



International Collective in
Support of Fishworkers



Dakar, Chennai, Brussels, Bremen, 21 July 2021

Small-scale fisheries' participation in decision-making is crucial for food security of African coastal communities

For thousands of years, artisanal fisheries have been a pillar for food and nutritional security for coastal communities in Africa. Today, the sector employs more than 10 million men and women across the continent and feeds about 200 million Africans - men, women and children. Fish, a source of proteins and other key nutrients such as vitamins and amino acids, caught by artisanal fishers, marketed and processed by fish processors, many of which are women, contributes thus to the eradication of hunger and poverty across the continent. Indeed, fish accounts for 22% of protein intake in sub-Saharan Africa and in some countries, it exceeds 50%.

Given the importance of small-scale fisheries for food security and the fight against poverty in Africa, the effective participation of artisanal fisheries stakeholders in decision-making is crucial, and needs to be guaranteed and enabled in a transparent, gender-sensitive manner.

Amidst the Covid-19 emergency, women and men in African artisanal fisheries have, against all odds and with many challenges, ensured access to affordable fish for their communities and the population.¹ Since the beginning of the crisis, their professional organisations have called upon their governments and decision-makers to find ways that will allow small-scale fisheries to continue their essential activities. More than ever before, in this time of crisis, the right decisions have to be taken to support sustainable artisanal fisheries development in Africa.²

We, the undersigned, share the concerns expressed by civil society and small-scale producers organisations with regards to the problematic direction of the Food Systems Summit, which has opened the doors to “*undue influence from the corporate sector*,” revolves too much around the “*corporate agenda for transformation of food systems*” and whose “*human rights approach remains extremely*

¹ CFFA-CAPE, “Amidst Covid-19 crisis, African artisanal fisheries are more than ever essential to feed the population”, 1 April 2020. Available at : <https://www.cffacape.org/publications-blog/amidst-covid-19-crisis-african-artisanal-fisheries-are-more-than-ever-essential-to-feed-the-population-lymc6>

² CAOPA letter to the technical and financial partners, “Measures to help African artisanal fisheries cope with Coronavirus crisis”, 2 April 2020. Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d402069d36563000151fa5b/t/5e8b0ade94f18a065286166b/1586170596174/Letter+from+CAOPA+covid+19++to+TECHNICAL+AND+FINANCIAL+PARTNERS+.pdf>

*weak.*³ On the other hand, the UNFSS process has involved very little direct engagement with civil society and small-scale producer organisations, and has not reflected the inclusive spirit of other UN processes. We believe that those most affected by hunger, poverty and malnutrition should be heard, and ultimately shape the future global food systems.⁴

We expect governments to strengthen the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and its Civil Society Mechanism (CSM), in which representatives of small-scale fisheries also participate in decision-making for sustainable food systems. This is reflected in the report of the CFS-Scientific-Panel (HLPE) on the importance of fisheries for world food security.⁵ We are extremely worried by the attempt by a group of academics to downgrade the role of the CFS and create a new instrument as an outcome of the UNFSS - a science-policy interface (SPI) - in favour of technological and data-based solutions to the world food crisis that would not integrate the knowledge and experience of small producers in its policy recommendations.⁶

In this regard, we would like to recall the importance of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small-scale Fisheries as a key instrument with a human-rights and gender-sensitive approach which takes into account the realities of the sector's whole value chain and its importance for the eradication of hunger and poverty for really sustainable food systems.

We call on our governments, the African Union and the European Union to support the development of national and regional action plans in a transparent, participative and gender-sensitive way, for the effective implementation of these Guidelines.⁷

We, the undersigned, have noted with concern the growing interest in large-scale industrial aquaculture from a food security perspective, which is seen by many as an alternative to fisheries to feed the world. Some of the organisers of the UNFSS are heavily promoting the further expansion of aquaculture and the production of "blue foods" in Africa as a solution to hunger and malnutrition. We would like to recall that industrial aquaculture can simply not replace fisheries⁸, including because global industrial aquaculture supply chains currently are relying on wild-caught fish for fish feed. Additionally, industrial aquaculture does not supply nearly as much employment as the small-scale fisheries sector and cannot be promoted as a viable alternative livelihood for fishing communities.

