



Global Action Network Sustainable Food from the Oceans and Inland Waters for Food Security and Nutrition

Summary from the Network Meeting (24th November 2021)

The Global Action Network seeks to arrange an annual meeting, involving cross-sectorial expertise, focusing on important elements for food security along the aquatic food chain “From healthy Waters to Healthy People”. Due to COVID-19, physical meetings had to be postponed, however in 2021 important elements for aquatic foods and food security were highlighted at three webinars, and an [online network meeting](#) was arranged in order to sum up achievements, and to plan for future work. A summary of this online meeting is given below. 113 representatives from ministries, institutions and organizations, from 44 countries, signed up for the meeting, approximately 50 joined real time. Due to different time zones, 18 registrants have watched the recordings and provided inputs by mail after the meeting. Norway as the leader of the Network was chairing the meeting.

Dr. Shakuntala Thilsted from WorldFish and Winner of World Food Prize 2021, gave the [welcoming remarks](#), highlighting the need to strengthen the role of diverse aquatic foods for nourishing nations, peoples and planet, putting solutions into action at all levels.

A brief introduction of the Network was given, for new participants, followed by a recap of the Networks latest activities: The Network organized [three Independent Dialogues](#) linked to the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, covering issues to transform food systems with aquatic foods. In total, 1611 people signed up for the webinars, and the recordings are made available to reach a wider audience (in total 2743 viewings to date). Network participants highlighted activities related to the mission of the network. The UNSCN presented a [discussion paper](#), which they launched this year, on the role of aquatic foods in sustainable healthy diets. The paper calls for a holistic food, land and water systems transformation, towards achieving the sustainable development goals. The importance of “[greening the blue and bluing the green](#)” was brought up by the Netherlands earlier, underscoring the need for common “land and sea” language for a circular food system. At this meeting, the Netherlands informed that a concept is being further developed on circular aquaculture principles, and that they will provide a document on this soon to be shared on the web page. “Bridging the decades” (UN Nutrition Decade and Decade of Oceans Science) was suggested by Ireland earlier. Exploring the potential of mesopelagic species was mentioned as important for future food security. At this meeting, Norway informed that Ireland and Norway are examining the potential of developing economically and ecologically sustainable mesopelagic fisheries further. Findings indicates huge biomass and low densities. Better technologies and management are needed to ensure sustainability. More information will soon be shared on the web page.

In line with the action plan, a webpage to share information among members has been developed. This year, to maintain presence and share up-to-date information, social media tools have been developed, including [twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Participants were encouraged to use these tools to share information, or to send information to the Network email for the Network to disseminate. Inputs for development of the webpage are also welcome.

Plans for 2022 were discussed, including an update of the Action Plan. Relevant upcoming events include: the UN Ocean Conference, the 49th session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022).

FAO gave a [presentation of IYAFA](#) which aims to enhance awareness, understanding and actions to support small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, promote dialogue and collaboration.

FAO invited the Network to engage in IYAFA. It was suggested to partner with CFS and bring IYAFA into the next plenary and to establish a small working group to explore and coordinate. Participants from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and WorldFish volunteered to be part of this initiative. It is possible to join this group after the meeting.

The Netherlands' focal point suggested to establish, and offered to chair, a working group to highlight food and feed within planetary boundaries in connection to the UN Ocean conference. It is possible to join this group after the meeting.

Norway suggested to arrange the next annual Network meeting based on the concept for the postponed 2020 meeting: "bridging the decades" -highlighting actions for future aquatic foods related to the UN Decade of action for the SDGs, the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, the UN Decade of Ocean Science and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition. With a high-level session, a thematic session on walking the talk and a network session. Participants were invited to join a Task Force for 2022. Representatives from WorldFish, the University of Ghana and Norad indicated that they were interested in taking part. Others may join after the meeting. The participant from the University of Ghana underscored the importance of using fish to resolve malnutrition and incorporating the concept of the value chain in local context followed by a question if it is possible to have a regional group in connection to the Global Action Network. Norway will check how this can be done.

The [gain and share tool](#) was briefly presented and the participants were encouraged to send inputs to further develop this tool. A newsletter will also be set up in 2022 to share information within the Network. Participants were asked to provide inputs and subscribe to the newsletter.

A question was raised about the background, framework, and decision making in the Network. Norway referred to the [Concept Document](#), the [Mission Statement](#) and the [Action Plan](#), that were developed together with interested countries at meetings at FAO in 2018, to frame the Network. UN work such as the CFS recommendations, goals and commitments already agreed upon, including the Rome Declaration, the NCDs (noncommunicable diseases), and the SDGs are important basis for the Network. This is an informal Network, but Norway will provide information on the Network web page about its leadership and ask those who wish to be listed as partaking in the work, at the webpage and reports to the General Secretary, to indicate this.

UNFSS follow up: Many [coalitions](#) are in the pipeline as a follow up to the Food Systems Summit. The participants were asked to indicate which of these could be relevant to promote aquatic foods. Coalitions which were mentioned included the Coalition for Aquatic/Blue Foods as well as those for School Meals, Healthy Diets, Zero Hunger and the Land and Freshwater Nexus Coalition. It was commented a huge number of coalitions are emerging, the Network should wait and see if they will develop further and be strategic when deciding which one to engage in.

The Coalition for Aquatic/Blue Foods was presented by the Chair from Iceland. This coalition is still in an early stage. A working group is established to work on the scope together with the UNFSS secretariate. The aim is to raise the profile of aquatic foods in the food system transformation, by providing assistance at a country level to achieve goals of the Food Systems Summit. It was underscored that the work will not duplicate that from others such as the Network. The Coalition and the Network seem to have a lot in common, thus these two initiatives should keep in touch and look at possible ways to amplify each other's work.

A post-meeting survey was sent to all participants. Topics in future Network meetings and communications were suggested: visibility of aquatic foods, system-based approaches, sustainable value chain, and collaboration at both regional and global scales. Better engagement among participants across multiple sectors was advised in future Network meetings through activities like sharing projects and case studies. These will be further discussed and addressed.