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OCEAN ACTION NEWSLETTER: BLUE FOODS AND THE OCEAN



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OCEAN ACTION



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



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INTRODUCTION

On 23 September 2021, the UN Food Systems Summit took place during the 76th session of the General Assembly High-level Week. It brought together farmers and fishers, youth, Indigenous Peoples, Heads of State, governments and many more in an effort to transform the sector and get the world back on track to achieve all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The Secretary-General Mr. António Guterres highlighted in his opening remarks that the world is waging a war against nature and reaping the bitter harvest. Food systems also generate one-third of all greenhouse gas emissions, he added, and they're responsible for up to 80 per cent of biodiversity loss.

Blue foods – the aquatic food including fish, shellfish and algae from marine and inland waters - are wonderful source of locally produced nutrition for millions of people, if sustainable managed, has huge potential to feed many more.

Blue food systems have relatively low greenhouse gas emissions and impacts on biodiversity. Fish can have a smaller environmental footprint than meat reared on land. They offer a solution for healthier diets, food security, sustainable use of ocean and marine resources, climate change mitigation and social equity.

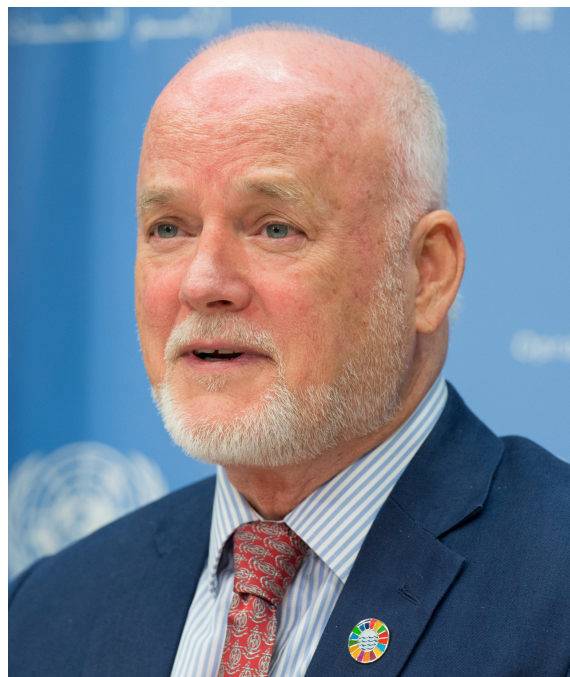
The fisheries sector is one of the main providers of jobs which generates economic growth and supports equitable development in many countries and regions. Most of the fish supply for human consumption are produced by small-scale fisheries-half of the total workforce are women. Blue foods have great potential in greatly improving livelihoods of local communities that heavily rely on fisheries.

However, the ocean is running out of fish, with a third of global fish stocks already overexploited and the proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels constantly declining. As noted in the UN Secretary-General's report on Progress towards the SDGs 2021, the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on fisheries poses significant challenges that threaten to undermine sustainable stock management and profitability. Urgent actions are required to scale up protection of marine environments, investment in ocean science and support for small scale fishing communities and sustainable management of the oceans.

MESSAGE FROM AMBASSADOR PETER THOMSON, THE UN SECRETARY- GENERAL'S SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE OCEAN

Blue foods are a vital element of our food systems, with their contribution too often overlooked. Blue foods are captured or cultured in rivers, lakes, and the Ocean, and they include fish, invertebrates, algae and aquatic plants. They are a wonderful source of locally produced nutrition for millions of people, and if sustainably managed, have huge potential to feed so many more.

The UN Food Systems Summit took place during the UN General Assembly in New York on September 23, seeking to set the stage for global food systems transformation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.



The global action agenda for the food system should embrace the priorities for a sustainable blue food system that are set out in SDG 14, including to end overfishing and the harmful subsidies that drive it, to conserve and restore productive marine and coastal ecosystems, and to ensure that small-scale fishers have access to resources and markets.

Integral to these blue food opportunities is the call for innovation to maximize the nutritional benefits these foods provide for the communities which rely on them. The call is for innovation to focus on supporting local economies, taking gender transformative approaches, with environmental sustainability as a ruling principle.

You are invited to follow the Special Envoy's [Twitter account](#) and [Instagram account](#), where he shares messages of solutions and strategies for achieving a healthy Ocean through implementation of SDG 14 and fidelity to the Paris Climate Agreement. More information about his work can be found on his website, oceanconference.un.org/SpecialEnvoy.

MESSAGE FROM MARCO LAMBERTINI, WWF INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL AND CO-FOCAL POINT OF MARINE AND COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS MANAGEMENT UN COMMUNITIES OF OCEAN ACTION

Blue foods – those sourced from marine and freshwater aquatic ecosystems – encompass a phenomenal variety, from highly prized tunas to more humble edible algae. They are essential elements of local cultures and lifestyles, sustaining healthy diets and livelihoods across continents. A category this diverse and integral to human well-being deserves to a thematic focus at the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit.

But the recent buzz and enthusiasm for blue foods must be tempered by reality: 90% of global fish stocks are currently fully or overexploited.

Fish cannot “feed the world” if we don’t change the way we harvest them and protect the ecosystems they need to thrive. And as much as fish need a healthy ocean, the ocean needs diverse and thriving fish populations. They play a critical role in maintaining many of the functions, such as nutrient cycling and carbon sequestration, natural selection and complex food chains, which allow the ocean to support life on planet Earth.



A handful of common-sense principles should guide discussions about how to leverage the important benefits and opportunities blue foods can provide.

- Protect and regenerate natural coastal infrastructure.

The restoration and regeneration of coastal habitats, such as mangroves, seagrass, coral reefs, shellfish reefs, and wetlands, is a powerful means of addressing biodiversity loss, enhancing or sustaining fisheries, and building climate and disaster defenses – delivering triple bottom-line benefits in terms of nutrition, mitigation and resilience.

- Address climate change and its impact on the ocean as a food security threat.

The IPCC projects a climate-driven crash in fisheries production, which would dramatically increase the vulnerability of tropical countries. Fisheries management organizations and policymakers must immediately incorporate climate change adaptation into policies. WWF encourages an inclusive process that prioritizes transparency and knowledge sharing, so policy is informed by both science and shared values.

- Focus on the value of blue food in nourishing vulnerable communities and addressing global public health.

Fish proteins are essential in the diets of hundreds of millions of people around the world, and in particular of many coastal communities and developing countries where protein intake is low. Overfishing reduces the availability of fish for domestic lower-income and nutrient-vulnerable groups, leading to malnutrition and exacerbating poverty.

- Invest in the next generation of sustainable aquaculture.

Aquatic farming can help feed the world, enhance livelihoods and conserve nature. It can provide small-scale producers a way out of poverty while paying workers decent wages – by employing smart subsidies for seaweed and shellfish farming to convert excess nutrients and carbon into food, for example. But it has to be done right: no conversion of critical marine ecosystems or terrestrial ecosystems; no using “trash fish” for feed. In fact, small and low-cost fish can be optimized by focusing on nutrient content and promoting healthy diets.

- Level the playing field by removing harmful subsidies.

Heavily subsidized fishing fleets distort markets, encourage overfishing and create a barrier to entry for coastal economies looking to leverage their coastal assets for sustainable development. It's time to break the 20-year gridlock on fishing subsidies reform and write a new rulebook based on fairness and equity.

- Make fisheries a source of decent work.

Consumers should be able to enjoy seafood free from the taint of human rights abuses, and fishworkers should have a workplace free from intimidation or violence. Establishing requirements for comprehensive and transparent reporting of all life-threatening injuries or deaths, adopting binding measures on crew welfare, and ensuring full traceability of all seafood products are minimum regulatory remedies.

Such is the nature of blue food that it runs like a current through the sustainable development agenda – a tool to address poverty, hunger, health, livelihoods, climate, and more. But it has to start in nature – in places where a thriving marine web of life is preserved. That's the foundational principle of sustainable blue foods and the entire blue economy.

You are invited to follow [Mr. Lambertini's Twitter account](#), where he shares messages of solutions and strategies for achieving a healthy Ocean through implementation of SDG 14 and fidelity to the Paris Climate Agreement. More information about his work can be found on this website <https://wwf.panda.org>

UPDATES FROM THE COMMUNITIES OF OCEAN ACTION (COAS)



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Sustainable Fisheries

The ocean, estuaries, lakes and rivers are vital sources of nutritious food worldwide – these ‘Blue Foods’, also known as ‘aquatic foods’, include a diverse group of animals, plants and microorganisms, each with unique qualities and nutrients.

Aquatic foods are a cornerstone of the global food system, providing a vital source of nutrition for more than 3 billion people worldwide and livelihoods for hundreds of millions. They have even greater potential and can play a central role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by supporting healthier, more sustainable and equitable food systems globally, and in many of the most climate-challenged and food-insecure communities.

