

SMALL-SCALE FISHERS' FORUM

The Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (RPOA-SSF) at the time of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries (IYAFA 2022): achievements and challenges ahead

Malta, 12 September 2022

Report

Executive summary

In the context of the Fourth [World Small-Scale Fisheries Congress](#) organized by Too Big Too Ignore (TBTI) in Malta for the Europe region from 12-14 September 2022, and of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022 (IYAFA), this session was organized by the [Friends of SSF](#) to explore the importance of the Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea ([RPOA-SSF](#)) for small-scale fisheries in the region. The session showcased initiatives and first-hand experiences of the Friends of SSF members and took a deep dive into some topics of the RPOA-SSF, including the participation of small-scale fisheries actors in decision-making processes and capacity building, the current European stakeholder involvement's status in the Mediterranean, as well as the role of women in fisheries and actions needed for achieving gender equality.

Summary of presentations and key conclusions

Introduction

The session was organized by the Friends of SSF, a regional network of actors sharing common interests in the sector and jointly support the implementation of the RPOA-SSF, including AKTEA, CIHEAM Bari, GFCM, LIFE, MEDAC, MedPAN and WWF. To introduce the session, the GFCM highlighted the importance of small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean region and of the RPOA-SSF, the latter covering a range of areas including both sustainable fisheries and socioeconomic aspects. The GFCM presented in detail the RPOA-SSF, the background, contents including the specific principles, objectives and concrete actions over nine key thematic areas, as well as its status of implementation.

Participation and capacity development

The first axis of the session focused on the participation of SSF in the decision-making process and capacity development. LIFE presented its work on value chain, in particular the Foodnetted Community of Practice initiative and its contribution to the implementation of the RPOA-SSF, which aimed to bring producers and consumers together based on shared values, help fishers to become price makers instead of price takers. With a focus on co-management, WWF and MedPAN shared their experience on engaging with a participatory approach in management, showcasing co-management as a catalyst for the implementation of the RPOA-SSF and a solution to the threat of unsustainability. However, they noted the need to scale up and widen co-management practices for enhanced impact, including through empowerment, capacity development, as well as legislation which follow a participatory process as well. MedPAN shared its specific experience with co-management in marine protected areas (MPA), including lessons learned, having developed tools and trainings for MPA management. Finally, as an advisory body, MEDAC presented its set-up and role, and how the advice stemming from MEDAC, based on data collection mechanisms, fed into decision-making processes within the GFCM and the European Union.

Women in small-scale fisheries

The second axis of the session covered the role of women in the small-scale fisheries sector, with a presentation from the AKTEA network sharing the voices of women in small-scale fisheries on how to be a fisherwoman, a shellfish farmer, develop collaboration and enhance communication around their engagement in the sector. They noted that there were still relatively few fisherwomen but that those who were active in the sector do the same work as fishermen, some also being boat owners. The fisherwomen also expressed that traditions still guided how fisheries associations are managed with only few women in leading positions, They added that there was a lack of gender equality in practices, as for example, meetings were organized at inconvenient times, not acknowledging their domestic responsibilities. These contributions were followed by a presentation by CIHEAM Bari on the role of women in the supply chain of small-scale fisheries and research carried out in Tunisia, which showed the important role of women in clam fisheries and in seafood processing. CIHEAM Bari noted that in these pivotal parts of the value chain of valuable export commodities, there were many gender inequalities; while women were the majority of the fish workers, men were in the leading positions in associations, with significant gaps in salaries.

Main conclusions and way forward

The session highlighted the importance of co-management and participatory arrangements, the need to develop capacity and ensure an enabling environment for a sustainable small-scale fisheries sector. This should be achieved while improving the recognition of the role of women and promote gender equality. Suggestions made for the way forward to change the situation and to promote gender equality included improving capacity building and education, stressing that but this should be translated into effective participation, including women, in research, administrations, and all along the value chain. It was encouraged to use an inclusive vocabulary, and improve gender-disaggregated data collection. While some thoughts were shared with regards to potential financial incentives as a way forward to encourage women to become fishers, other reflections were made on ways to ensure a generational shift and allow young fishers to get access to quotas.