

United Nations Ocean Conference 2025 (UNOC 2025)

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

13 June 2025 (Friday)

9:00am to 12:00pm

Nice, France

Shakuntala Thilsted, CGIAR

1. Panel chair, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Good morning. My name is Shakuntala Thilsted, representing the CGIAR, a network of global agriculture research institutes for a food-secure future, and the 2021 World Food Prize Laureate.
2. We are now less than six harvest seasons away from 2030, and yet, far from achieving the targets in SDG 2: Zero Hunger, and SDG 14: Life Below Water. This is further exacerbated by multiple disruptions such as climate change, conflicts and economic pressures, reversing significant progress that we have made in the past.
3. As we gather here today, it is opportune that we further emphasize the synergies between two domains: food and nutrition security, and the ocean we depend on. As we can see in the latest UNOC 3 Zero Draft document, the international commitments send a strong message on safeguarding the ocean and its biodiversity yet still wanting in recognising the ocean's role in nourishing people and planet, especially those in the low- and middle-income countries.
4. Last year, in FAO's State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture report, it was reported that the production volume of aquatic animals from aquaculture systems have surpassed capture fisheries, and this trend is expected to rise to meet the global demand for aquatic foods. Innovative technologies and approaches such as fish stock monitoring systems, selective breeding, climate-smart technologies and regenerative and integrated aquaculture systems are ready to elevate the aquaculture industry to nourish people and nations.
5. The report also highlighted the impactful growth of algae, (of seaweed, microalgae and cyanobacteria); with global production surging to 37.8 million tonnes in 2022, more than 300 percent increase as compared to the global production in 2000. The seaweed industry is rapidly expanding across new areas, including South Asia and Africa, and growing as an important source of livelihood and food and nutrition security.
6. As we recognize the value of the ocean and aquatic food systems, more can be done. The CGIAR, with its network of national and regional partners across six regions, are well-placed to advance the reach of science-based approaches through three impactful pathways: bringing innovations to scale, transformative policy options, and sharing capacity.
7. Sustainable ocean governance and aquatic food systems are embedded across the new CGIAR research portfolio, launched in April 2025. The Science Programs address aquatic food systems across different intersections: diets and nutrition, multifunctional landscapes, island food systems, and climate change; bringing together holistic interventions that harness the transformative potential of aquatic food systems for shared prosperity.
8. However, all these efforts can only be significant with purposeful intent: with the right investments for research and capacity sharing, with the right political will, and the right science to guide the transformation. We already have evidence that this can be done,

such as in the Illuminating Hidden Harvests study and the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations 2023, emphasizing the value of diverse aquatic foods for food and nutrition security. Now, we need the commitment, from everyone in the room, as well as our respective countries, to amplify the message.

9. We have taken the first step here, by having a dedicated panel discussing aquatic foods for livelihoods and food and nutrition security in an oceans dialogue. We must further this dialogue beyond this gathering, so that people and nations can sustainably harness and use aquatic foods from the ocean, as well as from freshwater bodies, as we collectively progress towards food and nutrition security for all by 2030 and beyond.
10. Thank you.