

A Future Commitment

Costa Rica is working towards a national policy for implementing the SSF Guidelines recently adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

The Preface to the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) notes: “Small-scale and artisanal fisheries, encompassing all activities along the value chain—pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest—undertaken by men and women, play an important role in food security and nutrition, poverty eradication, equitable development and sustainable resource utilization. Small-scale fisheries provide nutritious food for local, national and international

its fishery resources with a long-term perspective, and with respect for the human rights and aspirations of the thousands of families that depend on the sea for their well-being. This is all very well in theory, but it is difficult to achieve in the context of fisheries conflicts, the interests and bad reputation of public institutions that have served political and economically powerful interests in the past, and which was the situation that I found when I sat down for the first time in the chair of the Chief Executive of our fisheries authority.

This year INCOPECSA will celebrate 20 years of existence. There has been little interest shown by previous administrations for serving the most vulnerable, poorest and most needy sectors. From now on, it is fundamental that, at this historic juncture, public policy promotes the development of decent living conditions and the human well-being of the coastal and seafaring communities.

When I arrived in INCOPECSA, an important international tool of enormous value, promoted by the FAO, was at my disposal; a tool which could lend a hand with developing a vision for supporting and working with the small-scale fisheries sector in Costa Rica.

International support

The SSF Guidelines is an instrument that is close to the small-scale fishers. They have been party to its development and, thanks to the support of international, regional and national organizations, they have engaged in a participative process of discussing the issues that are of most concern to the sector. Just one month after 8 May (the date that the

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markets and generate income to support local and national economies.”

I have learned about fishing communities from the inside. My pastoral work as a Catholic priest was undertaken in the heart of artisanal fishing communities along the Pacific coast of my country.

When the President of the Republic of Costa Rica asked me to work for the government and to take up the leadership post of Chief Executive of the national institute that administers fisheries in my country (INCOPECSA), I reflected on that experience and about the opportunity to bring some justice and equity to the fisheries of this small Central American country.

A country like Costa Rica, with two coasts and more than 500,000 sq km of sea, should be able to administer

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new government was installed), I participated with other governments from around the world that are FAO members in approving these SSF Guidelines.

My experience tells me that this instrument meets four important requirements that give it enormous value for the management of just and equitable fisheries in Latin America,

The SSF Guidelines were produced through a process of construction rather than from a desk. In the case of Central America, four national workshops were undertaken (in Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador) and a regional workshop where all the countries from the isthmus participated. In these workshops, the instrument was discussed and thanks to these workshops, the SSF Guidelines include the vision and particular needs of this sector in this part of the world.

Specific recognition has been accorded to an impoverished sector that has been overlooked and where poverty is concentrated. The SSF Guidelines recognize the need to address the historic debt that we owe this sector. In the case of Costa Rica, it is clear that there is a concentration of poverty in the coastal areas, to a large

extent caused by the lack of zoning and management policies but also due to overlaps of institutional competences that generate disorder and chaos.

The SSF Guidelines incorporate a vision of the future in which women and youth are included, where they obtain improved quality of life and well-being. In Central America, it must be recognized that small-scale fisheries generate a value chain that gives rise to pre- and post-harvest activities in which women and men of all ages participate. In many of our coastal zones, fisheries provide the only source of available work for this important section of the population.

Implementation is urgently needed to ensure a more sustainable productive activity. During the development process a strategy for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines was discussed, so as to put good intentions into practice. In the case of Costa Rica, an analysis was undertaken that has allowed us to define some catalysing factors for sustainable small-scale fisheries and which provide more than just economic well-being by providing human beings with an identity, a culture, food security and options for decent work and well-being.

INCOPECSA



One of four national workshops undertaken in Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador. At these workshops, a strategy for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines was discussed

Statement from OSPESCA on the Approval of the SSF Guidelines

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Costa Rica, a member of the Organization for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector of the Central American Isthmus (OSPESCA), provided the venue for the consultation on the Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines, which FAO promoted, with countries from Central and South America and the Caribbean, so we are faithful believers in the social and economic benefits of small-scale fisheries. Given this and the fact that fisheries in Central America are basically small-scale, we have an interest in affording it special attention.

