

Aquaculture

Ensure greater coherence

The following Statement was presented to the Third Session of the Subcommittee on Aquaculture, Committee on Fisheries (COFI), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Fisheries and aquaculture play an important role in meeting the growing demand for fish, and in creating and sustaining livelihoods for women and men of coastal communities, especially in remote rural areas with few other employment opportunities. To enable that to happen, however, it is important to ensure greater coherence and complementarity between fisheries and aquaculture.

We believe that certain types of small-scale, family-owned aquaculture, in particular, have great potential to produce fish to meet local food security, to provide employment opportunities, particularly for women, and to sustain local communities and cultures. It is important for States to work towards recognizing and promoting such aquaculture.

However, indiscriminate development of aquaculture, notably of shrimp and salmon in Asia and Latin America, has led to serious socioeconomic problems. In the case of shrimp farming, these include severe conflicts, and even violence against local communities, associated, in particular, with land alienation; diversion of farm land; disruption of access to fishing grounds; negative impact on biodiversity, including of mangroves; salinization and overexploitation of water, including groundwater; and pollution. In the case of salmon, these include pollution and impact on wild fish through the spread of disease. Industrial shrimp and salmon aquaculture, geared mainly towards the export market, has contributed to foreign exchange earnings and high profits to investors, even though benefits to workers and local communities have been meagre. In India, concerted action by civil society to

highlight these problems resulted in a landmark judicial pronouncement, which then played a major role in State regulation of irresponsible shrimp aquaculture.

We would also like to draw attention to the overdependence on fishmeal, and the social and environmental problems associated with reduction fisheries for fishmeal in Latin America. Also problematic is the reported use of low-value fish species (inappropriately called 'trash fish') for fishmeal in Asia, which has increased the conflict between the use of low-value fish as fishmeal and as food, while compromising local food security and livelihoods, particularly of women in coastal communities. This has also given ecologically unsustainable bottom-trawling and push-netting a further lease of life.

We would further like to draw attention to the unregulated introduction of alien species for aquaculture. The introduction and rapid spread of the Pacific white-legged shrimp (*Penaeus vannamei*) in Asian and Latin American countries, and even in countries where its introduction is not officially permitted, is a case in point. The disregard for the impact of such uncontrolled introduction on local species, and thereby on the integrity of the ecosystem, is disturbing. In addition, current research on genetically modified fish, with a view to introducing such organisms on a commercial basis, in the absence of adequate information on the implications of such introduction, is not in keeping with the 'precautionary principle' and, therefore, not acceptable.

Against this backdrop, we would like to draw the attention of this Subcommittee to the importance of:

- monitoring conditions of work (related to safety, social security, remuneration, working hours, etc.) in aquaculture farms, and the use of child labour;
- extending support to small-scale, family-owned, traditional aquaculture systems that provide employment, particularly for women in rural communities;
- emphasizing greater energy efficiency in the use of inputs, and reduced dependence on fishmeal;
- giving priority to use native species, and strict regulation and monitoring of the introduction of non-native species for aquaculture operations, in accordance with Article 9.3 of the CCRF (Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries) and COP (Conference of Parties) decisions of States parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention;
- providing a greater role for civil society, to ensure more inclusive decisionmaking and monitoring of the social, economic and environmental impacts of aquaculture; and
- recognizing the need for clear policies and guidelines for the development of aquaculture, including mariculture operations, in the framework of coastal management, in particular, to ensure that aquaculture does not threaten responsible fishing operations and the livelihoods of women, or lead to negative impacts on capture-fisheries-based livelihoods, in accordance with Article 9.14 of the CCRF. ¶

This Statement was made on behalf of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) at the COFI Subcommittee on Aquaculture meeting in New Delhi, India, on 4 September 2006