

Solutions for empowering women's engagement in aquatic food systems: a journey through the supply chain

FAO, Green Room, 08:30-09:45

11. October 2022

On the CFS-day dedicated to empowering women and girls and promoting gender equality, the Global Action Network - Sustainable Food from the Oceans and Inland Waters for Food Security and Nutrition organized a side event titled *Solutions for empowering women's engagement in aquatic food systems: a journey through the supply chain*. It was an empowering all-women-event, showcasing solutions and how to scale them up.

The event was opened by the Ghanaian Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, and the Norwegian State Secretary to the Minister of International Development. The Honorable Minister in Ghana provided some specific examples from her country on how they are empowering women in the aquatic food system. The Norwegian State Secretary noted that we cannot advance on any agenda without women.

We heard three inspiring women from Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi and India present specific solutions and recommendations on how to empower and engage women along the supply chain. All speakers emphasized the important role women play, being carriers of innovations for economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable fishing along the supply chain. Solutions included FTT ovens to improve women's health, limit post-harvest losses and maximize income, small-scale aquaculture equipment and solar cooling, dried hygienic small fish for consumption by pregnant and lactating women, and nutritious small fish powder used for severe acute malnourished children.

Supporting women's cooperatives was noted as crucial, including access to capital and finance, legal recognition through registration and accreditation, provision of equipment, capacity building on advocacy skills to effectively engage in policy making processes, supporting the provision of facilities at marketplaces, and awareness and demonstration activities.

The discussion highlighted the importance of having women involved at all levels, to shape their own futures, including in leadership positions. Economic empowerment was highlighted as critical to achieve gender equality, which also included support to diversify income generating activities.

The second panel brought together another three engaging panelists from FAO, WWF, and AUDA-NEPAD, who reflected on how to scale up solutions and what elements needs to be in place for this to succeed.

The discussion highlighted the importance of recognizing and understanding women's role, and where they work in the supply chain, to reach them where they are. The importance of including youth and young scientists in research and innovation and providing opportunities for youth, such as internship programs, scholarships, experience in the field, was highlighted as critical. It was noted that we need to scale up, by supporting women organizations to impact laws and policies, scale out, by empowering coastal communities to reach a wide range of women and stakeholders, and scale deep, to change relationships, cultural values, by for instance identifying forums where learning and knowledge sharing takes place.

Capacity building for women in aquatic food systems was also highlighted as critical, for women to discuss and address issues and gaps in fisheries and aquaculture, to explore opportunities and

partnerships, train women in fish handling, food safety and quality control, and promote the participation of women in the blue economy at all levels.