

Small in size – big in value. Celebrating small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture in 2022

The importance of capture fisheries and aquaculture in human nutrition, employment and trade has long been known and recognised. This is not the case with small-scale fisheries and fish farming. The International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture is to help create the level of awareness which this important and highly diversified subsector of aquatic food production deserves.

By Nicole Franz

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization's flagship report *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture* (SOFIA) released in 2020 estimates total global fish production at 179 million tonnes in 2018. Aquaculture is increasingly important, accounting for almost half of global production (46 %). In terms of status of the resources, it is important to note that the share of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels amounted to 65.8 per cent in 2017. Fisheries and aquaculture globally provide employment in harvesting for almost 60 million people. In terms of its contribution to human nutrition, aquatic food has increased at an annual average rate of 3.1 per cent from 1961 to 2017, providing about 3.3 billion people with almost 20 per cent of their average per capita intake of animal protein. In 2018, 67 million tonnes of fish (live weight equivalent) were traded internationally, representing nearly 38 per cent of all fish caught or farmed worldwide.

SOFIA projects that overall production, consumption and trade of aquatic products will increase, but at lower rates in the future. The role of aquaculture in further ensuring supply is acknowledged while the capacity of capture fisheries to grow will strongly depend on the capacity to improve resource management with an ecosystems approach. This is particularly important given a growing world popula-

tion. It is noteworthy that only four per cent of food systems-related research since 1970 has included aquatic foods. As a result, current transformation approaches are disjointed and do not account for the potential of aquatic foods, posing a serious risk to achieving a healthy planet and healthy people.

The importance of fisheries and aquaculture for sustainable development is hence undeniable but not without challenges. This is also reflected in the 2021 Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture of FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI), endorsed by members of FAO this year. This Declaration acknowledges 'that urgent targeted action is needed to ensure aquatic foods and products continue to provide inclusive, effective and sustainable pathways to reduce poverty, secure livelihoods and underpin food security and nutrition, as vital to achieving the goals set in Agenda 2030'.

Indispensable for a sustainable global food system

That same COFI Declaration also acknowledges 'the important role and contribution of artisanal and small-scale fisheries and aquaculture in poverty eradication and in providing livelihoods, as well as ensuring food security and nutritional needs of local communities'. It calls to promote policies supporting and recognising the contribution of small-scale fisheries

and aquaculture in food security, employment and income, and improve data collection systems, especially from small-scale and artisanal fisheries. Furthermore, it calls to support access for small-scale fishers and fish farmers to local, national, and international markets, and to ensure equitable and non-discriminatory trade for small-scale fisheries and aquaculture products, also through implementing the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines).

In fact, the majority of those operating in aquaculture and capture fisheries value chains are small-scale artisanal actors (see Box), who are located primarily in low and middle income countries. The livelihoods associated with small-scale artisanal catching, farming, processing and trading of fish and other aquatic foods provide valuable income, seasonally or all year round, which can be relatively higher than that in agriculture and can act as a safety net during times of shocks and climate change. Aquatic foods from small-scale producers are also particularly important for the livelihoods of vulnerable populations who are landlocked and live on small islands or in conflict zones, and for vulnerable groups, such as indigenous populations, youth, women, and rural and urban poor. Women's access to income from fish can often have a stronger and more beneficial impact on food and nutrition security, where women are more likely to utilise income to meet basic needs.



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
ARTISANAL FISHERIES
AND AQUACULTURE

2022

Small-scale fishers, fish farmers and fish workers hold enormous potential to promote transformative changes in how, by whom and for whom fish and fishery products are produced, processed and distributed – with positive ripple effects felt throughout the global food system. A forthcoming study by FAO, World Fish and Duke University (USA) called ‘Illuminating Hidden Harvests’, to be released in early 2022, aims to provide more evidence on the contribution of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development.

