

Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition – HLPE-FSN consultation on the V0 draft of the report

Our congratulations to the dedicated team that brought out the draft report on 'Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition'. The Gender in Aquaculture & Fisheries Section (GAFS) of the Asian Fisheries Society (AFS) (<https://www.genderaquafish.org/>) submits comments, addressing the questions raised for the present consultation.

1. The Framework

Regarding the framework, it should also be able to provide practical guidance to policy makers in the field of fisheries and rural and social development. Information and examples about social inequality from (small scale) fisheries and aquaculture should be included, intersected by gender, ethnicity, class, caste, age, etc., among others on pg 12-17.

2. New definition of food security

The new definition of food security is appropriate. Small-scale fisheries (SSF) is an excellent illustration that could be used in the report to illustrate the need for all six dimensions of food security. availability, access, utilization, stability, agency and sustainability.

It is pertinent to note that 800 million people (50% are women) around the world depend on small-scale fisheries and aquaculture for their livelihoods. The Illuminating Hidden Harvests (IHH) report (IHH, 2021) found that small-scale fisheries (SSF) account for at least 40 percent of global fisheries catch. About 90 percent of the people employed along capture fisheries value chains operate in small-scale fisheries. 45 million women participate in small-scale fisheries, including for subsistence. Small fish and midwater fish are especially nutritious and found abundantly in small-scale fisheries landings. These fish should be made available as food for those in SSF communities. In some places, access by small-scale fishers and fish processors is compromised by management decisions that grant control of the catch to large industrial operators and channel to fish to uses such as fishmeal. Co-management is likely implemented for about 20 percent of the catch from small-scale fisheries. To improve sustainability and stability of supply and access, greater use of co-management arrangements is warranted through national fisheries policies. For each fisher in the small-scale sector, at least four other people are engaged in related land-based activities, such as the preparation of equipment, fish processing, and marketing. As a family-based activity, fishing makes a direct contribution to household food security, where women play a particularly important role both as the link with the market and as the provider of food in the household, in addition to their reproductive role. Utilization and agency are linked with the whole set of governance arrangements in SSF.

3. Definitions of inequities, inequalities, etc

No response

4. Major gaps

The report also needs to adequately capture the contributions of the informal sector of food economy / social economies such as dried/preserved fish value chains that largely remain overlooked and undervalued across science-policy-practice. Attention to the informal sector is important not only because its disproportionate contributions towards FSN of socio-economically marginalized communities particularly in the Global South, but also because of the unique threats to sustainability of such value chains (e.g., commercialization, inter-sectoral competition for coastal resources, and fish stock depletions) (Belton et al., 2022). Furthermore, such informal food economies are largely localized, deeply rooted in cultural and social norms, and remain integral to local culinary traditions that has lasted for centuries. For example, dried fish is a main consumer item in household food baskets in Sri Lanka with steadily increasing local production volumes over the past. Local dishes such as dried queen fish curry is a nutritious comfort food for Sri Lankans across income categories. In addition to the nutritional value, physical characteristics such as

storability, portability, and affordability of such food items elevates their suitability for FSN interventions including during disaster and crisis situations (<https://fish.cgiar.org/dried-fish-in-a-covid-19-world/>). Overall, attention to such socio-cultural and traditional linkages may provide an entry point for potential interventions seeking to harness the nutritional value of hidden and under-valued food items (Byrd et al., 2021) and thereby transform food systems in culturally appropriate ways. Perhaps the current sub-section on 'culture and social norms' (page 74) can be expanded to highlight some of these linkages?

5. Structural drivers of inequality covered?

Chapter 2 deals with inequalities in Food Security and Nutrition Across Regions and Groups. For inequalities between groups it is recommended to also look into issues of inequalities between specific food producer groups across the food chain of farming, fisheries, livestock, aquaculture, forestry. In Chapter 2 no distinction is made in animal source food, while fish has a very different nutritional value and is of much higher nutritional importance than meat, in particular for children and lactating mothers and also a relatively cheaper source of protein. Policy priorities in most countries and internationally give priority to terrestrial animal-source food rather than aquatic. This needs to be redressed.

Chapter 3 deals with inequalities in food and other systems and FSN implications. This chapter has a strong focus on inequalities in agriculture food systems. Inequalities in aquatic food systems (fisheries & aquaculture value chains) are not included. Inequalities in fisheries and aquaculture should be included in all "fields" of inequalities, in particular regarding Tenure Rights, Market and Trade, Information and Technology, Finance, Participation and Decision making, Decent Work and Social Development, Security and Safety.

6. Other trends that should be included?

Chapter 4. The systemic drivers and root causes of FSN inequalities (Pg 79 Fisheries policy and investment). In this section more information should be given on SSF and impact of global trends like the policies on "blue economy" and "blue growth". Although the international community has endorsed the SSF Guidelines, the implementation continues to meet major obstacles. The growing pressures of a 'blue economy', including the rapid expansion of aquaculture, wind farms, etc., pose multiple threats to small-scale fisheries, most fundamentally at the level of tenure rights, and access to resources and markets. Climate change and global environmental policies too are impacting small-scale fisheries in a major way.

7. Under/overrepresented topics

Women and gender are under-represented topics in this report on inequalities. Although the words "women" and "gender" occur frequently, they are used mostly in formulaic ways. The short sub-section on Gender and FSN (starting on p. 41) soon grades into other inequality dimensions and is rather vague and simple. If the intent of this report is not to focus much on gender inequality, e.g., because of the ongoing issues over the halted process concerning the VG on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment, this perhaps this should be noted?

9. Success stories

Example of a success story include the state nutrition program of the state of Odisha, India where powdered dried fish has been introduced as part of the take-home ration. [News stories - <https://mel.cgiar.org/projects/usaidipp/532/the-success-of-the-pilot-program-on-the-inclusion-of-fish-in-supplementary-nutrition-in-the-state-nutrition-strategy-promises-positive-nutrition-scenarios-in-odisha-india-> ; <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/odisha-to-introduce-fish-in-nutrition-scheme-7048364/>]. Also, ongoing research initiatives such as 'Dried Fish Matters' (a research partnership based in Canada with focus of dried fish social economies in South and Southeast Asia; <https://driedfishmatters.org/>) attempts to address the invisibility of informal food economies in research and policy.

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<https://www.worldfishcenter.org/strategy-2030/index.html#bigfacts>
- SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES AND THE HUMAN RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD. Making the connection: exploring synergies in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines and the Right to Food Guidelines <http://www.fao.org/3/cb4939en/cb4939en.pdf>
- Priority Actions for Ocean Equity: <https://oceanpanel.org/the-agenda/ocean-equity/> and <https://www.cffacape.org/ssf-call-to-action>
- Towards gender-equitable small-scale fisheries governance and development – A handbook: <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/resources/detail/en/c/1095418/>
- The international Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication: <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/guidelines/en/>
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Additional materials

Blue Economy and impact on (gender in) SSF, Climate change and impact on (gender in) SSF, Environmental policies and impact on (and gender in) SSF , International Trade and impact on (gender in) SSF

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