

United Nations Ocean Conference  
Ocean Action Panel 9  
Promoting the role of sustainable food from the ocean for poverty  
eradication and food security

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1. Many thanks to our distinguished co-chairs from Tanzania and South Korea for guiding this timely and important conversation on how sustainable ocean food can play a key role in ending poverty and ensuring food and nutrition security.
2. Good morning colleagues from governments, the private sector, civil society organizations, international organizations, and academia. It's great to be with you today.
3. I'm grateful to join you at this Ocean Conference —not just to look back at what's been done, but to shape real solutions for the future of our ocean and the people who depend on it.
4. Today, over 735 million people are going hungry and nearly 700 million are living in extreme poverty. These aren't just statistics — they represent real people, families, and communities who deserve the chance to live with dignity and opportunity.
5. Our oceans are under pressure but they also hold tremendous opportunities as engines of sustainable food security and poverty eradication.
6. According to the FAO's statistics global fish production reached 189 million tonnes in 2023, providing each one of us with 21 kg of aquatic animal protein every year.
7. In 2022, for the first time, aquaculture produced more aquatic animals than capture fisheries. Aquaculture, the fastest growing food production system in the world, is largely responsible for the doubling in per capita consumption of aquatic foods since the 1960s, supporting not just food security but nutrition security.
8. Aquatic foods are packed with essential micronutrients —vitamins, minerals, and highly bioavailable long-chain omega-3 fatty acids. These are critical for a healthy diet and play a key role in brain development and heart health. Simply put, aquatic foods are essential in the fight against nutrient deficiencies and for promoting global nutritional security.
9. Aquatic foods are truly brain food. It's one of the few significant natural sources of both long-chain omega-3s and iodine — two nutrients that are critical for brain development and cognitive function.

10. Ocean foods also provide other crucial nutrients like iron, zinc, and vitamins A, D and even B12, which support brain development, boost immunity, and promote good health — from early childhood all the way into old age.
11. However, aquatic foods are still often forgotten in national food security plans and policies even though global demand for them is set to grow by at least 15% by 2030, thanks to population growth and rising incomes—especially in the Global South.
12. Aquatic food systems aren't just about nutrition — they're also about jobs and livelihoods. It is estimated that 600 million people depend on fisheries and aquaculture for their livelihoods.
13. Of these, 500 million are employed by small-scale fisheries, especially in developing regions. According to the seminal FAO Illuminating Hidden Harvest report, SSF produce around 40% of the global fish catch. They are only small in name since most of their production directly contributes to local food security and nutrition.
14. Aquatic animal products are also one of the most traded food commodities in the world. Over 45% of fish and fish products are traded internationally. In 2022 alone, the global marine food trade was worth more than 195 billion US dollars, providing much needed income to many, including in developing countries.
15. Colleagues, it is our imperative to maximize the contribution of aquatic food systems to food security and nutrition, and livelihoods while keeping healthy productive ecosystems .
16. Fortunately we have solutions and scalable actions for this, and we can achieve them through FAO's Blue Transformation Roadmap. What we need now is clear: political will, smart governance, and focused investment.
17. Let me offer four practical actions for a Blue Transformation of our aquatic foods.
18. *ONE: Recognize the role of aquatic foods and include them in food security policies*
19. This means including them in national initiatives such as school and community feeding programmes. It also means advocating for aquatic foods among consumers, especially those in countries with low per capita consumptions. This includes specific interventions to ensure access and affordability for vulnerable consumers.
20. Globally we must share successes and lessons learned in efforts such as the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty and make sure that the role of aquatic foods is central to discussion in global policy processes.
21. *TWO: Make Better Use of Aquatic Foods:*
22. We must cut down on fish loss and waste and use more of the whole fish — including by-products. —and promote sustainable ocean foods like seaweed.
23. When fish are processed into fillets, 30 to 70% of the fish is removed. These parts are often the most nutrient dense and micronutrient rich. With simple technology they can be made into low cost, tasty, food. Good for the environment, good for food security and nutrition.
24. *THREE: Support Small-Scale Fishers and Post-Harvest Workers:*

25. Small-scale fishers — and especially women working in post-harvest roles — are essential to fighting hunger and poverty. We need policies and programs that lift these communities, improve their incomes, and recognize their crucial role in sustainable food systems.
26. *FOUR: Manage Fisheries Effectively and grow aquaculture sustainably*
27. Where fisheries are actively managed, fish populations are healthy and they provide a consistent and secure source of food and livelihoods, while ensuring healthy ecosystems.
28. Aquaculture is key to meeting future demand — but it must grow the right way. That means supporting, inclusive aquaculture that protects nature, provides jobs, and boosts food and nutrition security.
29. By investing in sustainable ocean food systems, we're not just protecting the planet — we're building food security, supporting jobs, and helping communities adapt to climate change.
30. As we look toward 2030, let's not only recommit to SDG 14, but also realize how critical it is for SDGs 1 and 2, among others - and make sure ocean-based food systems are not just sustainable — but central to our vision of a world without hunger or poverty.
31. Let's not miss this moment.
32. Here at UNOC 2025, let's commit to bold, joined-up policies — connecting land and sea, economy and ecology, hunger and hope.
33. Thank you.