



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Working Party on Internal and External Fisheries Policy
Subject: FAO - COFI Preparation of the 31st session - common positions on agenda items 7, 10, 11 and 12

Delegations will find attached draft Common Positions for the following items of the agenda:

- **Annex 1** - Agenda item 7: Inland fisheries;
- **Annex 2** - Agenda item 10: FAO's work in fisheries and aquaculture under the reviewed Strategic Framework;
- **Annex 3** - Agenda item 11: Multi-year programme of work (MYPOW) of the Committee;
- **Annex 4** - Agenda item 12: Rules of Procedure of the Committee and Sub-Committees.

The drafts are for discussion and finalisation during the Working Party meeting on 6 June 2014.

**31ST SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES (COFI)
OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION
Rome, 9-13 June 2014**

POSITION PAPER

Shared competence – MS vote

Agenda Item 7. Inland fisheries

(COFI/2014/5)

Background

The FAO Secretariat has produced an overview paper on inland fisheries, based on the SOFIA reports, to bring attention to this sector and inform about related FAO activity.

The Committee is invited to:

- review the current situation in regard to inland capture fisheries;
- advise on measures that need to be taken to ensure inland capture fisheries and the people that depend on them for food and nutritional security are appropriately considered in national, regional and global policy discussions;
- consider the need for a high-level policy meeting on inland capture fisheries, possibly in conjunction with the Global Conference on Inland Capture Fisheries: Freshwater, Fish and the Future.

COMMON POSITION

(on behalf of the EU and its Member States)

1. The EU and its Member States welcome the summary report on the challenges for inland fisheries. We agree that inland fisheries represent an indispensable element of the policy for covering the present and future nutritional needs, and are faced with challenges such as competing activities that are more meaningful economically.
2. Commercial inland fisheries in the EU carry an important cultural and heritage value. They are, overall, not very significant in terms of employment and catches, but do have local and regional importance, including economically, and show a large variety of methods and species.
3. We agree that data collection on inland fisheries may be a relatively marginal and expensive activity, and that improvements in this respect might not be feasible due to scarce public funds. However, as stated in the report, there are methods that could help in estimating the scope and relevance of this activity.
4. The EU supports efforts for the promotion of economic growth, social inclusion and job creation in communities which depend on inland fishing. Through community-led local development groups, the EU encourages economic activities, helps financing related investments, and supports local management of fish resources.
5. The EU also encourages the diversification of inland fishing activities towards complementary activities.
6. Investments in inland fishing may also receive financial support when they aim to reduce the impact on the environment, to increase energy efficiency, to increase the value and quality of fish landed, or to improve health, safety, working conditions, human capital and training.
7. The EU supports developing policy frameworks specific for inland fishing in other parts of the world.

Shared competence – MS vote

Agenda Item 10. FAO's work in fisheries and aquaculture under the reviewed Strategic Framework.

(COFI/2014/8)

Background

The 38th FAO Conference of June 2013 approved the Reviewed Strategic Framework 2010-2019 and the Director-General's Medium-Term Plan 2014-2017. Regional Conferences have identified regional priorities relevant for the FAO's work related to fisheries and aquaculture. With regard to the six elements of the FAO's strategy on fisheries aquaculture, COFI is invited to identify priorities for 2014-2017 in view of recent policy trends, such as the FAO's Blue Growth Initiative which is built around four streams of action in this policy sector.

The Committee is invited to:

- advise on the extent to which the main achievements, trends, global challenges and priorities identified in this document are consistent with the technical priorities within the mandate of COFI and in the context of FAO's reviewed Strategic Framework; and
- provide suggestions on technical specificities that should be incorporated in each one of the identified main challenges and the proposed priorities, and which should be taken into account in implementing the Blue Growth Initiative.

COMMON POSITION

(on behalf of the EU and its Member States)

1. The EU welcomes the FAO's efforts in strengthening its role as a leader in global agenda setting in fisheries and aquaculture taking into consideration drivers and main factors that will influence society, the environment and the goal for responsible fisheries and aquaculture. In particular, the EU recognizes the importance of FAO's role in assisting Member Countries by developing recommendations, advice and instruments for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in order to meet increasing demand for fish over the decades.
2. The results of strategic thinking and most evaluations have shown that in principle the current strategic objectives are not out-dated but needed to be reworded and tightened. A strong vision, as expressed in the "Blue Growth Initiative", and clear priorities are useful instruments to achieve this update. They are needed for delivering effective advice to Member Countries, to design and support measures that help generating income and improving governance, and to protect resources for a responsible and sustainable use through fishery and aquaculture.
3. The EU and its Member States appreciate the proposed priority areas on capture fisheries, aquaculture, livelihood and food systems, and ecosystem services. It also welcomes the development of a Coastal Fisheries Programme aimed at supporting and improving coastal fisheries management with regard to a sustainable resource base and market access.
4. Concerning aquaculture, the need for attention on such issues as health management and disease control is already mentioned, as well as the improvement of governance. To improve governance, a focus is needed on strategies that involves the various users of coasts and waters, with the aim of balancing their interests in the most appropriate way.
5. The EU welcomes the initiative to benefit from the wider expertise in FAO concerning the impact that agriculture intensification has on the aquatic environment.

