

Handing Over The Baton

IYAFA 2022 laid the groundwork for a future of inclusiveness, resilience and sustainable practices in the Caribbean region and Latin America

The journey from IYAFA 2022 to the upcoming 10th anniversary of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) marks a transformational period in the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) region. IYAFA 2022 was characterized by celebrations, multi-faceted initiatives, strategic events and recommendations. It set a robust stage for the significant milestone of SSF10.

Mesoamerica and South America enhanced the regional scope, resulting in joint publications and presentations that resonated globally.

In November 2021, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched a landmark virtual event that drew more than 1,200 attendees, setting the stage for a year of collaborative endeavours. The event initiated a year-long celebration, showcasing collaboration between WECAFC and sub-regional committees. To help lead the celebrations in the region, WECAFC, through its regional co-ordination committee, identified 24 champions, including individuals and organizations. These champions were recognized for their exemplary contribution to the development of small-scale fisheries (SSF) and aquaculture. This identification can extend beyond their contribution to IYAFA celebrations, dovetailing into the tenth anniversary of the SSF Guidelines.

Old relations, new partnerships

Venturing into Colombia, a strategic partnership with FAO unfolded, supporting the revitalization of cachama (the blackfin pacu) culture within the Ticuna indigenous producers association (ASOPROWONE). This initiative not only cut production costs but also elevated product quality. Meanwhile, Nicaragua took a bold step by hosting the National Forum on Artisanal Fishing and Aquaculture in Bluefields, where over 100 participants from diverse fishing communities engaged in discussions about experiences, challenges and innovations. This forum highlighted the significance of sustainable fishing practices, the vital role of women in the sector, and the looming effects of climate change.

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The proclamation of 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture by the United Nations General Assembly triggered a synergistic response in the WECAFC region

The proclamation of 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture by the United Nations General Assembly triggered a synergistic response in the WECAFC region. A pivotal recommendation from the 17th Session of WECAFC led to the establishment of a regional co-ordination committee comprising diverse stakeholders from the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations, the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), academic institutions and international organizations.

The committee strategically aligned its efforts with three main cross-cutting themes: recovery, resilience and gender-youth. Through careful planning, the committee orchestrated a series of impactful events, following a regional launching ceremony contextualizing the goals of IYAFA for the Latin America and Caribbean region. The collaboration between WECAFC,

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Colombian small-scale aquafarmers participating in the revitalization of cachama. Venturing into Colombia, a strategic partnership with FAO unfolded, supporting the revitalization of cachama (the blackfin pacu) culture within the Ticuna indigenous producers association

In tandem, the University of West Indies, through its Centre for Resource Management and Environment Studies, orchestrated a multi-faceted approach. This included youth dialogues in Jamaica, Guyana and St. Lucia, fostering discussions on youth-centric approaches to bolster SSF's sustainability. In Barbados, a popular theatre training initiative focused on women in fisheries, providing a unique platform for their voices. Furthermore, the university undertook a comprehensive study on inter-sectoral

linkages in Caribbean fisheries, offering valuable insights into the intricate web of connections within the industry. A webinar on social justice for women in fisheries delved into the nuanced dimensions of gender and social justice, enriching the discourse on the sector's dynamics.

Women's diverse roles

Building on this focus on gender in fisheries, the first Regional Women in Fisheries Forum was held on the margins of the 75th meeting of the

HEYSEL CALDERON GOMEZ



Small-scale fishers and aquafarmers displaying IYAF t-shirts while participating in a field trip during the 75th meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute

Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute. This regional event brought together women from over 18 countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region as well as international participants. This session was instrumental in producing a call to action for the mainstreaming of gender equity in fisheries policies in the region. Such efforts stand as a testament to a region-wide commitment to celebrate artisanal fisheries and aquaculture, to engage in actions promoting sustainability, inclusiveness and social justice in the SSF landscape.

The WECAFC co-ordination committee, working hand-in-hand with sub-regional committees, fuelled a series of high-impact events and publications. Notable articles showcased a commitment to inclusive, responsible and sustainable fisheries; an example was titled: A 'Sea' Grassroots Approach to Celebrating IYAF 2022 in the Western Central Atlantic Region. The WECAFC Regional Co-ordination Committee facilitated a European Union-funded project co-ordinated by the WECAFC Secretariat. It had the provision of financial support to the South American committee for policy briefs, fostering sustainable development in artisanal fisheries.

The 18th Session of WECAFC marked a crucial moment, with a high-level side

event to institutionalize the momentum from IYAF 2022. This was jointly organized by an IYAF 2022 partner, the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF). The gathering laid the groundwork for the long-term sustainability of the region's artisanal fisheries and aquaculture sector. Furthermore, the CRFM's strategic resolution at the Special Meeting of the Ministerial Council in October 2022 stands as a beacon, emphasizing the integration of SSF and aquaculture in the ongoing Blue Economy dialogue, symbolizing a unified approach for a more sustainable fisheries sector in the Caribbean.

As the WECAFC region plans for SSFIO, the focus shifts towards institutionalizing the regional co-ordination committee to ensure sustained progress. The celebration of IYAF 2022 showcased achievements and laid the groundwork for a better future. 🌊

For more

Report on the implementation of the IYAF (2022) in the context of the Commission-recommended Roadmap for the celebratory year in the WECAFC region and next steps
<https://www.fao.org/3/cc7100en/cc7100en.pdf>

Latin America and the Caribbean Workshop: IYAF 2022-Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries, Brazil, 2-5 November 2022

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/latin-america-workshop-iyaf-2022/>

A "Sea" Grassroots Approach to Celebrating IYAF 2022 in the Western Central Atlantic Region
<https://www.fao.org/3/cc0158en/cc0158en.pdf>