



Milestones

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Fisheries and the Right to Food

The report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter, presented recently to the 67th session of the UN General Assembly, is significant in that it is the first such report on fisheries in the context of food security.

The report assesses both the contribution of the fisheries sector to the realization of the right to adequate food and the challenges that the sector faces. It examines how the individuals most vulnerable to negative impacts can be supported to ensure the progressive realization of the right to food, noting that pursuing a human-rights approach is critical to achieving sustainable development in the fisheries sector. It makes recommendations that could guide current and future processes at the global level and the implementation of national-level policies that would support the realization of the right to food.

The report highlights that women comprise about half of the global fisheries workforce and that they are typically concentrated in pre-harvest and post-harvest activities. It calls for steps to be taken to actively support the livelihoods of small-scale fishers and the access to fish protein of food-insecure communities. It recommends five measures to achieve this:

the creation of exclusive artisanal fishing zones for small-scale fishers and greater oversight of incursions by industrial fleets; support for small-scale fishers' co-operatives in order for them to rise up the value chain; the establishment of co-management schemes to manage fishing resources locally; the avoidance of large-scale development projects that adversely affect the livelihoods of small-scale fishers; and the inclusion of fisheries and small-scale fishers in national right-to-food strategies.

Recalling the commitments made in the Outcome Document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the report calls for measures to support the role of women in the fisheries sector, for example, by ensuring access to credit for women and providing adequate facilities for them at landing sites. In the report, the UN Special Rapporteur also welcomes the current initiative of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) to developing International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries.

The report can be accessed at: http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/otherdocuments/20121030_fish_execsummary.pdf