



Food and Agriculture
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High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable development (HLPF) 2023

10-19 July 2023

“Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”

ANNEX 2

Inputs by the FAO Committee on Fisheries

The two main functions of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) are to review and guide the programmes of work of FAO in the field of fisheries and aquaculture and their implementation, and to conduct periodic reviews of global issues in the field of fisheries and aquaculture with a view to developing concerted action by nations, inter-governmental bodies and civil society. COFI is also a forum in which global agreements and non-binding instruments are negotiated to address identified fisheries and aquaculture issues. COFI also reviews and decides on the recommendations of its two COFI Sub-Committees on fish trade and aquaculture, respectively.

The 35th Session of COFI was held from 5 to 9 September 2022. Agenda 5, *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, was particularly focused on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs.

1. Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs¹

- During the 35th Session of FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), held from 5 to 9 September 2022, the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic were reviewed in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in particular regarding Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 (Life Below Water)² based on the Global Assessment of COVID-19 on Fisheries and Aquaculture³.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on people’s lives and livelihoods, and has hindered efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, achievement of the SDGs was already

¹ Paragraphs 2, 4, 55 and 56 of COFI/2022/3

² COFI/2022/3 (<https://www.fao.org/3/nj643en/nj643en.pdf>)

³ COFI-2022/SBD/9 (<https://www.fao.org/3/cc1609en/cc1609en.pdf>)

off track. Progress had been made in poverty reduction, maternal and child health, access to electricity, and gender equality, but not enough to achieve the Goals by 2030. In other areas, including reducing inequality, lowering carbon emissions and tackling hunger, progress had either stalled or reversed.

- The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are one of the factors which present acute challenges to achieving the 2030 Agenda, and reinforce the need for collaborative action to support political, economic and social change to ensure that the recovery reduces carbon emissions, conserves natural resources, creates better jobs, advances gender equality and tackles growing poverty and inequalities.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is intensifying data scarcity problems when timely reliable information has become even more essential for immediate policy responses and for monitoring national and international capacity agendas.
- The COVID-19 pandemic compelled data providers to innovate and build new forms of data collection and analysis, as well as partnerships; these should be leveraged and scaled up, particularly in data poor regions.

2. Examples of specific actions taken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that also accelerate progress towards multiple SDG targets⁴

- To combat the impact of the pandemic on both data collection and livelihoods, in terms of food insecurity and disruptions to the food systems, FAO is providing technical assistance and capacity building support in a number of areas, including in fisheries and aquaculture.
- FAO capacity development work aims primarily to enable countries to improve the sustainability of the management of their resources, including by accurate monitoring of resources and fishing activities, estimation of adequate indicators and preparation of scientific and technical advice according to internationally agreed methodologies and standards, both for the country's internal use and for reporting to relevant international fora.
- In particular, for the indicators under FAO custodianship, FAO has organized global and regional training workshops and is providing guidance for national monitoring, through guidelines and e-learning courses, the identification of reporting systems, including standard data collection frameworks, software, by using existing partnerships and through innovative technologies.

⁴ Paragraphs 57-61 of COFI/2022/3

- For this purpose, FAO has established a Multi-Donor Umbrella Programme to fill capacity gaps in national statistical systems and enable countries to report on and use the SDG indicators effectively. The Programme will help countries monitor progress for SDG targets related to hunger and food security, sustainable agriculture and management of natural resources, through improved monitoring based on higher quality and granular data. Partner countries will produce and disseminate more comprehensive and comparable data on SDG indicators, enabling them to design effective evidence-based national policies and strategies to meet SDG targets. Cooperation with regional fisheries management organizations and regional seas convention can play a fundamental role in fostering consistency and comparability of country approaches towards monitoring and reporting frameworks.
- FAO's Blue Transformation allows agencies, countries and dependent communities to leverage existing and emerging knowledge, tools and practices to secure and sustainably maximize the contribution of aquatic food systems to food security, nutrition, affordable healthy diets and the SDGs. By supporting a transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable aquatic food systems, Blue Transformation forms an important mechanism for accelerating actions to reach the SDG targets.