The Sustainable Fisheries Community of Ocean Action is working to promote blue and aquatic foods for sustainable development, below are some recent highlights:

Committee on Fisheries calls for urgent, targeted action on aquatic foods

As we come to terms with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and how to build back a better world for all, it is important to note that we are not on track to defeat hunger and malnutrition. The number of undernourished people has been steadily increasing since 2014 and urgent action is needed to support a shift that makes healthy diets affordable and accessible to all. The pandemic is not making this fight any easier, with significant additional impacts on food production systems and related livelihoods. The world needs to refocus its efforts if we are to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

In February 2021, FAO member countries endorsed the [COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture](#) at the 34th Session of the Committee on Fisheries in the context of the High-Level event to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

The fisheries and aquaculture sector has changed significantly over the past 25 years, with a constantly growing demand and consumption of aquatic food, and a shift of source from capture to culture: aquaculture production is now 200 percent larger, fish trade 300 percent larger, and per capita consumption almost 40 percent higher than it was in 1995.

The Declaration is the result of an extensive consultative process to acknowledge the achievements of the fisheries and aquaculture sector and to gather collective momentum in tackling the challenges and opportunities to secure the long-term sustainability of the sector.

The Declaration calls for urgent targeted action to ensure aquatic foods and products continue to provide inclusive, effective and sustainable pathways to reduce poverty, secure livelihoods and underpin food security and nutrition, as vital to achieving the goals set in Agenda 2030.

The aquatic foods sector has much to contribute to securing all the SDGs, including SDG 14, as ‘blue foods’ have an essential, growing, and yet still under recognized role in fighting hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

[New paper explores the role of aquatic foods in sustainable healthy diets](#)



A new discussion paper titled, [“The role of aquatic foods in sustainable healthy diets”](#), was published in May 2021 by UN Nutrition aims to present the breadth of evidence available to inform and steer policy, investments and research to make full use of the vast potential of aquatic foods in delivering sustainable healthy diets and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The report was made possible by the generous time and expertise provided by FAO and the CGIAR Research Program on Fish Agri-food Systems, led by WorldFish.

Blue Foods: Science for a Sustainable Future - 1 April 2021



2021
2030
Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development

**THE OCEAN DECADE
VIRTUAL SERIES** | **1 April 2021
12h00 - 13h30 CET**

**Blue Foods:
Science for a Sustainable Future**

oceandecade.org

The virtual series event, [“Blue Foods: Science for a Sustainable Future”](#), introduced the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and its ambitions to foster transformative partnerships to generate knowledge that provides the basis for innovation and solutions to optimize the role of the ocean in sustainably feeding the world’s population under changing environmental, social and climate conditions to achieve a productive ocean supporting sustainable food supply.

Presentations explored key science knowledge, capacity gaps and opportunities to achieve sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and inspire solution-oriented actions to support implementation of the Ocean Decade. [Watch the event on YouTube.](#)

UN Food Systems Pre-Summit, 26-28 July 2021



The UN Food Systems Pre-Summit took place in Rome bringing together diverse actors from around the world to leverage the power of food systems to deliver progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to set the stage for the UN Food Systems Summit taking place on 23 September 2021.

Blue and aquatic food systems have become a central issue around which multi-stakeholder coalitions are forming, in recognition of the transformational pathways they offer to contribute to achieving the SDGs.

Recognizing blue and aquatic foods in the UN Food Systems Summit process

In a joint letter to the Food Systems Summit Action Track Leaders, Scientific Group Chair, Senior Advisor for Food Systems Summit Dialogues, Multi-Actor Food Systems Champions Network, and UN Task Force, Dr. Agnes Kalibata, the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy for the Food Systems Summit, and Ambassador Peter Thomson, the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean emphasized, “The common ground of the UN Food Systems Summit and the UN Oceans Conference,” and the inherent connections among the ocean and food systems. They further stressed that blue and aquatic foods are already a “cornerstone of the food system,” and urged leaders to “[mobilize] around blue foods as part of the commitments and action that move forward in the Summit process, through transformation pathways and multi-stakeholder coalitions of action.”

Building an Alliance for Blue Foods

Members of the Blue Food Assessment (BFA), an international joint initiative that brings together over 100 scientists from more than 25 institutions, joined the Pre-Summit for a parallel session: "Steering the Food System Summit towards Full Integration of Blue Foods for Health, Wealth and Ecological Recovery.

The session presented science to support key policy, finance, and engagement convergence points — to ‘add fish to the recipe’ for food security, improved nutrition, and nature-positive production while encouraging and securing dignified livelihoods for a diversity of actors.

At the event the Alliance for Blue Foods was officially announced and touted as an “Emerging Coalition for Action”. The Alliance will seek to mobilize action towards blue and aquatic food systems that are fairer, healthier, greener and more resilient.

Celebrating the contributions of small-scale aquatic food producers to the SDGs

A UN Foods Systems Pre-Summit affiliated event, “Small in size, big in numbers: Aquatic small-scale food producers’ contribution to the SDGs”, was organized by FAO and WorldFish with members of the International Steering Committee of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (Spain, Peru, Global Aquaculture Alliance, InFish Network, Too Big To Ignore research network) and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism.

