



Global Action Network “Sustainable food from the oceans and inland waters for food security and nutrition”

Minutes from the Network meeting held on the 14th October 2019 15:30-17:30, German room, FAO HQ, Rome

Background

The Network seeks to arrange one annual meeting, involving cross sectorial expertise, focusing on the important elements for food security along the food chain “From healthy Waters to Healthy People”. This year, instead of one single Network meeting, the Network organized the side event "Treasures of the oceans and inland waters, ensuring food security and nourishing nations" under the 46th meeting of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), where important aspects of food security were presented and debated. A summary of the side event is available here (link once available). A Network meeting was also held in conjunction with the side event, to discuss Network follow ups. A summary of this meeting is given below:

Network meeting

The purpose of the Network meeting was to give a short update of the work done so far, share latest news and discuss possible next steps for the network, including relevant upcoming events and ideas on further development of the Global Action Network.

The Networks story was presented initially at the meeting: The initiative was launched at the UN Oceans conference in NY June 2017. During 4 follow up meetings the network framework has evolved (The [Mission Statement](#), the [Concept document](#) and the [Action Plan](#)). Through a "Gain and share document" information about aquatic foods and various challenges with their role for food security are mapped and possible actions and practical solutions are shared. Relevant SDGs and CFS recommendation are identified. The inputs will be presented at the Network website. Network participants are invited to give feedback to the web solution, and to provide inputs on [challenges, knowledge and solutions](#) related to the key elements under Gain and share, moreover to share information about activities and events relevant to the [Networks mission](#) to: foodfromtheocean@nfd.no.

The Network organizers underscored the importance of active participation to create actions in the Network. The following debate revealed many specific issues that could be further explored and followed up. The inputs are listed in the annex and will be reflected in the "gain and share" and further work. Some participants were invited to elaborate and provide input on specific issues they brought up. In addition all were invited to make contact if they would like to take charge and elaborate specific issues further.

A message to be delivered to Our Ocean conference taking place in Oslo 23-24 October 2019 was prepared at the meeting. WorldFish will be part of the panel and agreed to deliver the message.

It was suggested to arrange a larger Network meeting in July 2020 in conjunction with the COFI meeting or the Codex meeting. The network will explore the possibility of a declaration in support of the network to be signed, possible at the COFI meeting. It was suggested to have an electronic meeting before the summer meeting. Members are welcome to contribute in planning the meeting.

Inputs to further work brought forward at the meeting:

Sufficient

- Sustainable feed is a challenge (also in relation to circular economy mentioned below). It is important to find sustainable feed resources. If people are to eat more fish, increased production must come from aquaculture. How can we produce more without exploiting other food sources?

- Mesopelagic might contribute, however the challenge is "potential but proceed with caution". There is a need for greater awareness and knowledge in this field. Moreover, the public needs to be educated. We must ensure that actions are taken in a sustainable way and impair the ocean ecosystem. Ireland brought up the theme and are encouraged to elaborate the theme further. (Issue is relevant to "bridging the decade" below).

Safe aquatic food

- There are many challenges to food safety. Sharing knowledge is important, also for the purpose of *teaching*. Developing models which can be used in education at higher levels and leaflets for lower levels, to share information was suggested.

Nutritious aquatic food

- Monitoring data on food composition (food safety and nutrition): Food programme initiatives should not only monitor the amount of available biomass, but also the content of nutrients and contaminants. Focus should be on the transparency of access to nutrient and contaminant contents of seafood, including promoting existing databases.

Dietary needs

To address "leaving no one behind" knowledge sharing could address the following challenge:

- Elderly people might have challenges such as lack of teeth, making it challenging to eat healthy (eg smoke dried fish). Possible solution: sharing recipes/ products that are easier to eat, and knowledge on food technology. (also relevant to food preference).

Food preferences

- Food safety and nutrition knowledge is a prerequisite however technological development is required which maintains seafood quality.

- New technology might lead to better food quality and safety etc., however product might differ in taste, colour etc from the traditional food so people may not prefer them. Some places food produced with new technology are exported, while local people continue eating the old type.

- Convenient tasty products are important to increase fish consumption.

Leaving no one behind

- The "gain and share" information on the webpage are organized under the elements of food security. Issues relevant to "Leaving no one behind" are described under each element and not as a single item. If possible, relevant information could be linked and presented under "leaving no one behind" at the webpage as well.

- "Capacity building" could be included as a challenge. There are many good research programs which have a finite duration. There is a need to coordinate research programs and to keep the knowledge in place longer than the research program is lasting.

Another element related to capacity building, that the network might contribute to, is the holistic view. E.g. Programs on monitoring should not only look at the amount of resources available but also monitor if it is safe and nutritious etc.

Towards common goals

- Circular economy. Solution to consider food systems in an integrated way is important. Question was raised if the Network platform is prepared to look at this in a broader picture – resource security and the land and ocean connection. The Network can be used to make the connections “bluing the green and greening the blue”. The Netherlands who raised the issue was invited to elaborate the idea further in connection to the network. Blue and green should look at this question together. The theme relates to challenges mentioned under "Towards Common Goals" in the "gain and share". It was suggested to add SDG 15 among the SDGs listed under this theme.

Policy coherence

- The network members working at policy level can support each other to move the food system from the dominant land-based systems towards the blue area. It was suggested to highlighting nutrient benefits of fish when working with the NCD targets (non-communicable diseases). In this work there are workshops at regional and country level, in which it is possible to promote actions.
- Summits on food, food systems and nutrition should include fish (such as SAFANSI World Bank arrangement). The network members might link up to such events. There are also many upcoming global events on food, nutrition or food systems. The Network collective should make use of these event and make sure aquatic food is a part of those global discussions. Should be possible to access on the network webpage.
- Agriculture dominates the food system debate. Ongoing work related to nutrition sensitive food system also includes fish. There is a need to include food safety of fish in the work on food systems and address issues related to this, including in post-harvest part of the value chain.
- Human rights approach and the gender approach is important to many members. Nutrition, poverty, gender, climate change and environment are important SDGs. Fish can help meet these challenges and the network can be a place to meet partners, work together to respond to the global challenges.
- Putting actions and policy together is a key, and a holistic approach is important. Policy on fisheries may affect gender and poverty issues. Solving one problem can create another.
- Knowledge based action is important. The Network can be a place where we can show available scientific data. There is a need to make sure actions are based on solid evidence, e.g. regarding sustainability.

Check whether the network is of assistance

Actions should be taken at the national level. It was suggested that the network after a while could test if the work is useful for developing countries. E.g. is the webpage of use for them? Can the network enable them to take action? The network could have a workshop, present the work and see if this is of any use for developing countries, such as for a ministry of fisheries or others.

Bridging the Decades

The Global Action Network could bridge between the Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025 and the Decade of Oceans Science (2021-2030). Issues important for future food security, such as exploring the potential of mesopelagic species. These two decades will overlap, and the network members should look for synergies between the decades. Discussions about the Ocean Decade starts in in January.