



FAO FISHERIES

A MISSION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE WORLD'S FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE



THE FISHERIES DEPARTMENT OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS



Fisheries, including aquaculture, are a fundamental source of food, livelihood, trade and recreation for people throughout the world.

Careful and responsible stewardship is required to conserve and protect the industry for present and future generations.

As the new millennium unfolds, the importance of fisheries to human well-being is all the more obvious.

Fish for food

Overall, fish provide more than 2.6 billion people with at least one fifth of their animal protein needs. In many parts of the developing world, fish are the most important source of animal protein.

Fish for livelihood

It is estimated that fisheries directly and indirectly support around 200 million people worldwide. The vast majority of those connected with marine and inland fisheries, fish farming and associated trading and service activities are small-scale operators. Many are very poor, with few other ways of supporting themselves.

Photo courtesy of ReefBase

In 2002, people around the world consumed an average 16 kilos of fish each – 21 percent greater than in 1992. Global fish supplies have remained stable since the early 1990s, with a decline in capture fisheries offset by the growth of aquaculture. Total world fisheries production for 2002 was some 133 million tonnes.

FAO/22376/M. Marzot



FAO/19612/G. Bizzarri



The Ecosystem

Impacts on fisheries are caused by pollution, habitat destruction and other forms of environmental degradation. Climate change – human induced or not – also alters aquatic ecosystems and the coastal fishing communities they support. These ecosystems and communities are extremely vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters – as tragically confirmed by the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean.

Impacts of fisheries on ecosystems include the direct consequences of overfishing, a result of many factors: demands from growing populations, unlawful fishing activities, excessive fleet capacity, and certain types of fisheries subsidies. These impacts are also linked to the use of habitat-damaging gear and practices within the industry.



Fish for trade

International exports in fisheries commodities reached a record of more than US\$58 billion in 2002 – a 45% increase in ten years.

In general, trade flows from less-developed to more-developed countries. In 2002, developing countries' share in total fishery exports was 49 percent by value and 55 percent by quantity. Developed countries accounted for about 82 percent of total fish product imports in 2002. By 2010, developed countries are expected to import more than 10 million tonnes of fish and fish products.

But Low-Income Food Deficit Countries – those whose populations are undernourished – struggle to supply lucrative developed-country markets and meet stringent access conditions, without compromising domestic food supplies. A challenge faced by all countries is how to trade profitably without further depleting fish stocks.



FAO/21977/G.Bizzarri

Fish as future

The state of world fishery resources and their ecosystems allow no room for complacency. **The global potential for marine capture fisheries has been reached.** About half the stocks are fully exploited (52%) and are producing catches close to their maximum sustainable limits. Approximately one quarter are overexploited (16%) or depleted (8%). In the mid 1970s, only an estimated 10 percent of stocks were in these combined states. The challenge to securing the future of the world's fish stocks lies in addressing problems arising from both inside and outside fisheries.

Meeting Responsible Fisheries Challenges

The challenges to achieving sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture are global and need to be addressed through coordinated action by a range of national, regional and international institutions and organizations. At the same time, solutions must be appropriate and adaptable to regional and local conditions. Solutions must also be participatory – involving the very people who can support and benefit from responsible practices.



FAO/23828 D.Minkoh



FAO/221128/A.Urcelayeta

The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries

Against a background of profound concern over the growing threats to the world's fisheries and their ecosystems, the **Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries** was unanimously adopted by FAO members on 31 October 1995.

The Code contains a broad set of principles and methods for developing and managing fisheries and aquaculture and using their products. A voluntary (legally non-binding) instrument, the Code is widely recognized as the global standard for setting out the aims of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture over the coming decades and as a basis for reviewing and revising national fisheries legislation.

International Plans of Action on Seabirds, Sharks, Fishing Capacity, and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing and the **FAO Strategy for Improving Information on Status and Trends in Capture Fisheries** have been developed as complementary instruments, within the framework of the Code, to further promote the aims of responsible fisheries.

