


# Small-scale Fisheries as a Source of Sustainable Seafood: Opportunities and Challenges


An aerial photograph showing a large wooden boat packed with fish. Numerous people are in the water around the boat, some carrying baskets, suggesting a busy fish landing or market scene. The water is a greenish-brown color.

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# Aquatic foods, food security and nutrition

- ▶ Globally, aquatic foods provided about 17% of animal proteins and 7% of all proteins (FAO. 2022)
  - ▶ For 3.3 billion people, aquatic foods provide at least 20% of the average per capita intake of animal protein (ibid.)
  - ▶ In developing countries such as Cambodia, Sierra Leone, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Ghana, Mozambique and some small island developing States, aquatic foods contribute half or more of total animal protein intake (ibid.)
  - ▶ Share of proteins from aquatic foods in the diet of non-high-income countries tend to be greater than in the diet of high-income countries (ibid.)
  - ▶ Fish is not only a source of protein but also a source of key micronutrients such as vitamin B12, calcium, vitamin D, iodine, selenium, Omega 3 as well as vitamin A, iron and zinc (UN Nutrition 2021)
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# Contribution of SSF to fish production and livelihoods

- ▶ Small-scale fisheries (SSF) contributes 37 million tonnes or 40% of total global fisheries catch of 92 million tonnes (2013–17 average) (FAO, Duke University, Worldfish. 2023)
- ▶ **SSF marine** accounts for **25 million tonnes** (68%) and SSF inland accounts for 12 million tonnes (32%) (ibid.)
- ▶ SSF supports the livelihoods of 492 million people out of 600 million livelihoods dependent at least partially on fisheries and aquaculture (ibid.)
- ▶ SSF accounts for 90% of capture fisheries employment (**13 million marine**, and 15 million inland) (ibid.)
- ▶ 45 million women participate in SSF (15% preharvest, 19% commercial harvest, 50% post-harvest and 45% subsistence fishing) (ibid.)
- ▶ 53 million people in subsistence fishing, especially in SIDS like Kiribati (**17 million SSF marine** and 36 million SSF inland) (ibid.)

# Opportunities

- ▶ Aquatic foods from SSF is a source of affordable animal protein, cheaper and more accessible and preferred as part of culinary traditions in many developing countries and SIDS (FAO. 2022)
- ▶ Fish consumption is associated with lower rates of stunting in children aged 6–23 months in many developing countries (due to the intake of growth promoting nutrients such as bioavailable zinc, iron and protein (FAO, Duke University, Worldfish. 2023)
- ▶ SSF landings could provide nearly a billion women, worldwide, with 50% of the recommended nutrient intake (RNI) of omega 3 fatty acids and nearly half a billion women with over 20% of the RNI of calcium, selenium and zinc (ibid.)
- ▶ Low-impact marine small-scale fishing methods produce lower rates of bycatch, cause minimal structural damage to marine habitats, use less fuel (fishing closer to shore); since mostly consumed locally, their transport CO2 footprint is also much lower than fish that are traded globally (World Bank 2012)

# Challenges

- ▶ **Resource management** (need for effective input and output controls for conservation and sustainable use of fishery resources, conflict resolution, poverty eradication and sustainable livelihoods, especially through fishers' organizations)
- ▶ **Climate change impacts**
  - Addressing extreme weather events and slow onset events (heat waves, flooding, droughts, loss of marine and coastal biodiversity, ocean warming, sea level rise, ocean acidification, salinization, coastal erosion, species redistribution) reducing access to resources along the value chain, affecting both men and women (UNFCCC Sixth Assessment Report )
  - Global decrease in marine fish catch potential, dealing with this decrease, especially in tropical marine ecosystems and dealing with increasing number of conflicts over redistribution of resources (ibid.)
- ▶ **Blue economy effects** impact of negative externalities on small-scale fishing communities (dealing with threats from oil and gas, mining, offshore windmills, tourism, marine protected areas, etc.)

# Requirements

- ▶ **Recognize small-scale fisheries subsector and subsistence fisheries:** Their contribution to nutrition and food security to be mainstreamed into aquatic food systems
- ▶ **Adaptive resource management:** Integrating equity, traditional ecological knowledge, and sea safety into sustainability, paying special attention to local specificities of biodiversity and access to resources by securing tenure rights of Indigenous Peoples, coastal and marine fishing communities, and involving local institutions
- ▶ **Collaborative governance:** Cross-sectoral, gender sensitive, consultative and participatory, applying a human rights-based approach including to marine spatial planning
- ▶ **Disaster preparedness, early warning systems, social protection and social development** (including alternative livelihoods, weather-indexed insurance and decent work)
- ▶ **Exchange of experiences:** Of good practices between fishing communities at the national, regional and international levels
- ▶ **Implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication**
  - **2<sup>nd</sup> Small-Scale Fisheries Summit**, 5–7 July 2024, FAO, Rome (largest-ever gathering of small-scale fisheries actors!) To observe the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the SSF Guidelines, to address governance and development changes in small-scale fisheries, and to strengthen the implementation of the SSF Guidelines

# References

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- ▶ **IPCC.** 2022. *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability: Summary for Policymakers* <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>
- ▶ **UN Nutrition.** 2021. *The role of aquatic foods in sustainable healthy diets.* Discussion paper. Rome. [https://www.unnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-UN-Nutrition-Aquatic-foods-Paper\\_EN\\_.pdf](https://www.unnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-UN-Nutrition-Aquatic-foods-Paper_EN_.pdf)
- ▶ **World Bank.** 2012. *Hidden Harvest: The Global Contribution of Capture Fisheries.* Report No. 66469-GLB. Washington, DC. (also available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/11873/664690ESWOP1210120HiddenHarvest0web.pdf?sequence=1>).



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