Shared competence – MS vote

Agenda Item 11. Multi-year programme of work (MYPOW) of the Committee.

(COFI/2014/9)

Background

The COFI Secretariat has prepared a progress report on the 2012-2015 multi-year programme of work and drafted a multi-year programme of work for 2014-2017.

The Committee is invited to:

- examine this Progress Report, in accordance with its overall objectives and mandate and proposed results, work planning and methods, outlined in the approved MYPOW 2012-15, and make recommendations for further improvement; and
- review and approve the proposed MYPOW 2014-2017, set out in the Appendix. This rolling plan follows the pattern established at the 30th Session of COFI (July 2012) and is presented for comments, suggestions and approval.

COMMON POSITION

(on behalf of the EU and its Member States)

1. The EU and its Member States welcome the succinct progress report on MYPOW 2012-2015. The EU recalls that the 30th COFI had requested FAO to initiate performance reviews of the Regional Fisheries Bodies under its auspices that had not already been assessed, and would welcome information on the state of play.
2. Concerning MYPOW 2014-2017, a fundamental element should be a clear link between the priorities emanating from the Blue Growth Initiative and outputs to be listed in the multi-year programme of work.

3. In general, we believe FAO should put more emphasis on up-stream activities and the elaboration of Country Programme Frameworks (CPFs) as a tool for effective delivery. In doing this, it should seek inputs not only from the countries themselves, but also from within the UN system, International Financial Institutions, bilateral and multilateral donors, universities and research organizations, the civil society and the private sector. CPFs should constitute a country-specific capacity development scheme and the basis for specific advice from FAO or others to interested member countries.
4. Regarding substantive content of the next PoW, the EU would like COFI to give consideration to the following areas:
 - a. State of Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA):

SOFIA should be structured in a way that facilitates discussion by clearly pointing out major changes in trends. For the major indicator for fisheries, the status of global stocks, a breakdown of the global level to regional levels, and to straddling and highly migratory stocks, would be useful and necessary to enable deliberations on possible action to be taken.
 - b. Technical guidelines for evaluations of bilateral fisheries agreements with developing countries

Fisheries agreements are subject of public interest in many parts of the world. Independent evaluations of their social costs and benefits could be a useful tool in pursuing blue growth, and could facilitate public discussions provided they meet high standards. FAO should establish a process to develop technical guidelines for evaluation standards.
 - c. Evaluations of International Plans of Action

Evaluations of most of the various International Plans of Action that were agreed several years ago have still not been undertaken. In particular, the effects of the plan on the management of fishing capacity should be assessed. Possible improvements in such plans should be considered in cases where objectives have not been attained.
5. The EU invites the Secretariat to present the next multi-year programme of work in a slightly more detailed fashion, by clearly linking outputs to objectives/priorities, adding timelines, and estimates of internal resource allocation.

MS competence – MS vote

Agenda Item 12.: Rules of Procedure of the Committee and Sub-Committees.

(COFI/2014/10)

Background

At its 30th Session in July 2012, the Committee on Fisheries (hereinafter referred to as COFI or the Committee) amended its Rules of Procedure, with regard inter alia to the role of the Chairperson and other officers during and between COFI sessions, the composition of its Bureau, and its reporting lines. At that occasion, Thailand, on behalf of some Members of the Asia Regional Group, proposed two amendments to the Rules of Procedure of COFI.

The first amendment aims at expressly providing a criterion for the composition of the Bureau, to ensure that the membership of the Bureau reflects FAO's seven regions. The Bureau considered this request, which reflects current practice, and looks at it favourably.

The second amendment aims at changing the current practice whereby the first Vice-Chairperson is automatically elected as Chairperson in the succeeding session. The Bureau also considered this request and agrees that it is desirable to ensure rotation of the office of Chairperson among FAO's seven regions. It also noted that such a rule would not exclude the practice of allowing a first Vice-Chairperson becoming Chairperson in a succeeding session.

The Committee is invited to:

- review and adopt the proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Committee.

COMMON POSITION

(on behalf of the Member States)

1. The EU Member States consider the possibility for regions to be represented in the Bureau of Committee on Fisheries not only fair, but also important in securing efficient communication with the Members and conducive for the active involvement of Members in the work of COFI.
 2. The EU Member States are also of the view that when a successor to the Chairman needs to be found, due consideration should be given to regional rotation.
 3. Therefore, the EU Member States can support the changes to the Rules of Procedure as suggested by the Bureau.
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