The **International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations** (**IUF**) is a [global union federation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_union_federation) of [trade unions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_union) with members in a variety of industries, many of which relate to food processing. Established in 1920, IUF is recognized by ILO, FAO and other UN agencies, as well as by many global food companies. In 2023 IUF established the Seafood Workers Division for the organized workers in fish/seafood farming, processing and distribution.

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Questions:

• What do you see as the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the fish sector and fish workers? What local, sub-national, and national policies during the pandemic were beneficial? What did fish workers do themselves to help each other during these difficult years?

---- The COVID-19 led most governments to recognize fish workers as “essential”, but this recognition did not result in adequate adjustment of the pay level.

---- At the same time, when the disruption of the fish supply led to the temporary factory closures, it became obvious that most fish workers had no social security coverage and no cash and food reserves to feed their own families during the quarantine or work stoppages.

• What do you see as the main threats to fish workers today?

--- Climate crisis, ocean pollution, corporate crime and endemic violations of human rights.

• What does the fish supply chain look like today to you? Which companies dominate the sector in your country?

--- The concentration of capital and production in the hands of multinational companies is a rapid ongoing process which leads to the increase of power of several companies, which dominate the essential fish supply chains, such as salmon, tuna, and shrimps. (The list of 100 is attached). Citra Mina (tuna Philippines), BMI (shrimps Indonesia), and Philipps Seafood (crab USA) are among the top seafood companies with a record of workers' rights violations).

• What are your main concerns regarding working conditions in the fish supply chain? Which parts of the supply chain do you think are the most dangerous or problematic?

--- The poor working conditions affect every element of the fish and seafood supply chain. That includes a dangerous, unsafe and unhealthy working environment and, a low level of pay (in particular piece-rate payment system), gender-based discrimination and violence, slavery and forced child labour.

• How do you think the issues of modern slavery, exploitation, human trafficking and child labour could be addressed through international and national policies?

--- The most effective mechanism is the promotion of ratifications and implementation of the Core ILO conventions, related to forced labour, child labour, discrimination, health and safety and Freedom of Association. The ratifying countries are obliged to develop national plans of action. These plans can be supported by international organisations. They should include community development, social protection, enabling education for all, state labour inspectorate and enforcement institutions.

--- Another effective mechanism to impact on the sector is developing a due diligence system for the companies. This system should be linked with the regulation of market access.

• What is your opinion on aquaculture? Can it be a good sector for both the environment and people?

--- Aquaculture is an important source of food for the growing population and essential for enabling food security for all. It also provides a significant number of jobs and employment opportunities. However, as with any other food industry (meat, poultry, drinks, etc) it must be properly regulated to eliminate the risks of diseases and negative impacts on the nature and environment.

--- The global vision of Decent agri-food concept, recently formulated by the ILO within the Guidelines on the promotion of decent work in the agri-food sector (<https://www.ilo.org/sector/Resources/codes-of-practice-and-guidelines/WCMS_873895/lang--en/index.htm>), which is applicable to aquaculture in according with the ILO 2021 decision (https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\_dialogue/---sector/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\_832490.pdf)

• What national laws in your country or international standards need to be implemented to better serve and protect fish workers' interests?

--- The most important instrument is the ILO Conventions on Freedom of Association Nos 87 and 98. Effective realization of these conventions enables workers to access other rights. These rights are universal and protected by the UNDHR, although due to the very special conditions of the sector are not extended to most fish and seafood workers. Special program

• Have you been able to adequately participate in national and international relevant discussions? If not, from which discussions have you been excluded?

--- As the global union federation IUF has an opportunity to participate in the forums and discussions, which set up the standards for the sector. However, at many international forums, the opportunity for trade unions to impact on the decision is limited by manipulations and other forms of reducing the volume of the voice of workers.

• What do you see as the major hurdles to implementing the fundamental ILO Conventions in seafood and fish production?

--- For the workers in industrial, big and medium size operations the main obstacle is the resistance of the employers to recognize the rights of workers for decent pay and collective representation, union-busting activities and repressions against workers activists. In several countries, which play a key role in the sector, the employers are supported by repressive governments.

--- For the workers in small-scale operations the main issue is their informal status, which allows the government to refuse their recognition as WORKERS, which means a denial of the labour standard, including social protection. As they are not recognized as workers, they have no access to the Ministry of Labour and to benefit from the norm of the Labour legislation.

• How relevant is the FAO Small-Scall Fisheries Guidelines for your work?

--- This document plays a very important role for the workers in small-scale operations but also in ensuring the sustainability of the resources since it protects the oceans, seas, lakes and rivers resources against overuse and overcapacity of the big industrial operations. The sustainability of these resources is a prerequisite for stable employment for waged workers and income generation for self-employed.

• What is your opinion on the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement?

--- This is the right move to link subsidies and the practices of operations. However, the document is very limited in the scope of the coverage and the impact of this agreement is still to be monitored to conclude whether it is advancing the seafood and fisheries sector in all nations, or only in some, and the possible positive and negative effects of it.

• How do you see the High Seas Treaty as potentially affecting human rights and workers’ rights?

--- It is a good opportunity to restore the Rule of Law in a bigger part of the world ocean and it has to be appreciated. But since it was only adopted recently, a lot will depend on the practical implementations and critical evaluation needs to be made in due course.

• Please add any other information, or position, which is not covered by the above questions but might be relevant to the report on the right to food and fish workers. Don’t forget to include your name, union/organization, and contact information (phone and/or e-mail) with your answers.

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