

Responsible Fisheries through Transparency and Participation

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THE NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY AND PARTICIPATION

There is a widely shared understanding of the need to achieve sustainable and responsibly managed marine fisheries. But coastal states and fishing nations face a complex challenge: ensuring that fishing and fish trade contribute to income, employment, food and nutrition for millions of people, while also conserving marine biodiversity for future generations.

While there are many aspects to achieve sustainable fisheries, the public availability of credible information is essential.

The need for transparency and participation is central to major fisheries reform efforts, including: the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (FAO; 2015); the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (FAO; 2012); and the Guidelines for the Development of National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (UNEP; 2010).

However, even with a greater interest in the fisheries sector, basic information still often remains out of the public domain. Such information includes the status of fish stocks and marine ecosystems, conditions attached to fishing authorisations, the contracts of fishing access agreements signed between fishing nations and coastal states or the amount of fish taken from the ocean. But without such information, the quality and credibility of decision-making can be undermined, while the prospect of effective oversight and accountability diminishes.

ABOUT THE FISHERIES TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) is a global multi-stakeholder initiative. Its purpose is to increase transparency and participation in fisheries governance for the benefit of a more sustainable management of marine fisheries.

- ➔ **Transparency:** At the heart of the initiative is the FiTI Standard, an agreement on what information on fisheries should be published by public authorities. It comprises 12 transparency requirements and is applicable to all countries. The FiTI Standard provides governments, the fishing industry (both large-scale and small-scale), and civil society with a comprehensive and credible way to achieve and maintain high levels of transparency on the management of the marine fisheries sector and the activities of fishers and fishing companies.
- ➔ **Participation:** The FiTI is based on the principle of multi-stakeholder participation. The FiTI is implemented in countries through National Multi-Stakeholder Groups, consisting of representatives from government, business and organised civil society. These groups work collectively to assess whether information in the public domain is perceived as accessible and complete and make recommendations on how to improve information published by national authorities.

Cornerstones of this initiative are the **FiTI Principles**, which reflect the beliefs and aims of all FiTI Stakeholders.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- The FiTI is **not owned or operated by one organisation nor does it represent the work of a single interest group**. Instead, the diversity of different stakeholders is a central feature of how the FiTI works, for national implementations as well as its international governance.
- The FiTI is a **global initiative**. The initiative does not focus on a single country or a region. It seeks to establish a global level playing field among fisheries countries. The more countries participate, the more powerful this initiative will get!
- The **implementation of the FiTI is country-centered**. The intention to join the FiTI must come from a country's government. For this, a country's government must demonstrate active support for the implementation of the FiTI. This includes the commitment to an enabling environment, the establishment of a National Multi-Stakeholder Group and the publication of accessible and complete information.
- The FiTI is a **voluntary initiative with mandatory requirements**. The FiTI is voluntary; however, once a country has decided to participate, mandatory requirements must be followed.
- The FiTI **yields benefits for all stakeholders**. The FiTI supports informed public debates on fisheries policies and meaningful participation in fisheries decision-making. The FiTI also helps tackling other issues which impact all actors in the fisheries sector, including contributing to food security and nutrition, social stability, underpinning the sustainability of marine ecosystems, supporting the fight against corruption as well as Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing.

ABOUT THE FITI STANDARD

The global FiTI Standard sets out the **requirements that countries must follow to be part of the FiTI**.

The FiTI Standard is the outcome of **extensive discussions**, spanning nearly two years, by members of the FiTI International Advisory Group, including representatives from governments, large-scale and small-scale fishing sector organisations, multinational and regional fisheries organisations and civil society groups working on fisheries and marine conservation.

Under the FiTI Standard, countries must produce regular **FiTI Reports** to demonstrate whether the 12 transparency requirements have been fulfilled, i.e. if the information published by national authorities is accessible and complete, and represents the best available information.

The FiTI Standard has been designed to ensure that **any country can implement it**. The FiTI does not expect all countries to have complete data for every transparency requirement from the beginning. Instead, public authorities must disclose the information they have, and where important gaps exist, they must demonstrate **progressive improvements** over time. As such, engaging with the FiTI is not intended to be a burdensome and costly research activity.

The FiTI Standard recognises that **enhancing transparency on the fisheries sector must be achieved for all sectors**, including both large-scale and small-scale fisheries, although the level of detail expected on each cannot be the same.

For more information, please visit our website or contact us at info@fisheriestransparency.org.