And our national-level fishermen's organizations and the Central American Confederation of Artisanal Fishermen have been highly active in the various steps to generate the SSF Guidelines.

Another positive step taken by Central America is to arrive at this moment with a unique inter-sectoral position, which is to say that both the civil society representatives of artisanal fisheries and the governments support the content and hope that this meeting of the Committee on Fisheries will approve the SSF Guidelines, overcoming those few issues that need to be resolved.

This being so, the fisheries authorities have the desire, at the Central American level, to consider the governance framework of the SSF Guidelines as providing a binding agreement, which, it is hoped, could become concretized in the current year. Thus the SSF Guidelines will become binding in OSPESCA countries.

We understand the importance for fishermen and States to have guidelines that provide us with a framework for the sustainable management of small-scale fisheries, and let me urge all the delegations to make every effort to overcome our differences so that on this day the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication will be approved.

—*This Statement was made by Gustavo Meneses Castro, Executive President of the Costa Rican Institute for Fisheries and Aquaculture, at COFI 31 on 10 June 2014*

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Whilst I am providing leadership in the fisheries sector, Costa Rica will take up the challenge of elaborating a national policy for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. At a minimum, this process must include the following characteristics:

1. An approach that goes beyond INCOPECA and which requires a joint institutionality established at the level of the highest political authority. We have initiated a process from INCOPECA in which the office of the President of the Republic has accompanied us, towards positioning fisheries as an important sector that contributes to the national economy. We are now working closely with such important ministries as Human Development and Social Well-being, Public Works and Transport, and Health and Agriculture, to name a few.
2. A national dialogue that includes all the actors and sectors interested in achieving the sustainability of our seas, should be organized. We have initiated a management-oriented process that touches on the most human elements of the fisheries sectors in seeking positions of consensus, values and principles to achieve a management that benefits the country and which allows it to be applied in the future with environmental responsibility and social well-being.
3. Support from the government that, recognizing the relevance of the small-scale sector, is disposed to promote a policy of public aid to strengthen the organization and capabilities of the small-scale sector. I have committed myself to ensuring that the SSF Guidelines are included as part of the National Development Plan for 2015 – 2018.

4. A commitment of coastal communities to the environment and to social resilience to ensure development of the coasts and seas that is locally based and harmonious. Without the commitment of civil society, the State could not succeed in moving forward on many of the issues that secure the perspective of well-being in the fishing communities.

This government has established three very clear lines of work, which are absolutely and completely consistent with the philosophy of the SSF Guidelines:

- Fight corruption and strengthen transparency and efficiency of the State.
- Boost economic growth of the country and generate more and better jobs.
- Reduce inequality and eliminate extreme poverty.

I have instructed INCOPECSA to ensure that the SSF Guidelines provide one of the main policy planks of this government in the realm of fisheries. This message has been heard and supported by the office of the President of the Republic. What is proposed demands a major effort, because it must form part of the management of fishery activity in our seas.

We hope that the National Development Plan, which is already in place, will, at the start of 2015, send a clear message about the priority that INCOPECSA and this Administration will give to recognizing the contribution and productive value of the sector in contrast to the omissions of the past and as regards the future challenges it faces.

Four years is not long to achieve necessary change. It is urgent, knowing as we do that the future will bring major changes in climate, temperatures and sea levels that will directly affect coastal populations. From this perspective, the implementation of the SSF Guidelines provides an important way to address the need to adapt to climate change and for maintaining sources of food security which the sea and its culture provide.



Source : http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/costa_pol87.jpg

We hope that the example of Costa Rica motivates other countries in our region to take up the challenge of implementing the SSF Guidelines in a responsible manner, given their importance.

For more

www.incopescas.go.cr

Costa Rican Institute for Fisheries and Aquaculture, INCOPECSA

www.fao.org/fishery/facp/CRI/es

Fisheries Country Profile–Costa Rica