3. Assessment of the situation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic

- SDG indicator 14.7.1 (Sustainable fisheries as a percentage of GDP in small island developing States, least developed countries and all countries)⁵
 - Fisheries support the livelihoods of millions worldwide, providing an important source of income and food security. Ensuring that fisheries resources are appropriately safeguarded is inextricably linked to their continued contribution to economies and sustainable development, especially for least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS).
 - The multifaceted character of this indicator allows positive spill overs that can be particularly relevant in supporting other areas of the 2030 Agenda, including minimizing the negative effects of COVID-19, especially involving SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production patterns).
 - The 2022 reporting cycle (which estimated the indicator for 2019) saw a significant drop in national reporting, in particular for SIDS and LDCs, and highlights the challenges faced by national statistical systems in reporting during COVID-19.
 - Effective fisheries management, supportive and transparent government initiatives, better access to information and the implementation of new technologies are critical to increasing the contribution of sustainable fisheries to

⁵ Paragraphs 34, 35, 39 and 40 of COFI/2022/3

GDP, particularly in countries where fisheries are central for local economies, food security and vulnerable communities.

- SDG indicator 14.b.1 (Progress by countries in the degree of application of a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries)⁶
 - Small-scale fisheries, which account for at least 40 percent of the total inland and marine capture fisheries production, play a fundamental role in food security and poverty eradication, underpinning the livelihoods of those who are often most vulnerable in society. It is estimated that almost 500 million people depend at least partially on small-scale fisheries for their livelihoods. Supporting their access rights has parallel efficiencies for SDG 1 - No poverty, SDG 2 Zero hunger, SDG 5 -Gender equality, and SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions.
 - At the same time, small-scale food producers fulfil a vital role to nourish those depending on the sector and local communities, as especially seen during the COVID-19 pandemic and current food crisis. It is more important than ever for countries to support small-scale fishers as key contributors to sustainable agrifood systems.
 - Expanded support for small-scale fishers is critical, in particular in light of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the sector, and in line with the objectives of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) 2022⁷. In addition, more financing is needed to support small-scale fisheries initiatives, including utilizing non-traditional and unconventional funding and resources, in conjunction with increased public awareness of the importance of small-scale fisheries and stronger inter-institutional coordination. In the context of supporting Members in achieving and reporting on SDGs, FAO has developed an e-learning course for data collection, analysis and reporting on SDG 14.b.1.
 - IYAFA 2022 provides a unique global opportunity to implement the SSF Guidelines and achieve SDG 14.b. Pillar 2 of IYAFA's Global Action Plan for economic sustainability calls for support for value chains that are inclusive of SSF, which would enable SSF producers to better provide affordable, high quality fish products, fostering economic development and generating employment.

4. Key messages for inclusion into the Political Declaration of the September 2023 SDG Summit⁸

⁶ Paragraphs 42, 43, 47 and 48 of COFI/2022/3

⁷ www.fao.org/artisanal-fisheries-aquaculture-2022/home/en/

⁸ Paragraphs 11 p), 12 b) and 21 e) of C 2023/24 (<https://www.fao.org/3/nk424en/nk424en.pdf>)

- According to the Report of the 35th Session of COFI⁹, the Committee requested FAO to continue assessing the global impacts on the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the context of global food security, of the COVID-19 pandemic and of conflicts.
- The Committee also noted the serious implications that the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing conflicts, the climate crisis, increasing population, and biodiversity loss have on achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and called upon Members to redouble their efforts to support an equitable and sustainable recovery¹⁰.
- The Committee further recommended FAO to consider support to fisheries and aquaculture post COVID-19 response and recovery as a priority area.

⁹ C 2023/24

¹⁰ Recalling the ministerial declaration of the 2022 session of the Economic and Social Council and the 2022 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) “building back better from the coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (E/2022/L.14, E/HLPF/2022/L.1)