COVID-19 – Global Market Trends of Fish and Fish Products

David Vivas Eugui
Legal Officer, Office of the Director, Division International Trade and Commodities
UNCTAD
What the news say about the impact of COVID-19 on fish trade?

Indian seafood companies struggling to export during COVID-19 lockdown

Seafish companies in India are doggedly continuing to export their products, despite various barriers brought about by the complete lockdown imposed across the country last month, The Hindu BusinessLine reported 1 April.

COVID-19: Maldives halts fish exports to Europe

Seafood may not find takers on Covid-19 scare

With several countries affected by the virus, export has turned sluggish.

Myanmar's aquaculture exports hit hard by COVID-19

Myanmar's aquaculture and fisheries sectors are suffering from the collapse in the export trade that has accompanied the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Argentina's fisheries industry estimates exports to drop 30% this year because of COVID-19

94% of Companies Aim to Gain Efficiency By Converging Backup and DR

As COVID-19 batters fishery, Indonesia's sharks get a respite
What latest trade statistics tell us about species? The case of Tuna

Source: FAO Globefish 2020
Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on international fish trade

**Demand side:**
- Falling consumer demand (closure of restaurants, hotels & retail business, specially of fresh produce)
- Changes in consumer demand (more local & processed fish consumption)
- Changes in means of purchase (more e-purchases and e-auctions)
- Potential increase or stricter application of sanitary measures on fish and seafood products (human & animal species health)

**Supply side:**
- Impossibility to fish in some countries due to social/economic confinement measures
- Missing profitable fishing seasons in some countries
- Disrupted trade routes (e.g. air transport has ceased in many routes) for fishers in many countries
- Lack of sanitary and social protection for fishers and processors
- Lack of capacity to process overstock of fresh fish
Coping with the challenges (1)

**Harvesting**
- Fish remains an essential food/animal protein that it can support post-pandemic recovery.
- Keep the fight against illegal fishing in all shores and rely as much as possible on electronic MCS systems complemented with targeted interventions at sea & port.
- If conditions allow, adjust fishing seasons, i.e. when below MSY & without disturbing reproduction periods, so fishers can compensate lack of activity (case by case).

**Processing**
- Introduce sanitary and social safety readiness and adaptation plans for most vulnerable workers in key blue economic sector such fisheries and seafood processing.
- Support fresh production shifts to seafood processing when feasible, as well as new product development and effective logistic support.
- Enhance digitalization & coordination: fish producers & suppliers with transport, warehousing & logistical services (to avoid food losses & waste).
Coping with the challenges (2)

Commercialization & distribution

- Apply the least possible trade-restrictive & at the same time effective sanitary measures
- Minimize unnecessary controls and burdensome procedures associated with trade in fish clearance
- Make effective use of online sales and auction platforms

Recovery

- Rescue packages need not only to be green but also BLUE (focus on sustainability vulnerable populations)
- Phase out unsustainable public expenditure including fish and fuel subsidies, shifting resources to stock management & responsible small-scale fishers support
- International cooperation must continue: UNCTAD-FAO-UNEP Plan of Action for SDG implementation
See UNCTAD resources on trade and COVID-19 at: