

Ocean Action Panel 9:

Promoting the role of sustainable food from the ocean for poverty eradication and food security

*An extract of the Global Online Stakeholder Consultation:
Inputs to Ocean Action Panels Concept Papers*

About this Paper

This paper is an extract from the report of the Global Online Stakeholder Consultation: Inputs to Ocean Action Panels Concept Papers, which summarizes inputs received from stakeholders to a global online stakeholder consultation organized by UN DESA in connection with the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference which will be held from 9 June to 13 June in Nice, France.

The main Report can be found [here](#), including links to all responses and all inputs to the ten Ocean Action Panels, as well as detailed background information and a summary.

This paper presents summaries of key messages for Ocean Action Panel 2: Increasing ocean-related scientific cooperation, knowledge, capacity building, marine technology, and education to strengthen the science-policy interface for ocean health.



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Ocean Action Panel 9:

Promoting the role of sustainable food from the ocean for poverty eradication and food security

Under this topic, 116 contributions were received, and more detailed inputs are available [here](#).

Main Challenges

Stakeholders from various sectors highlighted multiple challenges in promoting sustainable food from the ocean to eradicate poverty and ensure food security. Key challenges highlighted included a **lack of investment in small-scale fisheries, an absence of partnerships along the seafood supply chain, and outdated fisheries agreements**, making it difficult to achieve equitable and sustainable fishing practices.

Many stakeholders raised concerns about **small-scale fishing communities**, especially those that are **not subsidized, facing competition and displacement** from large-scale industries. Small-scale fisheries struggle to access necessary resources, geographic markets and technology, which in turn limits their ability to contribute to food security and economic development.

Reduction fisheries is another major concern highlighted by respondents, as it is still being deployed and overexploited species are further being targeted in the pursuance of producing fish meal and fish oil.

Transformative Actions

One transformative action that was mentioned by stakeholders would be the **investment in and**

support for small-scale fisheries (SSF). Stakeholders highlighted several options for promoting SSF. **Greater protection for unsubsidized local fishing communities** needs to be ensured through investments and collaborative efforts by governments, financial institutions, the private sector, and civil society advocacy. Stakeholders highlighted the **FAO Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines** as an effective way to contribute to sustainable food production from the world's ocean.

Stakeholders have also emphasized the importance of **creating safe and permanent exclusion areas for small-scale fisheries** to protect them from large-scale industries such as large-scale fishing, mass tourism and gas extraction, and to provide greater access and local control over waters and their resources. This must be done in **cooperation between states, local fisheries and the private sector**.

"States must securely protect the tenure and access rights of small-scale fishers through creating secure and permanent exclusion areas that promote local control, customary stewardship, and enforcement to keep industrial fisheries out. Small-scale fishers are major contributors to food security and poverty eradication in coastal regions." (WWF)

Moreover, the **implementation of policies that prioritize the sustainable management of small-scale fisheries** to enhance food security and poverty eradication is important to stakeholders. According to stakeholders, it is the task of governments to ensure that small-scale fisheries have access to resources, geographical markets, and technology.

Several stakeholders called for the promotion of the **Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI)**. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of this initiative in fostering **partnerships between major seafood retailers, processors and fishing communities to create and enforce global standards for sustainable seafood sourcing**, while improving traceability and supporting small-scale fisheries through capacity building and market access programmes.

“This initiative (GSSI) would promote sustainable fisheries management, enhance food security programs, support economic empowerment for small-scale fishers, and raise awareness about the nutritional benefits of seafood. By investing in research and innovation and implementing robust monitoring systems, this approach would effectively address food security and poverty issues, making it a crucial focus for the 2025 UN Ocean Conference.” (University of Cape Coast)

Many stakeholders urged the establishment of **sustainable aquaculture hubs and practices** as a key transformative action developed in partnership with governments, international organizations and local fishing communities, to focus on environmentally friendly farming practices. Stakeholders highlighted practices such as an **Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA)** and **Community-Based Fish Farming**. IMTA mimics natural ecosystems to improve productivity and reduce environmental impact by replacing mono-species aquaculture with multi-trophic seafood farms. Such hubs could provide a global framework for sustainable and equitable management of marine resources.

