

## COFI 29 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2011

COFI 29 reconvened in plenary sessions throughout the day. Delegates discussed the decisions and recommendations of the 12th Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade and the 5th Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture.

### **DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 12TH SESSION OF THE COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE**

In the morning, discussions focused on the agenda item on the decisions and recommendations of the 12th Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, which took place from 26-30 April 2010, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Parties addressed a wide range of issues, including: FAO input into the World Trade Organization (WTO) fish subsidies negotiations and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) listing process; traceability; market access for small-scale producers; and ecolabelling.

A number of countries called for funding the FAO *Ad Hoc* Expert Advisory Panel for the Assessment of Proposals to Amend Appendices I & II of CITES Concerning Commercially-Exploited Aquatic Species through the regular budget, and many called for modifying or strengthening the Expert Advisory Panel process. JAPAN, with NEW ZEALAND, ICELAND, MOROCCO and the FAROE ISLANDS, noted that the input provided to CITES by the Expert Advisory Panel should be based on sound scientific advice, taking into account livelihoods and other relevant social and economic factors. JAPAN said CITES listing criteria could result in listing species in the appendices despite abundant populations, and do not take into account existing stock recovery plans. ARGENTINA supported the role of FAO in developing criteria for CITES listing and individual assessments of proposed listings, but noted countries have responsibility to decide on listings.

INDIA suggested that instruments such as the FAO guidelines on ecolabelling, which can have an impact on trade, should be considered cautiously to avoid duplication of work in other fora. MALDIVES requested revising the FAO guidelines on ecolabelling to allow differentiation between sustainable and unsustainable methods of capture. THAILAND encouraged development of a framework for the evaluation of ecolabelling of aquaculture. ARGENTINA, CHILE, URUGUAY and ALGERIA supported a technical consultation on ecolabelling guidelines.

CANADA, NEW ZEALAND, ICELAND, NAURU and MEXICO, cautioned against a proliferation of certification schemes, and with GUINEA, noted these could create technical barriers to trade. CANADA, with NEW ZEALAND, supported the development of internationally agreed guidelines, starting with a study on existing traceability schemes, identification of gaps and analysis of best practices. CHINA called for approving guidelines on ecolabelling in inland capture fisheries.

BRAZIL emphasized that recommendations on the conformity of ecolabelling schemes should be comprehensive and non-discriminatory and not burden small-scale producers. REPUBLIC OF KOREA stressed support for capacity building for small-scale fishers to allow them to prepare for trade-related measures. NORWAY called for a process for benchmarking ecolabelling schemes and said such guidelines are the best way to ensure transparency and accountability in fish trade. NICARAGUA and ECUADOR noted the difficulties faced by developing countries when entering new markets, particularly confusion created by various ecolabelling schemes. INDONESIA expressed concern over the high cost of certification schemes.

AUSTRALIA supported a harmonized approach to traceability requirements to ensure that unilateral efforts do not create barriers to trade. She said traceability requirements should be based on the level of risk faced by a fishery and that fisheries at low risk of IUU fishing should face minimal requirements.

MALDIVES noted that lack of stock assessments limits certification of sustainable fisheries for his country. TANZANIA, with MADAGASCAR, underscored continued support for developing countries on data collection and stock assessment.

OMAN said capacity on ecolabelling and traceability should be strengthened through RFMOs. IRAN encouraged FAO to facilitate sharing of experience on aquaculture and fishing traceability between countries. NAMIBIA said any WTO agreement on subsidies should provide a balanced and fair outcome respecting the development priorities of developing countries. MAURITIUS stressed that the chief forum for fish trade issues is the WTO.

Describing FAO as an "essential partner in addressing aquatic species," CITES highlighted that the Convention's role is complementary, rather than an alternative, to regional fisheries bodies. Observing that the Convention is a suite of tools available to member states to utilize in addressing aquatic species in decline, he added that it was up to parties to decide whether to include species in CITES appendices. He also noted that there is work to be done regarding alignment of listing criteria between CITES and FAO.

Summarizing the recommendations, the Secretariat highlighted: following up the expert consultation by developing draft benchmarks for evaluating methodology for ecolabelling schemes; including trade and management aspects in the work of the Expert Advisory Panel on CITES listing proposals; collaborating with the WTO on fisheries matters and ongoing negotiations on subsidies; providing technical assistance for developing countries to address implications of WTO agreements; harmonizing market systems for traceability, ecolabelling and food safety; guidelines for ecolabelling fish products from inland fisheries; and expanding work on aquaculture certification. The Secretariat noted that the recommendations and observations would be included in the meeting report. COFI 29 endorsed the report of the 12th Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture.

### **DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 5TH SESSION OF THE COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE**

In the morning, Belemane Semoli, South Africa, introduced the item (COFI/2011/4 and INF.s 9 and 10) and the Secretariat reported on the 5th session of the sub-committee, which took place from 27 September to 1 October 2010, in Phuket, Thailand.

