

The Right to Food

Small-scale fisheries play an indispensable role in combating poverty, enhancing food security and promoting the sustainable use of marine and inland waters the world over

This year is the tenth anniversary of a monumental achievement for small-scale fishing communities and Indigenous Peoples. A decade ago, fisherfolk and civil society organizations united to secure the endorsement of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) by the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The dedication of these organizations during the consultations was instrumental in shaping the SSF Guidelines, the only international document devoted to the rights of small-scale fishing communities, including Indigenous Peoples.

Currently, the decline in water and fisheries resources threatens 492 million people at least partially dependent on fisheries for their livelihoods. These communities face resource depletion and industrial encroachment that violate their basic rights. Activities such as mining, over-fishing and industrial development exacerbate environmental degradation. Protecting the rights of small-scale fishers is crucial for ensuring food security and alleviating poverty.

Despite the endorsement of the SSF Guidelines by many governments a decade ago, implementation remains fragmented, and small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples continue to face significant challenges and violations of their human rights. In this context, and considering the unique moment of this anniversary, it is more critical than

ever to reclaim the rightful place of small-scale fisheries (SSF) and refocus attention on protecting the human rights of small-scale and artisanal fishers.

The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) strongly affirms the indispensable role of small-scale fisheries in combating poverty, enhancing food security and promoting the sustainable use of marine and inland waters. This year, IPC aims not only to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the SSF Guidelines by providing an overview of global developments through a two-year participatory process that gathered qualitative information on the status of small-scale fishers but also to emphasize the importance of

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their participation in decision-making processes, particularly within COFI.

Alarming, this year, small-scale fisheries have been entirely excluded from the COFI agenda and relegated to the Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management. IPC believes that addressing SSF solely as a management issue is insufficient for tackling the wide range of issues related to small-scale fishers, including human rights, access to resources, biodiversity protection and social development, as highlighted by the SSF Guidelines.

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Political dialogues must prioritize the needs of small-scale fishing communities and Indigenous Peoples, who are among the most marginalized and whose rights to food and nutrition are under threat.

We urge all governments to thoroughly review the latest report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, and incorporate its insights into their policies and regulations addressing social development, food security, climate change and biodiversity protection. The report clearly demonstrates the impacts on small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples, infringements upon their rights to food, decent work, gender equity and a healthy environment, as well as their crucial contributions to safeguarding these rights.

Indigenous Peoples and small-scale fishers are indispensable custodians of natural resources and cultural wisdom, possessing invaluable traditional knowledge crucial in the fight against

hunger and food insecurity. Food sovereignty is the true and only solution to transforming food systems in a way that ensures human well-being and healthy food systems. 3

For more

International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)

<https://www.foodsovereignty.org/working-group/fisheries/>

SSF People centred methodology to assess the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication by IPC

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/ssf-people-centred-methodology-ssf-guidelines-report-ipc/>

Celebrate the 10 years of the SSF Guidelines!

<https://www.fao.org/publications/home/news-archive/detail/celebrate-the-10-years-of-the-ssf-guidelines!/en>