

Artisanal fisheries call on governments to pursue the dialogue on the implementation of the Guidelines for Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries

On the occasion of the 35th session of COFI, which takes place during the International Year of Small-scale Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA), Small-scale fishing organisations from six continents identify five priority areas for action by FAO members up to 2030.

The 35th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI - 5-9 September), and the preceding Small-Scale Fisheries Summit (2-4 September), will focus on women and men in small-scale fisheries (SSF), the most numerous users of the ocean, whose major contributions to livelihoods, employment, food security and income contrast with their marginalization in decision-making.

Governments meeting at COFI will discuss, among other things, how to **support small-scale fisheries**. In this International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA), fishers from Africa, the Pacific, Central and South America, Asia and Europe have [identified five areas of action for governments](#), in dialogue with their countries' artisanal fishing communities, to offer a sustainable future for these communities by 2030:

- Urgently ensuring preferential access and co-manage 100% of coastal areas;
- Guaranteeing women's participation and supporting their role in innovation;
- Protecting small-scale fisheries from competing sectors of the blue economy;
- Demonstrating transparency and accountability in fisheries management; and
- Building climate resilient communities and providing opportunities for youth

For the implementation of these priorities, rooted in the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries, the establishment of a permanent dialogue between governments, and with fishing communities, is essential. We therefore support FAO in its endeavours to establish mechanisms for **an ongoing dialogue between governments, with the active participation of fishers, on the implementation of the Guidelines on Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries**.

The issue of the blue economy will also be on the agenda. The latest report on the state of world fisheries and aquaculture (SOFIA 2022) is entitled "**Towards a blue transformation**". The growth of the blue economy is creating a "blue fear" among small-scale fishers; their livelihoods are threatened by competition and negative impacts from more powerful marine and land-based industries, such as oil and gas exploitation, tourism, but also industrial aquaculture. So, when the FAO commits to "*ensure that the intensification and expansion of sustainable aquaculture continues to meet the global demand for aquatic food*", we think of the significant damage to our communities caused by intensive fishmeal-dependent aquaculture, such as salmon and shrimp farming, which is destroying our coasts and resources. For us, the precautionary approach must prevail. No new use of the oceans should be allowed, or supported, if it has a negative impact on aquatic ecosystems or the communities that depend on them for their livelihood.

COFI will also discuss the **mainstreaming of biodiversity in the fisheries and aquaculture sector**. Artisanal fisheries support conservation initiatives, as long as they recognise and protect local communities' rights of ownership, occupation, access and use of resources, giving priority to participatory governance systems. Strategies for environmental protection and sustainable management must also go beyond the slogan "*30% of the oceans*

protected by 2030". It is necessary to address the drivers of resource degradation and biodiversity loss that also affect the remaining 70% and we insist on the urgent need of implementing a human rights-based approach to marine conservation.

Artisanal fishing communities are at the forefront of those experiencing the impacts of climate change: loss of coral reefs, mangroves and other key habitats, sea level rise, coastal erosion, increasing frequency and intensity of storms, reduced catches, invasive species. This has direct consequences on our livelihoods and on people's food security. The **FAO Plan of Action on Climate Change** will of course be an important element in responding to this situation. We urge that within this framework, permanent and transparent consultative governance structures involving representatives of small-scale fisheries be put in place, to provide an effective and appropriate response to disasters and emergencies after extreme weather events, ensuring that sufficient funds are provided, and managed transparently at the local level.

The issues to be discussed at COFI 35 are of paramount importance for the future of artisanal fisheries. It is essential that the women and men of artisanal fisheries fully participate in fair and equitable dialogue and that the participation of the communities concerned leads to joint action. As we [stated at the UN Ocean Conference \(UNOC\)](#):

"We are ready to work with you, decision-makers, donors and NGOs to save our ocean, our common mother. But to work well together, we need consent, agreement, a definition of what a good partnership is. We are ready to work with you in transparency and in mutual respect. Will you join us?"

Quotes from representatives of artisanal fishing organisations:

Gaoussou Gueye, President of [CAOPA](#) (Senegal):

"We are concerned about the marginalisation of small-scale fisheries in the blue economy strategies of our countries. We cannot survive if we have to compete with powerful, polluting and destructive sectors of the marine and coastal environment. In the face of this threat, we call on governments to adopt a precautionary approach: Do not give the green light to a destructive blue economy!"

Micheline Dion Somplehi, President of the Union of Women Fish Processors' Cooperatives [USCOFPCI](#) (Côte d'Ivoire):

"Artisanal fishing is as much about women as men. But their contribution is often invisible, while their working conditions are disastrous. It is essential that governments make a visible and sustainable commitment to recognise them as key players in the fisheries sector, at the origin of many innovations that enable better use of our resources for the benefit of our populations. For this to happen, women must have access to financing, to fisheries resources and to social welfare."

Alhafiz Atsari, Kesualan Nelayan Traditional Indonesia, [KNTI](#) (Indonesia):

"Artisanal fishermen are forced to live with giants. These giants are fishing vessels that use destructive fishing gear, like bottom trawlers. They take up a lot of space. They are greedy and don't pay attention to anything. And they destroy everything in the ocean. These

destructive giants are colonial products that were introduced into Indonesia under the pretext that artisanal fishing is unable to produce and process fish efficiently. Artisanal fisheries are powerless to deal with them or drive them away. We are forced to live with them."

David Chacon Rojas: President of [CoopeTarcoles R.L.](#) (Costa Rica)

"Where there is hunger, there is no conservation."

Maria Carrillo: Coordinator of the Association of Women Shrimp Processors in Barra del Colorado (Costa Rica)

"It seems that we, the women of the coasts and seas, and our work, are invisible to the world."

Lavenia Naivalu, Nacula District Representative from Yasawa Islands and fisherwoman (Fiji)

"We need more accountable and transparent fisheries management plans and policies, that include indigenous and local communities and women fishers. We need to know the number of fishing licences given, whether they are compliant with management plans, how much revenue are they earning and can some of this be reinvested back into management?"

Signatories to the press release

The African Confederation of Artisanal Professional Organisations (CAOPA)

The Locally Managed Marine Areas Network (LMMA International)

The Network of Marine Areas of Responsible Fisheries and Marine Territories of Life (RAMPR)

The Low Impact Fishers of Europe Platform (LIFE)

Sindicato de trabajadores del Mar SITRAMAR, Bocas del Toro territorio Comarcal Gnohe Bugle Comarcal, Panamá

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