

# For the Love of Oceans

**A recent conference at Annapolis, US, dealt with the role of the seafood industry in the social development of seafood-producing communities in developing countries**

Annapolis, the capital of the state of Maryland, US, founded in 1649 with a population of 39,000 people near Washington, D.C. is worth a visit for ocean and seafood lovers. It was an excellent place to host an event that brought together 100 people from the five continents representing the fisheries supply chain, certification organizations, fishing and fish-farming communities in developing countries, NGOs, foundations, international cooperation agencies, the *Global Environment Facility* (GEF) and the World Bank, besides UN organizations and government representatives. The event—a conference on the seafood industry and social development—took place at the Loews Annapolis Hotel, during 21 and 22 September 2015.

The sponsors of the conference—Oxfam, Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) and the Rockefeller Foundation—opened the event by outlining the objective which was to explore the potential for mobilizing the seafood industry to deliver substantial social and economic benefits for communities dependent largely on fishing and fish farming. Fred Boltz from the Rockefeller Foundation outlined the reasons for the interest of the Foundation in fisheries and the support for global fisheries, human livelihoods, food security and social development through partnership with SFP, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Care and Rare.

With many of the world's fish stocks overexploited, wild catch has been roughly flat for the last 30 years, with the deficit made up for by the dramatic growth in aquaculture

which now supplies nearly half of all seafood consumed by humans. Most of the seafood originates in developing countries, and 80 per cent to 90 per cent of the producers are small-scale, with limited or no alternative livelihoods. Against this background, environmentally, socially and economically sustainable seafood production is essential for sustainable development and reduction of poverty and inequality.

It is difficult to estimate how much of the seafood industry is already closely engaged with promoting improvements in the ecological

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management of fisheries and fish farms around the world through fisheries-improvement or certification programmes. Fishery and aquaculture improvement projects (FIPs and AIPs), certification schemes and other mechanisms are all used to connect the seafood supply chain to improvement activities and deliver increased sustainability and environmental protection.

## **Gender equity**

The challenge now is to translate this into social development with associated socioeconomic benefits, improve commercial terms for producers, empower communities, improve labour conditions, and promote gender equity, community development and poverty alleviation.

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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES PARTNERSHIP (SFP)



8 An Indonesian fisherman with his catch. Most seafood come from small producers with no alternative livelihood sources

The first session of the Annapolis conference was titled ‘Challenges and Opportunities in Social Development’ and was chaired by Blake Lee-Harwood of SFP. The objective was to get an expert panel to outline the challenges and opportunities in social development.

Christoph Béné of the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture in Colombia, outlined the importance of fish in world trade, which amounts to twice the volume of chicken and thrice that of beef, with between 660 and 820 mn people depending on fisheries and aquaculture for their source of income.

Béné pointed out the challenges present, such as, reduction of fishmeal dependency and improvement of the efficiency of aquaculture and, more specifically, the promotion of labour rights, the recognition of women as a key entry point, and the need to change the narrative by moving away from ‘crisis’ narrative to building a new image based on food security and nutrition contribution.

Rachel Davis of SHIFT talked about the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and their implications for the seafood industry. Andrew Hudson of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) talked of ocean threats and solutions for restoring the oceans through an engine for sustainable economic development, job creation and poverty reduction.

Gawain Kripke presented Oxfam’s vision for change, with small-scale producers and labourers having a voice and a fair share in the ownership of the benefits of seafood resources.

Among the other speakers were Carrie Thompson of USAID, Bill

DiMento of Highliner and Jim Cannon, the president of SFP.

The second session on ‘Current Activities and Approaches’ brought together presentations from multilateral institutions like the World Bank. Among the speakers were Randall Brummet and Leah Karrer of GEF and Nicole Franz of FAO. The FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Small-scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines) were accorded top priority and it was evident that the Guidelines are very well-known by now and the instrument continues to attract great interest.