The Secretariat noted meeting outcomes including the agreement on: draft guidelines on aquaculture certification; the need for short- and long-term strategies for adaptation to climate change and the application of the ecosystem approach to aquaculture; and a study on the impacts of offshore aquaculture.

In the afternoon, many parties supported adoption of the draft guidelines on aquaculture certification and discussed a variety of issues, including: concerns about trade barriers; increased funding for aquaculture development and implementation of the guidelines in developing countries; and biosecurity.

HONDURAS suggested a monitoring and evaluation system to ensure that the aquaculture certification guidelines do not affect negatively small-scale producers, while COLOMBIA said that the circumstances of small- and medium-scale producers should be incorporated into the guidelines.

MALAWI underscored evaluating the economic impacts of certification. GHANA, INDIA, BRAZIL, MOZAMBIQUE and MOROCCO said the guidelines on certification should not create trade barriers. ARGENTINA, Brazil, for the GROUP OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES (GRULAC), and ALGERIA, stressed that implementation of certification guidelines should be progressive and consistent with international reference standards, particularly the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade of the WTO. The US said the guidelines on certification would not pose barriers to trade.

VIET NAM expressed concern that implementation of the certification scheme could be burdensome, noting that traceability should take countries' level of development into consideration. TONGA, with UGANDA, CAMEROON, ANGOLA, BANGLADESH, the COOK ISLANDS and SRI LANKA, drew attention to funding constraints and requested that funding for aquaculture be increased. MALDIVES supported foreign direct investments in aquaculture. GHANA, with MAURITANIA, proposed a special fund for developing countries and small island states for implementing the guidelines, and, with the EU and CANADA, endorsed four pillars of certification implementation: animal health and welfare; food safety; environmental integrity; and socio-economic aspects. NAURU, FIJI and MAURITIUS called for increased funding for aquaculture development in their regions. TURKEY said these increased funds should be allocated through RFMOs.

BRAZIL emphasized ongoing discussions on animal health and welfare issues in several fora and reiterated the need to review the certification guidelines at the next session of the

sub-committee. Kyrgyzstan, for the CENTRAL ASIAN AND CAUCASUS REGIONAL FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE COMMISSION, called for FAO assistance for adaptation of aquaculture to climate change. UKRAINE and CHILE underscored the need to improve data collection on aquaculture. CHINA emphasized strengthening unified registration and technical management, including full traceability and market access, to ensure the quality of aquaculture products. CANADA proposed clarification of technical terms on offshore aquaculture.

On biosecurity, GHANA expressed concern about the impact of alien species on biodiversity. NORWAY called for FAO to collaborate with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) on biosecurity. THAILAND highlighted risk assessment and preventive measures. CHILE called for developing technical guidelines on biosecurity measures for the introduction of species. NAMIBIA, with ANGOLA, REPUBLIC OF CONGO and ZAMBIA, commended FAO for the Special Programme on Aquaculture Development in Africa and requested assistance in fighting eruption of diseases in inland waters. INDONESIA called for assistance to control viral diseases in aquaculture.

IRAN requested support for a national aquaculture certification system and suggested a global study on the use of medicines in aquaculture. CANADA suggested considering the impact of aquaculture on wild fisheries. MEXICO stressed strengthening regional and international cooperation in aquaculture.

A number of intergovernmental organizations highlighted their work on aquaculture, supported the guidelines on aquaculture certification and highlighted concerns, *inter alia*: use of guidelines as non-tariff barriers to trade; proliferation of certification schemes for aquaculture; and use of fish meal and fish oil in aquaculture. Non-governmental organizations expressed concern about the social and environmental impacts of aquaculture development.

The Secretariat noted that the Committee approved by consensus the guidelines on aquaculture certification and endorsed the report of the 5th Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. He further noted, *inter alia*: the suggestion for a phased approach and a monitoring system for the implementation of the guidelines; the request that FAO allocate more resources to aquaculture in its work programme; and consensus on the importance of biosecurity issues and related capacity building needs.

### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

Delegates at COFI had a busy day on Tuesday as many took part in plenary sessions, bilateral meetings and meetings with the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. "We spend a lot of time in plenary discussing principles and norms, but being here at FAO is a great opportunity to walk down the hall and meet with experts to develop and initiate programmes to implement these ideas on the ground," noted one delegate after a full schedule.

As the Committee endorsed the proposed technical guidelines for the certification of inland capture fisheries and certification of aquaculture, several developing country delegates emphasized the importance of capacity building and technical support: "all of these guidelines are well and good," said one "but we need the capacity to implement them or they do no good." One seasoned observer asked "where is money for implementation going to come from, with limited resources some painful decisions about priorities will have to be made."

Looking ahead to Wednesday, one delegate was overheard saying "I can't wait for the discussion on IUU fishing, we are all against it, but we all have a different interpretation of what it means."