We also underscore that industrial aquaculture based on fish feed made from wild-caught fish, which produces farmed fish for consumers in wealthy countries, is only increasing food insecurity of the poorest, in particular in West Africa.⁹ The exponential increase of fishmeal and fish oil factories in West Africa is leading to an unprecedented food security crisis in the region, with women fish processors struggling to access fish and fishermen losing their livelihoods. The fishmeal industry, and the

³ CSM key points on the Food Systems Summit, CFS AG-Bureau meeting, 23 November 2020. Available at :

<https://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/EN-CSM-Key-points-on-FSS-during-Bureau-Ag-meeting-23-Nov.pdf>

⁴ Letter of International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty to the UN Secretary General, March 2020. Available at: https://www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/EN_Edited_draft-letter-UN-food-systems-summit_070220-4.pdf

⁵ HLPE, "Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture for food security and nutrition. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security", Rome, 2014. Available at : <http://www.fao.org/3/i3844e/i3844e.pdf>

⁶ "Scientists Boycott the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit: Open letter to policy makers: No new science-policy interface for food systems", 2021. Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1axLNs6Ck1FA_T8WjQbmxKAQavT_5l9fl/view

⁷ CAOPA, "Decent working conditions in the artisanal fisheries sector: An essential element for the Covid-19 post-crisis", August 2020. Available at: https://caopa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Covid-19-and-Working-Conditions-in-artisanal-fisheries--CAOPA-f_fr.pdf

⁸ CFFA-CAPE, "Replacing fisheries and decarbonizing the sector: we should not expect it from industrial aquaculture", 9 November 2020. Available at: <https://www.cffacape.org/publications-blog/replacing-fisheries-and-decarbonizing-the-sector-we-should-not-expect-it-from-industrial-aquaculture>

⁹ <https://undocs.org/A/67/268>

aquaculture and animal feed industries buying fishmeal and fish oil, are depriving coastal communities of their right to food, as well as contributing to the overexploitation of stocks and the pollution of the environment.

We urge governments and their partners to develop a truly sustainable approach to aquaculture, which does not jeopardize the future of coastal and fishing communities in the African and European continents. We call for the development of fish feed that is not dependent on fresh wild-caught fish, which will be necessary to ensure food systems are sustainable in the long-term.

For all the reasons mentioned above, we will not participate in the UNFFS and support the parallel events¹⁰ to the pre-summit in Rome and the UNFSS in New York. These alternative events will demonstrate the contribution of artisanal fisheries to a healthy and diverse world food supply and how they contribute to the sustainable conservation of fish resources.

Sincerely,



Gaoussou Gueye,
President CAOPA



International Collective in Support of Fishworkers

The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)



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¹⁰ CSM, "Hundreds of grassroots organizations to oppose the UN Food Systems Summit", 2021. Available at: <https://www.csm4cfs.org/hundreds-of-grassroots-organizations-to-oppose-the-un-food-systems-summit/>

Regarding the signatories

The **African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries Professional Organisations (CAOPA)** was created in 2010 and brings together professional organisations of men and women from 26 African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros, Mauritius, Uganda, as well as Reunion Island, as an observer member. Its main objective is to foster a pan-African dynamic for the development of sustainable artisanal fisheries for the well-being of coastal communities, and to contribute to the food security of populations. Since 2017, CAOPA has been committed to promoting the development, in a transparent, participatory and gender-sensitive manner, of national and even regional action plans to implement the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Artisanal Fisheries. CAOPA is a member of the FiTI Board of Directors, CFFA's steering committee, and chairs the West African Platform of Non-State Actors in Fisheries, set up by the African Union. The organisation has observer status at COFI (FAO).

The **International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)** is an international non-governmental organization that works towards the establishment of equitable, gender-just, self-reliant and sustainable fisheries, particularly in the small-scale, artisanal sector. Its mission is to support fishing communities and fishworker organizations, and empower them to participate in fisheries. As a support organization, ICSF is committed to influence national, regional and international decision-making processes in fisheries so that the importance of small-scale fisheries, fishworkers and fishing communities is duly recognized.

The **Low Impact Fishers of Europe** is an umbrella organisation run by fishermen for fishermen. The aim of LIFE is to provide a clear and coherent voice at EU level for the previously mainly silent majority of European fishers who are smaller scale and who use low impact fishing gears and methods but have historically lacked dedicated and effective representation in Brussels and at Member State level. The Platform works via a Management Board of **working fishermen** who are representatives of their local fishing communities. The daily duties are carried out by the Executive Director with the support of a Brussels-based Secretariat and its Regional Coordinators.

The **Coalition for Fair Fisheries Agreements (CFFA)** is a platform of European and African organisations which, since 1994, has aimed to make the voice of African artisanal fishing communities heard at the level of the European institutions in the context of fisheries relations between the European Union and African countries. CFFA currently holds the vice-presidency of the European Union's Long Distance Fisheries Advisory Council (LDAC).

Fair Oceans is an NGO based in Bremen (Germany) that works in the formulation of policy positions in cooperation with other civil society organisations, in particular with partners from the South, that address key development policy issues and link environment and development in the context of maritime policy.