

I write this as I sit mesmerized by ancient ruins on top of the hills overlooking the Colosseum in Rome. I think of all of the accomplishments brought about by this ancient civilization and reflect on how much humanity has changed and progressed over time. In particular, I consider how humans have depended on fisheries resources since the onset of early civilization and how aquaculture has played an increasingly important role in providing food security and nutrition to humans.



I am representing WAS at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations' 32nd Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) meeting in Rome and attending the presentation of SOFIA 2016. COFI is the United Nations intergovernmental forum where major international fisheries and aquaculture issues are examined and discussed. SOFIA is the State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture published every two years by FAO, which includes detailed statistics regarding fisheries production throughout the world and is considered a well-informed and balanced reference. Based on the information discussed and exchanged during the meeting, I am struck by the fact that between 2013-2015, for the first time in history at the global level, farmed fish and shellfish were consumed in greater quantity than wild-caught fisheries. If we include aquatic plants, aquaculture now produces about 52 percent of the total worldwide fisheries production, with an estimated 101.1 million t produced in 2014. This is a major milestone for aquaculture and its implications should not be taken lightly.

It is important to acknowledge that 58.1 percent of fish stocks are fully fished and 31.4 percent are overfished, leaving only 10.5 percent under-fished. It is well documented that the world fisheries

catch has not increased over the last 30 years and that it is unlikely to increase in the future. Nevertheless, in 2014 the world per capita fish consumption reached a new record high of 20 kg. This has been achieved mainly by increasing fish production through aquaculture.

Thus, meeting the present and projected demand for human fish consumption depends on aquaculture and the research and development on which it depends, and we must meet this challenge based on a global agenda for sustainable aquaculture. Thanks to the diversity of aquaculture practices, the multiple species that can now be cultured at small and large scales and the recent and dynamic growth in its production, aquaculture has been able to supply the world-wide demand for fisheries products for human consumption despite population growth. However, this will be difficult to sustain if we consider that the expected global population will be close to 10 billion by 2050.

Having reviewed the latest trends and outlook with respect to the world fisheries production during the 32nd COFI meeting in Rome, it is clear to me that we are now entering a new era with an outlook that indicates that aquaculture will be the main force behind growth in the fisheries production sector. This is a tremendous responsibility and WAS must assist farmers throughout the world by developing and helping implement strategies that ensure sustainability and by providing the best science-based information and technology. WAS must help balance the use of our fisheries resources in an environmental, social and economically responsible manner. Your active participation and involvement in our Society's meetings, Board of Directors and publications throughout the world can help achieve this goal. Please get involved! — *Juan Pablo Lazo, President*

THE STATE OF WORLD FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

The FAO has recently released the latest SOFIA report (www.fao.org/3/a-i5555e.pdf). Aquaculture now provides more than half of all fish for human consumption. Production of aquatic animals in 2014 was 73.8 million t, with a value of more than US\$160 billion. China accounts for 60 percent of global fish production from aquaculture. Other top producers are India, Indonesia, Viet Nam and Bangladesh. About 18

million people are engaged in fish farming, 96 percent from Asia. The top seafood exporters are China, Norway and Viet Nam. Global per capita consumption of fish and other seafood is about 20 kg, with about half provided by aquaculture. Fish accounts for 17 percent of the global intake of animal protein. Fish provides 3.1 billion people with about 20 percent of their average per capita intake of animal protein.

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