Part 2 of the second session was dedicated to examples from the business sector, with presentations by Mike Kraft of Bumblebee, Rene Benguerel of BlueYou and Helen Packer of the Fishing and Living Programme. These presentations outlined examples of community and small-scale fisher involvement, fair-trade supply chain and fisheries-improvement programmes.

The session ended with a look at civil society involvement in fisheries-improvement projects. Rene Schärer of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) traced the importance of the process of civil society and fisher involvement from the 2008 Bangkok Conference, through regional consultations and national workshops all the way to the negotiating sessions at FAO in 2014.

### Civil-society partnerships

The SSF Guidelines reflect the positive side of stakeholder involvement. The negative example is the lack of participation of all the members of the supply chain—from small-scale fishers to the government—which led to the failure of the lobster FIP in Brazil. Five years after the programme began, lobsters are closer to collapse than ever before. Three examples of civil-society partnerships with family aquaculture operations in Indonesia and Thailand show that there are solutions for sustainable fish farming and maintenance of human rights conditions even in countries which have made the headlines for negative reasons over

the last few months. Abdul Halim of Seafish for Justice, Helen Packer of MDPI, Pongsagorn ('Art') Satjipanon of Oxfam GB Asia Regional Centre, Tom Grasso from the Environmental Defense Fund and Arlene NietesStaprnvanit of the Network of Aquaculture Centers rounded out this session.

The third session, 'Developing Tools for Change', was dedicated to presentations of certification and fisheries/aquaculture-improvement programmes, with many interesting experiences from around the world. Jeff Peterson of the Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA), Valeska Weymann of GlobalGap, Iain Pollard of ASC, Yemi Oloruntuyi of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Corey Peet of Postelsia, Ashley Apel of Fair Trade USA and Libby Woodhatch of Seafish talked on certification.

Mark Prein of GIZ, Urs Baumgartner of BlueYou, Anton Immink of SFP, Michael Akester of GEF/UNDP Humboldt Current Large Marine Ecosystem Programme, Huw Thomas of Morrisons, Dessy Anggraenni of SFP and Simon Bush of Wageningen University talked on fisheries and aquaculture improvement projects.

The Work Session that followed was structured around these questions: What are our objectives and the core strategic questions we need to answer to attain our goals? How can we collaborate more effectively? What are the best combinations of tools and actions to deliver the outcomes we all seek? What do we need to do right now to succeed in the future?

The fourth session, 'The Way Ahead', provided an opportunity to identify the main themes and opportunities that have emerged from the conference while also allowing all participants to make suggestions about future directions and activities.

The results of the Work Session and Session 4 are available for consultation on the conference website (see 'For more' below).

Being a first for members of the supply chain and civil society organisations, it is encouraging to

note that social development of fisher and aquaculture communities is a matter of general concern and is being addressed by many UN and cooperation agencies, funding organisations (foundations) and some members of the supply chain who were present at the Annapolis conference. From here to sustainability is a long way to go, but at least the first steps have been taken.

A poll conducted among the participants in the closing session of the conference sought answers to the question "What are your top recommendations for future interventions?". The results were: (i) implement SSF Guidelines (59 per cent), (ii) bring the voices of fishers to the foreground (76 per cent), (iii) empower the voices of fishworkers (76 per cent), (iv) connect the supply chain with the project (79 per cent) and (v) improve collaboration between stakeholders (70 per cent).

It was encouraging to note that the majority of participants already knew about the SSF Guidelines and the engagement of ICSF in the process leading to its adoption by the FAO. The fishing and aquaculture community now counts on three global initiatives to work for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture: (i) the SSF Guidelines with a human-rights approach, (ii) TBTI (Too Big to Ignore) joining academics, fishers and society, and (iii) the network inaugurated at the Annapolis conference for social development through the supply chain. 

**For more** 

[sustainablefish.org/global-programs/seafood-industry-conference](https://sustainablefish.org/global-programs/seafood-industry-conference)

**Conference on the Seafood Industry and Social Development**