The event highlighted the diversity of small-scale aquatic food production systems, and the immense value they provide in supporting equitable livelihoods, nourishing the planet and sustainable development, and called for small-scale aquatic food systems to be recognized, accounted for, and included in the agenda, discussions and outcomes of the UN Food Systems Summit.



COMMUNITY OF OCEAN ACTION

MARINE AND COASTAL ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Conservation Finance Alliance

Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Management

Carol Phua, leader of WWF's [Coral Reef Rescue Initiative](#) and Ambassador Peter Thomson, United Nations Special Envoy for the Ocean, conducted a [Facebook Live event](#) to talk about why we need ocean conservation to be a global priority and what we need to do to achieve SDG14: Life Below Water. This virtual conversation was held at the end of May on WWF's Facebook page. It reached more than 6,500 people, and counting.

CARE, a partner of the Coral Reef Rescue Initiative (CRRI) released a paper on [Gender Equality in Coral Reef Socio-ecological Systems](#). This literature review examines gender and gender equality in livelihoods linked to coral reef-dependent communities in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Madagascar, Philippines, and Tanzania. This paper is the first in a series of three (the second, a set of good practice case studies and the third, a policy brief) and is part of a project that aims to increase the levels of awareness and knowledge among CRRI partners and the wider development and conservation communities on the relevance and importance of gender-transformative approaches in interventions related to coral reef socio-ecological systems.

CARE and WWF convened a [panel discussion](#) on Resilience and Recovery: Transforming Food Systems for an Equitable and Secure Future for People and Nature in the context of the upcoming [UN Food Systems Summit](#). It was made clear, given COVID-19, the alarming loss of biodiversity, the climate crisis, pervasive poverty, and hunger, that the integration of human development approaches premised on human rights with conservation approaches is absolutely imperative.

This coming year and decade offer an opportunity to change the trajectory of coral reefs from world-wide collapse to slow, but steady recovery. This [new paper](#) outlines the actions and policies needed to conserve and restore reefs in this century.

NEW VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

- **Whale Conservation: Using consumer activation for global tracking and engagement by The Ocean Azores Foundation (Philanthropic organization) [39244](#)**

The objective is to create a global platform to track the journeys that whales make around the world, increase consumer knowledge about whales and the need for their protection, help consumers and tourists to be part of a global movement to protect whales and support scientific research with global data. So little is known about these magnificent creatures and where they travel in the ocean and this platform will be donated for free to the World Cetacean Alliance and other NGOs around the world to use, so that the reach can be increased and more people can be involved in the project.

- **Introduction of the recyclable transparent & eco-friendly products by KoreaSeven Co., Ltd. (Private sector) [39390](#)**

Korea Seven is focusing on strengthening its eco-friendly product lineup. 7-Eleven introduced the first recyclable transparent ice cup in the retail industry in 2018. Furthermore, in November of 2020, Korea Seven installed a recycling resource recovery robot, an automatic plastic bottle and can collection machine. This year, two types of straw less coffee cups were introduced, an eco-friendly idea product that allows you to drink beverages conveniently without using a plastic straw. Also by introducing eco-friendly bags, Korea Seven is taking the lead in creating an eco-friendly consumption culture for consumers.

- **Parliamentary Campaign for Protection of the Oceans and Implementation of SDG 14 by Parliamentarians for Global Action (Non-governmental organization) 39019**

This commitment aims to end impunity for crimes committed on and against the world's oceans and their related human rights violations through more transparency in the seafood industry. Specifically, the campaign aims to address illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing that threatens the sustainability of the world's fisheries; posing an environmental hazard, and associated with numerous human rights violations.

A particular focus is to build political will and capacity for the national implementation of international agreements for that purpose, such as (i) IMO Cape Town Agreement (CTA); (ii) FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA); and (iii) the ILO Work in Fishing Convention. PGA Member-actions may contribute to implementation of various SDG 14 targets through the multiple projects within the Campaign. In November 2019, PGA convened the first International Parliamentary Oceans Day at PGAs 41st Annual Forum, where Praia Plan of Action was adopted to engage on various initiatives relating to the implementation of SDG 14.

OTHER NEW VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS

- Borneo Ghost Nets Hunter by Future Ocean Borneo LLP (Private Sector) 39222
- Earthlanka Youth Network 39020
- Open & transparent delivery of knowledge for fisheries management in support of SDG 14.4 by ICES 38918
- Responsible Sourcing Policy (RSP) for Tuna fishing operations by Fishing Industry Association of Papua New Guinea (Private sector) 38702
- Blue Economy Global Report by Skipper & Wool, Lda (Private sector) 38669





2018 Henrique Hioe 2nd Place Above Water Seascapes

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