“Governments, international organizations, and the private sector should collaborate to promote and fund innovative, eco-friendly aquaculture technologies. By investing in sustainable practices, such as integrated multi-trophic aquaculture and community-based fish farming, this action can ensure increased food production, economic opportunities for coastal communities, and environmental conservation.” (Association Tizzigzoute pour l'environnement et développement)

The promotion of the **blue economy and blue foods** was highlighted by stakeholders as a needed transformative action.



Partnership Spotlight

The “Fish Forever” initiative illustrates effective new approaches to promoting sustainable food from the ocean for poverty eradication and food security. Led by Rare in partnership with the Coral Triangle Initiative, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and local stakeholders, Fish Forever focuses on empowering coastal communities through community-based marine management and co-management systems. The initiative collaborates with local communities, governments, and NGOs to build capacity, advocate for supportive policies, and share best practices, making it a valuable model for accelerating the implementation of SDG 14. (Submitted by the University of Cape Coast)

Blue foods need to be integrated into key food system policies and national strategies to promote sustainable ocean use and conservation of the oceans, balancing food production with ecosystem health and aligning with broader marine conservation objectives. **Coordinated efforts across governments, ministries, fisheries, environmental agencies, and financial institutions are needed to align policies, investments, and programmes** to ensure that sustainable blue foods are prioritized.

“A crucial transformative action is the integration of blue foods into the core of food system decision-making, necessitating coordinated efforts across multiple government ministries. Establishing an inter-ministerial task force, with representatives from agriculture, fisheries, health, environment, and finance ministries, would be essential to this effort. This task force would work to harmonize policies, investments, and programs, ensuring that sustainable blue foods are prioritized in national strategies for food security, poverty reduction, and climate resilience.” (Aquatic Blue Food Coalition)

Another transformative action identified by stakeholders is the need to **reform international fisheries agreements**. Several stakeholders highlighted the unequal distribution of power between fishing countries and fishing areas. Stronger agreements should ensure that an adequate share of the catch is reserved for local consumption and that small-scale fishermen have preferential access to marine resources.

“The countries that need these fishing resources need to ensure that international fishing agreements prioritize sustainable fishing practices, fair data principles and the rights of local communities. These agreements should ensure that an adequate portion of the catch is reserved for local consumption and that small-scale fishers have preferential access to marine resources. Additionally, these agreements should include data sharing and capacity-building to enable local fishers to manage their own fisheries and to adopt sustainable practices and improve their economic resilience.” (European Marine Board Secretariat)

Stakeholders also stressed the **need for fisheries agreements** to be **based on the most recent assessments** of current target stocks of marine wildlife, no more than 10 years old. **Transparency and public access to private fisheries agreements must be promoted at the international level** to ensure that agreements between states and shipowners are publicly available. Finally, stakeholders have highlighted the need for **mariculture**, in particular seaweed farming, as a transformative measure to ensure food security while being a promising tool for carbon neutrality, improving coastal water quality, and strengthening the blue economy.

“Without thoughtful safeguards and development, there is a substantial risk that rapid growth of this industry could cause damage to marine ecosystems while excluding indigenous and small-scale farmers. Therefore, governments should commit to ensuring that indigenous and coastal communities have equitable access to mariculture opportunities that benefit both people and nature, including by promoting sustainable, inclusive, and well-monitored seaweed farming practices and industries.” (Pew Charitable Trusts)



Credits: Magda Ehlers from Pew



Figure 15: Keywords associated with Ocean Action Panel 9: “Promoting the role of sustainable food from the ocean for poverty eradication and food security” according to stakeholders.
Source: UN DESA



Credits: World Oceans Day/Romeo Bodolai

Partnership Spotlight

In 1999, the Monterey Bay Aquarium launched the Seafood Watch Program, with the aim to promote sustainable seafood choices through consumer education and strategic partnerships with fisheries, retailers, and restaurants. This initiative involves creating accessible sustainable seafood guides, collaborating with businesses to adopt responsible sourcing policies, and engaging local fishing communities in sustainable practices. By offering workshops, sharing data, and advocating for sustainable policies, the Seafood Watch Program contributes to sustainable development goals related to ocean conservation, poverty eradication, and food security. (Submitted by World Muslim Congress; Human Rights and Forest Brain Africa)