI discussions on fisheries management: Proposal for a new COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management*, the Committee:

- cc) agreed to continue a transparent and inclusive consultation process on the proposal of the establishment of a new sub-committee on fisheries management, under the leadership of the Chairperson of COFI, and looked forward to a proposal being submitted at COFI 35.

Under Agenda item 13, FAO's Programme of Work in fisheries and aquaculture under the FAO Strategic Framework, and Agenda item 13.1, *Terms of Reference of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture*, the Committee:

- dd) welcomed the development of a new FAO Strategic Framework (2022–31), and called upon FAO to fully include fisheries and aquaculture under the four new Aspirations of Better Production, Better Nutrition, Better Environment and Better Life;
- ee) endorsed the identified fisheries and aquaculture priority areas of work for the biennium 2020–2021;
- ff) recommended that the relevant FAO Governing Bodies duly consider integrating actions identified in the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture;
- gg) reaffirmed the importance of FAO's role in collecting, analysing and disseminating statistics on fisheries and aquaculture, including gender disaggregated data when possible, and requested FAO to inform Members on additional needs to improve data collection systems, in particular for small-scale and artisanal fisheries and aquaculture;
- hh) expressed its support for the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture, and requested FAO to ensure that the activities of the International Platform include issues related to digital technology applications on fisheries and aquaculture, and further requested FAO to develop a solid funding concept for the International Platform based on voluntary contributions, and continue developing and refining its terms of reference for further review by the Programme Committee and the FAO Council.

Under Agenda item 14, *Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) of the Committee*, the Committee:

- ii) approved the progress report of the MYPOW 2018–2021 and draft MYPOW 2020-2023 with several recommendations, and underlined the importance of the timely preparation of the documents.

Mr Shingo Ota, Chairperson of the Committee on Fisheries