

**Statement supporting better governance for a sustainable aquaculture development in the
Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) Region**

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With over 3.5 million tons harvested during 2019, the LAC region has an enormous potential for further aquaculture development, trending towards 4.5 to 4.6 million tons by 2030, but certainly, not limited to that amount. Even if these results are promising, this region is still far from achieving its potentialities, nor is it close to do it in a sustainable manner, particularly when sustainability applies to multiple dimensions such as economic, social and environmental ones.

Having been involved in the preparation of the FAO review for aquaculture in this region for 2010, 2015 and 2020 I am clearly aware that we can go much further and quicker in helping alleviate hunger, creating new and well-paid employment opportunities, improving social and economic conditions in rural areas and transforming the quality of life of many underprivileged populations and regions in different countries. However, we are currently constrained by many limitations, among which I would like to emphasize poor governance, the lack of long-term views, poor use of limited human and financial resources, improvisation and a deficiency in good and useful science and technology leading towards innovation and better abilities to compete in domestic and international markets.

After Asia, the LAC region is the second largest producer in world aquaculture, but our region cannot progress as desired and possible, among other things, because of poor management and a lack of long-term goals and views.!!

Here, then, we welcome the **Shanghai Declaration**, as it highlights many dimensions in which aquaculture should and can improve, suggesting at least ten strategic priorities, among which governance is included and highlighted. Unfortunately, all statements included do not fully recognize the need for strong leadership to be exercised by Governments and private sector, to facilitate and even guide the future development processes. Without guidance and leadership, good governance and well devised long-term plans and policies, chances are that this region's aquaculture might continue losing part of its energies in coming years, as it has happened during the last three decades ending in 2018, where even if harvests have progressed handsomely, they have experienced diminishing growth rates along the years. Here, production growth rates for aquaculture volumes have continuously diminished from a compound average annual rate of 10.1% between 1986/88-1996/98 to 6.2% in 1996/98-2006/08 and to 4.7% in 2006/08-2016/18.

Even if other factors are also behind this diminution in vitality of our aquaculture industry, during this decade governance is and will be among the most relevant aspects deserving further consideration, as stated in the **Shanghai Declaration** and as needed to cooperate more substantially towards the achievement of several among the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals to 2030. Here, asymmetric access opportunities for small and large-scale producers; high levels of informality in small-scale

aquaculture; gender inequalities; poor cooperation among countries; lack of meaningful and sustainable technical and organizational support schemes to help rural producers; relatively high prices of end products as compared with birds and pork; poorly trained governmental personnel; a clear dedication to regulate and solve day-to-day problems rather than promoting long term and sustainable objectives and strategies; continuous changes in policy directions, etc. seriously affect local production prospects and actual results, possibly beyond environmental, biological or technical matters, and are responsible for less-than-desirable aquaculture growth patterns, a fact that deserves full attention, along the lines, proposals and strategic views highlighted by the **Shanghai Declaration**.

I am convinced that during this decade we can go much further, more rapidly, equitably and sustainably, and advance more decisively towards the **2030 Sustainable Development Goals** if only our local Governments and industries support the **Declaration** with energy and try 'to make things happen', and our industry and local communities can agree on how to live together and realize that fish farming might contribute much more to regional development, nutrition and human well-being in the years to come.

LAC Aquaculture deserves a better future. Our authorities and industry leaders need to exercise their best capacities to enable a more dynamic and sustainable industry, with all its advantages.