

Fishing Communities

World Fisheries Day is a time to reiterate the rights of small-scale fisherfolk and Indigenous Peoples to secure food sovereignty

We, in the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), represent small-scale fisher people including Indigenous Peoples from the four global movements, the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF), the World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP), the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) and La Via Campesina (LVC). Our constituencies span the entire world and both from coastal and inland fishing communities.

Today we recall that World Fisheries Day carries our rich history and was first celebrated when we formed the global fisher movements (WFFP/WFF) in Delhi in 1997. Back then, we denounced industrial fishing and aquaculture because both sectors bring environmental destruction and expropriation of fishing communities, and we decided that this day of our birth, World Fisheries Day, would be a day to celebrate small-scale capture fisheries internationally. It is a day filled with the determination and endeavors of fisher people to be proud contributors to the world's food systems and a humane society at large.

Over the last several decades, aquaculture and blue economy development have resulted in territories being taken away from us, the pollution of rivers and the sea, and the loss of livelihoods that are not compensated for by the few jobs offered by the blue economy and aquaculture sector. The tendency we see is that fewer and bigger corporations control more and more of the aquaculture sector. At the 34th session of the Committee on Fisheries, we witnessed a strong commitment by the committee members and the FAO to increase aquaculture production further to feed the world's population. While

this reflects a global trend, our position remains that this market-driven blue economy is a false solution.

Macro-level policies that are driving elite developmental paradigms have failed to recognize the contribution of small-scale fishworkers to local livelihoods, the economy, their contribution to food security, and the customary rights of these fisher people and indigenous communities. We, therefore, call upon the international community to listen to our concern and support Small-Scale Fisher Peoples Rights as espoused in the SSF Guidelines.

We, small-scale fishers and fish workers worldwide, celebrate World Fisheries Day, stating Food Sovereignty as the true and only solution to food systems transformation and calling to recognize small-scale fishers and fishworkers' contribution to human well-being and healthy food systems.

As we enter the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) we call on governments across the world to incorporate the principles of the SSF Guidelines into national policy. Importantly, we see that on this World Fisheries Day, governments must monitor the progress in implementing the SSF Guidelines. We highlight the fundamentality of our participation in governance processes, particularly in these times, when we are struggling to get through the COVID-19 pandemic while also dealing with the effects of climate change on fishers livelihoods. 🍴

*This statement was delivered by **Editrudith Lukanga** (elukanga@gmail.com), Vice Chair, IYAFA International Steering Committee, on behalf of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) - Working Group on Fisheries, during the official launch event of the IYAFA-2022 on 19 November, 2021.*

Watch the launch event here: <https://www.fao.org/webcast/home/en/item/5716/icode/>