



Highlights of the Third Session of the Committee on Fisheries Sub-Committee on Aquaculture

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BACKGROUND

The Third Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) was held in New Delhi, India from 4 to 8 September 2006 at the kind invitation of the Government of India. It was attended by 48 Members of FAO, by several representatives from specialized agencies of the United Nations, and observers from intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations.

On behalf of Mr Ichiro Nomura, Assistant Director-General of the FAO Fisheries Department, Mr Serge Garcia, Director, Fisheries Resources Division, expressed the gratitude of FAO to the Government of India for hosting the meeting and for their generous hospitality. His Excellency, Mr Sharad Pawar, Union Minister of Agriculture, Consumer Affairs and Food and Public Distribution delivered the welcoming address on behalf of the Government of India. Mr Pawar reiterated the important role that aquaculture can play in increasing economic opportunities and in reducing poverty. Mr Ajay Bhattacharya, Joint Secretary (Fisheries) of the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries chaired the session.

HIGHLIGHTS

The sub-committee

1. Strongly supported the continuing work towards development of regional aquaculture networks in Africa and the Americas, referring to the models of NACA (Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific) and the more recently established NACEE (Network of Aquaculture Centres in Eastern Europe).
2. Discussed the importance of:
 - introduction and culture of alien and/or genetically altered organisms;
 - competition and potential conflicts between aquaculture and other users of aquatic resources;
 - food safety and aquatic animal health;
 - environmental sustainability and ecosystem approach to aquaculture;
 - risk assessment in aquaculture;
 - stock enhancement; and
 - education and training.
3. Requested FAO to organize an Expert Consultation on the development of harmonized shrimp farming standards and review certification procedures for global acceptance and transparency.
4. Endorsed the concept of establishing a Coordinating Working Party on Aquaculture Statistics to provide advice on matters

related to information for aquaculture and to facilitate the establishment of standardized concepts, methodologies and software for use in data collections.

5. Approved the Draft Strategy (on Aquaculture Statistics) subject to additional comments that could be provided at COFI. It recommended that the document be translated into the FAO official languages and submitted to COFI at its 27th Session.
6. Recommended organizing an inter-sessional Expert Consultation on Socio-Economic Impacts of Aquaculture.
7. Recommended the organization of an Expert Consultation on Improving Planning and Policy Development in Aquaculture.
8. Requested to organize a regional workshop for ASEAN member countries in order to strengthen the planning and development programme for aquaculture in the Asian region.
9. Congratulated FAO and the members of the FAO/NACA/WB/WWF/UNEP Consortium on the development of the International Principles for Responsible Shrimp Farming. These would serve as a basis for further global consensus building on norms for shrimp aquaculture and act as guidance in the elaboration and harmonization of standards among producer countries.
10. Strongly encouraged further emphasis on the establishment and development of farmer organizations to improve management of the aquaculture sector and empower producers to participate in decision-making and self-regulation.
11. Recognized the use of Better Management Practices (BMPs) as offering promise with regard to increasing public and consumer confidence in aquaculture production practices and products. However, it also recognized that currently, many non-governmental certification schemes have resulted in higher costs for producers without delivering significant price benefits to small-scale producers and expressed concern that the costs of such schemes were disadvantageous to small-scale producers.
12. The Sub-Committee commented that the emergence of a wide range of certification schemes and accreditation bodies was creating confusion amongst producers and consumers alike and stated that there was a need for more globally accepted norms for aquaculture certification, which could provide more guidance and serve as a basis for improved harmonization and facilitate mutual recognition and equivalence of such certification schemes.
13. Requested FAO to convene an Expert Consultation and/or workshops which would assist in elaborating norms and reviewing the diverse options and relative benefits of these approaches. It encouraged FAO to play a lead role in facilitating the development of guidelines which could be considered when national and regional aquaculture standards are developed.
14. Appreciated the comprehensive consultative process adopted in the preparation of the Prospective Analysis as well as the quality, depth and accuracy of the document and was impressed with the quality of the publication "The State of World Aquaculture: 2006".
15. Agreed that high priority should be given to Africa (Sub-Saharan Africa in particular) in future aquaculture development, and it called for the establishment of a special programme on aquaculture development in Africa, which would provide special assistance to African countries.

The Fourth Session of the Sub-Committee will be held in Chile in 2008.

Full report of the Third session of the Sub-Committee is available at <http://www.fao.org/fi/body/cofi/cofiq/cofiq.asp>.

Examples of press releases and photos during the Session can be found on pages 28-31.

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