Building global momentum

The role of small-scale producers in fisheries and aquaculture is slowly being recognised, and the United Nations General Assembly has declared 2022 the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYafa 2022). FAO is the lead agency for celebrating the year in collaboration with countries, small-scale producer organisations, other relevant organisations and bodies of the United Nations system. IYafa 2022 is an opportunity to highlight the importance of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture for our food systems, livelihoods, culture and the environment. The objectives of IYafa 2022 are as follows:

- Enhance global awareness about, understanding of and action to support the contribution of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture to sustainable development, and more specifically in relation to food security and nutrition, poverty eradication and the use of natural resources.
- Promote dialogue and collaboration between and among small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers, fish workers, governments and other key partners along the value chain, in order to further strengthen their capacity to enhance sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture and to enhance their social development and well-being.

IYafa 2022 aims at building global momentum to accelerate the support required to bring small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture to the forefront of societal attention by raising awareness on the role of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, strengthening science-policy interaction, empowering stakeholders to take action, and building new and strengthening existing partnerships. IYafa 2022 can also act as a springboard towards implementing the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and related documents, like the SSF Guidelines, and take concrete actions towards achieving the

What is 'ARTISANAL', what is 'SMALL-SCALE'? – The weakness of definitions

There is no universal definition of 'artisanal' or 'small-scale' fisheries or aquaculture. In general, these terms describe fisheries and aquaculture that use relatively small production units with relatively low input and low output and limited levels of technology and small capital investment. They are commonly managed at family level, sometimes with a small group of employees, or at community level. The fish are often sold in local markets, but can also reach national and international markets. For the purpose of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture IYafa, 'small-scale' and 'artisanal' are used interchangeably (fishing for sport or recreation is commonly not called 'artisanal' or 'small-scale'). In an article published in *Frontiers in Marine Science*, Hillary Smith and Xavier Basurto, having reviewed existing definitions of small-scale fisheries, stress the importance of considering how these definitions determine how knowledge is generated, as they influence “what dimensions of SSF count and consequently what gets counted”. Similarly, in an article in *Nature Food*, Rebecca Short and colleagues point to the need to overcome the contemporary governance paradigm that assumes homogeneity in small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture rather than valuing its diversity.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as we enter the last decade of action to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, it also falls within the UN Decade of Family Farming, the two observances will reinforce one another in providing greater visibility to small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers.

A Global Action Plan (GAP) for the IYafa 2022 was developed with the International Steering Committee composed of government representatives and non-state actors. The GAP provides guidance for the international community, including local and national governments, bodies of the United Nations, non-governmental organisations, international financial institutions and other international mechanisms, regional bodies, producer organisations, academic and research institutes, civil society organisations and the private sector. Structured around seven pillars, the GAP outlines a series of indicative and interconnected actions from the global to the local level that are mutually reinforcing in the pillars of work.

” IYafa VISION STATEMENT:

A world in which small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers are fully recognized and empowered to continue their contributions to human well-being, healthy food systems and poverty eradication through the responsible and sustainable use of fisheries and aquaculture resources.

IYafa 2022 was officially launched on the 19th November 2021, just two days before what is currently celebrated informally as World Fisheries Day, the 21st November 2021. One important ambition of the International Steering Committee of IYafa 2022 is to el-

evate this World Fisheries Day to an official UN Day on Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture, to create a legacy of IYafa 2022 that provides an opportunity for all to continue celebrating and securing sustainable small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture for generations to come. Communication materials such as visual identity guidelines and a trello board with social media messages are available on the IYafa 2022 webpage.

Many actors at all levels are already gearing up support for celebrating IYafa 2022. Examples include a series of five regional small-scale fisheries congresses organised by the research network Too Big To Ignore in 2022 (also see article on pages 14–15), the establishment of three sub-regional IYafa 2022 committees covering the Caribbean, Central America and South America, the formation of a national IYafa 2022 committee in Uganda as well as initiatives by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) to organise a series of dialogue meetings and 'Fish Night' events to connect stakeholders and the preparation of a series of infographics and animations.

IYafa 2022 is a unique opportunity for all – and we invite you to be creative and to get organised to celebrate the power and value of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture in 2022. Contact us at IYafa@fao.org to share your ideas.

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