

Assessing Aquaculture Progress in Complying with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF)

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Every two years, FAO Members as well as regional fishery bodies (RFBs) and the civil society are asked to complete a self-assessment questionnaire on the implementation of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF). Information collected from the questionnaires are consolidated and a report is presented to the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI). Detailed information on aquaculture, focusing on Article 9 of the Code, is presented to the COFI Subcommittee on Aquaculture (COFI/SCA). The COFI/SCA requested FAO to develop a questionnaire that will specifically assess the status of compliance of States to the aquaculture provisions of CCRF.¹ In response to this request, FAO under the supervision of the Aquaculture Service (FIRA), drafted an aquaculture questionnaire that supplements the aquaculture section of the CCRF compliance questionnaire, and has been carrying out a testing process of such instrument.

The main objective of the “CCRF Aquaculture Questionnaire Testing” process was to produce a new aquaculture-dedicated questionnaire that would enable (a) an effective and comprehensive global assessment of the status of compliance to the aquaculture provisions, (b) the effective identification of the needs of States to develop mechanisms and implement actions for compliance, and (c) for governments to conduct a self-assessment of their capacities for compliance to the aquaculture provisions of the Code. A question on preparedness and capacity to manage and respond to disasters and longer term impacts such as those posed by climate change was also included.

The testing comprised two activities, namely: (i) responding to and evaluating the questionnaire by selected experts from various countries and regions, and (ii) conducting an expert workshop

to reformulate the questionnaire and recommend strategic and technical actions regarding its use. The test and evaluation were carried out during November and December 2009 and the workshop took place in January 2010.

The first activity involved selected experts from Africa, Central America, Europe, Latin America, Near East and Asia-Pacific, coordinating and providing national (regional, in the case of Central America) responses to the draft questionnaire and evaluating the questionnaire using a set criteria. The draft questionnaire was also sent to some Pacific Island nations through the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and through the FAO Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific Islands (SAP) for response and, by some of them, for evaluation. The experts were invited to participate according to their experience as national experts or as representative of national and regional institutions responsible for reporting the State’s CCRF compliance.

In this phase, the responses were evaluated for the purpose of demonstrating the analytical tool to process and analyze the returns and exploring methodologies to generate various types of reports for governments and FAO.

Experts from Chile, China, OSPESCA (Organización del Sector Pesquero y Acuicola del Istmo Centroamericano, on behalf of the Central American states), Kenya, Norway, the Philippines, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Turkey and Viet Nam responded to the draft questionnaire. The results of the test and the evaluation were discussed at an expert workshop that took place at the FAO Regional Office for Asia Pacific in Bangkok on 12-15 January 2010. Participants included 13 country/regional experts previously involved in this process, the Network of Aquaculture Centers for Asia and the Pacific (NACA), FAO officers and consultant.

Purpose and design of the questionnaire

Replying to the new CCRF questionnaire on aquaculture – an evaluation tool – would not be the same as replying to a poll. It demands much more mental and physical exertion, and time, but the reward system follows the same principle: an immediate feedback to the one replying to it, with one crucial difference: the information that comes back from responding to questions is a basis for a future action, i.e. to improve on a current situation. How is this accomplished?

The questionnaire is designed to provide a quick assessment to the respondent – the government – of two things: (i) how well, relative to a benchmark, it has complied with the aquaculture provisions of the Code, and (ii) what might explain the level of compliance. The core attribute of the evaluation tool is that it is a means to enable its user – the government – to assess as objectively as possible the State's current level of compliance and present capability to comply with those provisions so that both could be improved and relevant assistance can be provided.

How does this work?

Principles and processes

The key feature of the questionnaire is that it is structured so that one set of questions reveal indications of status of compliance and another set indicates capacity for compliance.

The second feature is that every question is close-ended and the response is made in a short Likert-like² scale, from zero to low to medium to high (level of compliance or capacity for compliance). Here, the issue arises as to what point on the scale applies or corresponds closest to the actual. This issue is addressed as follows:

- **Guideline.** The tool to help the respondent make a judicious and informed response – rather than a guess or an arbitrary tick – is a manual of instruction that would contain explanations, illustrations or clarifications for every question.
- **Strengthened country team.** The other provision, as recommended by the test reviewers and by the workshop, is to organize and strengthen a country team made up of staff from relevant agencies and to designate an institution to serve as a focal point for the survey.

The third feature is that the questionnaire is in excel format in which an analytical protocol is embedded. The analytical protocol allows a rapid generation of means (average), the assignment of weights to each question representing an indicator and setting up a benchmark against which the result can be compared. The overall result then is an immediate picture of how the government has performed and what is the state of its capacity to comply. The individual indicators themselves reveal the weak and strong points in the performance and the strong and weak elements in its capacity for compliance.

Global and regional uses

A major purpose of the questionnaire is to determine priority needs for assistance. Learning from the lessons of previous surveys, the questionnaire refrains from asking for these directly. Instead the questions themselves are so framed as to be able to indicate the major issues, the problems and therefore the priorities for assistance. The analysis of the priority needs can be focused on a country or on a group of countries in a region, which would then signal various types of national and national technical assistance programmes. They could also be used by FAO and regional organizations to develop technical cooperation programmes meant to strengthen the regional capacity for compliance with the aquaculture provisions of the Code.

In sum, the tool is a means of self-assessment for a country to be able to identify key areas for improvement, the second is for a global assessment whose results FAO and regional organizations can use to inform the planning and development of strategic technical assistance programmes for countries. A third use is for regional organizations to focus technical cooperation in training, information and expert exchange among their member states.

One final point, the questionnaire is designed to be concise but comprehensive enough to achieve its two basic purposes: provide FAO Members an objective basis for improving their capacities to implement the aquaculture provisions of the Code, and yield information for FAO to better identify areas for technical assistance to countries. ■

¹A similar effort is being carried out for the CCRF's provisions on Trade.

²When responding to a Likert questionnaire item, respondents specify their level of agreement to a statement.