

**High-Level Political Forum 2024
15-17 July 2024**

“Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions.”

Inputs by the Committee on Fisheries (COFI)

The two main functions of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI, The Committee) 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 three Sub-Committees on Fish Trade, Aquaculture, and Fisheries Management¹, respectively.

The 35th Session of COFI was held from 5-9 September 2022. Agenda item 5, “FAO’s contribution to fisheries and aquaculture towards achieving the 2030 agenda for sustainable development,” focused specifically on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 36th Session of COFI will be convened from 8-12 July 2024, the agenda is still being finalized and will feature a special event celebrating the 10-year anniversary of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication.

Suggested outline² (1-3 being entity and contact person details):

4) Impacts of multiple crises on the implementation of SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body.

1. The challenges facing aquatic food systems are significant and interlinked – including poverty and hunger, as well as inequality and lack of access to resources and income-earning opportunities, climate change, loss of biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, disasters and conflicts.
2. When managed sustainably, the aquatic food sector thrives with a generally low carbon footprint and significant growth potential, especially from the sustainable expansion of aquaculture, the fastest growing food production industry in the last 50 years.
3. Aquatic foods are irreplaceable and essential to developing countries, they have a low carbon footprint, high feed conversion efficiency and represent a highly diverse source of animal protein, with approximately 3,400 taxa harvested and 700 species or species-types cultured.
4. The world’s consumption of aquatic foods has increased significantly in recent years and will continue to rise. Global fisheries and aquaculture production is at a record high and the sector will play an increasingly important role in providing food and nutrition in the future. Aquaculture has great potential to feed and nourish the world’s growing population.

¹ The first session of COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management was held virtually from 8-11 January 2024.

² The headings are included as per the suggested template provided in the letter from the President of ECOSOC.

5. Aquatic animal production is forecast to grow another 14 percent by 2030. It is vital this growth goes hand in hand with safeguarding ecosystems, reducing pollution, protecting biodiversity and ensuring social equity.
6. It is thus crucial to recognize the specificity of the aquatic food sector within the context of achieving the 2030 Agenda.

5) Three key areas where sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions for achieving the SDGs are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2024, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.

1. Blue Transformation, currently being discussed and implemented in many countries as a pathway to maximize the contribution of aquatic food systems to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an integrated way with focus, on three key objectives:
 - i. Sustainable **aquaculture** intensification and expansion satisfies global demand for aquatic food and distributes benefits equitably.
 - ii. Effective management of all **fisheries** delivers healthy stocks and secures equitable livelihoods.
 - iii. Upgraded **value chains** ensure the social, economic and environmental viability of aquatic food systems.
2. Aquatic food systems can make meaningful contributions to food security and nutrition, help prepare for and buffer the impacts climate change, and when properly transformed sustainably increase the supply of nutritious food and contribute to community resilience, decent employment, equity, gender equality, and poverty alleviation.
3. Blue Transformation can meet the twin challenges of food security and environmental sustainability, which requires a commitment from the public and private sectors if we are to achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

6) Three examples of specific actions, policies and measures that are most urgently needed to effectively deliver sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to eradicate poverty and reinforce the 2030 Agenda, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving the SDGs.

1. FAO is fostering the inclusion of aquatic foods in global climate fora, including through the UNFCCC Ocean dialogue.
2. Agreement 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):
 - i. The BBNJ Agreement will cover over two-thirds of the ocean and will address conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. It will deal with global issues such as climate change, ecosystem degradation, biodiversity conservation and pollution, coordinating

diverse ocean uses, and filling regulatory gaps and complementing the existing ocean legal and regulatory framework.

- ii. To ensure the Agreement realizes its full potential, further international cooperation and coordination across relevant legal instruments and frameworks, as well as global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies, it will be necessary, to promote coherence and coordination with those instruments, frameworks and bodies. Effective implementation will require multiple sectors working together to support its the implementation and will facilitate more cohesive approaches for the management of areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ).
 - iii. Sustainable utilization of fisheries resources cannot be achieved without marine biological diversity conservation.
 - iv. FAO is supporting the implementation of BBNJ Agreement and helping ensure that the obligations of FAO Members as parties to the BBNJ are realized and promoting coherence and coordination including with existing relevant legal instruments, frameworks and sectoral bodies.
3. World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies:
- i. The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies aims at eliminating all forms of subsidies for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and fishing related activities in support of such fishing, is a major step forward for ocean sustainability.
 - ii. FAO has provided technical support to WTO's members in achieving this outcome and will continue actively support implementation of the Agreement, as requested by COFI.
4. Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA):
- i. The increasing importance of aquaculture for food security and nutrition, improved livelihoods, poverty alleviation, income generation, as well as job creation and trade, and its potential to meet the growing global demand for fish has been highlighted by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI).
 - ii. COFI further recommended FAO develop global guidelines for sustainable aquaculture development to support government authorities and policymakers in their efforts to enable aquaculture to effectively contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
 - iii. FAO will provide capacity development to support implementation of the GSA to promote sustainable aquaculture development.

7) Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit.

1. Millions of lives and livelihoods are supported by aquatic food systems. Yet, many small-scale producers, especially women, are vulnerable with precarious working conditions. Building their resilience is key to sustainability and equitable development.
2. Aquatic foods are making a significant contribution to food security and nutrition; they are drivers of employment, economic growth, social development, environmental

recovery while also providing essential nutrients for healthy diets, and they hold the potential to play an even bigger role in the future global food system.

3. While aquatic food systems present a significant opportunity, the challenges facing aquatic food systems are significant and interlinked – including poverty and hunger, as well as inequality and lack of access to resources and income-earning opportunities, climate change, loss of biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, disasters and conflicts.
4. Science and innovation are critical to the transformation of aquatic food systems to nourish people, nurture the planet, advance equitable livelihoods and build resilient ecosystems. They must be accompanied by strong institutions, good governance, political will, enabling regulatory frameworks, and effective measures to promote equity among aquatic food system actors.
5. FAO is mobilizing science and innovation by:
 - i. Fostering the inclusion of aquatic foods in global climate fora, including through the UNFCCC Ocean dialogue.
 - ii. Engaging in international processes, providing its fisheries management and aquaculture expertise, including support global processes, collaboration with relevant international organizations, including Regional Fisheries Advisory Bodies (RFABs) and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs).
 - iii. Promoting sustainable fisheries and aquaculture through collaborative approaches and engagement in United Nations fora and processes, including the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science, the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the United Nations Ocean Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, and looked forward to the continued collaboration with relevant global and regional organizations, bodies and initiatives to strengthen this work.

8) Recommendations and key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2024 HLPF.

1. Millions of lives and livelihoods are supported by aquatic food systems. Yet, many small-scale producers, especially women, are vulnerable with precarious working conditions. Building their resilience is key to sustainability and equitable development.
2. Blue Transformation can meet the twin challenges of food security and environmental sustainability, which requires a commitment from the public and private sectors if we are to achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda.
3. The world's consumption of aquatic foods has increased significantly in recent years and will continue to rise.
4. Global fisheries and aquaculture production is at a record high and the sector will play an increasingly important role in providing food and nutrition in the future.
5. Aquaculture has great potential to feed and nourish the world's growing population.
6. Aquatic animal production is forecast to grow another 14 percent by 2030. It is vital this growth goes hand in hand with safeguarding ecosystems, reducing pollution, protecting biodiversity and ensuring social equity.