The Code serves as the basic charter for the work of the FAO Fisheries Department, which is committed to fostering its full and effective implementation.

The Code of Conduct places strong emphasis on interrelated principles of food security, poverty alleviation, sustainable development, biodiversity, stakeholder participation and empowerment, education, safe, healthy and fair working and living conditions, transparency, institutional strengthening and international partnerships, and use of precautionary and ecosystem approaches. It thus harmonizes the quest for responsible fisheries with other global sustainable development initiatives, including the landmark **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development** (1992), the **Millennium Development Goals** (2002) and the **Plan of Implementation** negotiated at the **World Summit on Sustainable Development** (2002).



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The role of the FAO Fisheries Department

FAO Fisheries is a leader in international efforts to promote the transition to more responsible fisheries, through both its work to improve policy, legislative and institutional frameworks and its field activities. These are planned in line with the broad goals set out in the Overall FAO Strategic Framework (2000- 2015), the intermediate goals in the five-year Medium Term Plans and the more immediate goals of Biennial Plans and Annual Plans.

Activities are coordinated among the Department's **Fishery Policy and Planning Division**, **Fishery Resources Division** and **Fishery Industries Division**, as well as the **Fishery Information, Data and Statistics Unit**. The activities are implemented by Fisheries Department staff attached to FAO headquarters and regional and sub-regional offices around the world. They work through networks involving other FAO technical departments, regional fishery bodies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and programmes with fisheries-related interests.

The activities of the Fisheries Department

are overseen by the **Committee on Fisheries (COFI)**, a subsidiary body of the FAO Council that was established in 1965. Meeting every two years, COFI is the only global intergovernmental forum where major international fisheries and aquaculture problems and issues are examined and recommendations are addressed to governments, regional fishery bodies, fish workers, NGOs and the international community. COFI has also been used as a forum for the negotiation of global agreements and instruments, such as the Code of Conduct. Two COFI sub-committees, each dealing with specific issues on fish trade and aquaculture, meet during COFI's intersessional period.



FAO/21487/S. Garcia



FAO/21186/A. Proto

FAO Fisheries in the field

Special trust funds and other extra-budgetary resources also play a crucial role in the process of applying responsible fisheries principles and in establishing best practices learned from those experiences. In fact, the Fisheries Department relies heavily on extra-budgetary resources, mobilized for the most part through the field programme, to extend the scope and reach of its regular programme budget and to forge enduring partnerships and networks aimed at fostering responsible fisheries around the globe.

Donor support and involvement varies, ranging from contributions of finance and expertise, to donations in-kind, for a wide array of activities that can be project-specific, geographically-focused or thematic in nature. Donor commitments have been growing steadily. FAO Fisheries currently operates over 100 technical advisory and assistance projects focused on various responsible fisheries issues at country, regional or global level, some of which are described below.

During the last biennium, the Government of Japan continued its collaboration with FAO, providing funding for a cluster of global and

regional projects with a highlight on implementing the ecosystem approach to fisheries management. The Nansen Programme, sponsored thus far by the Government of Norway but open to multidonor participation, assists developing countries in fisheries research, management and institutional strengthening. It also accents the ecosystem approach and offers the potential for strong

partnership arrangements with various other international fisheries-related initiatives including the Large Marine Ecosystem projects financed through the Global Environmental Facility. Additional trust fund projects on responsible resources management operated by the Department include COPEMED, ADRIAMED, MEDSUDMED and MEDFISIS, which thus far receive support from Italy, Spain and the European Union.

Of particular note are the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme in West Africa, and the projects and activities implemented under the FAO Programme of Global Partnerships for Responsible Fisheries (FishCode).



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Emergencies and fisheries

Extra-budgetary projects include emergency interventions in situations such as armed conflict or natural catastrophes, where fishing communities can no longer meet basic survival needs or where there is a threat to lives and well-being. In emergencies, fisheries interventions may be critical to help restore production and/or as a source of immediate income and food. Following the December 2004 tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean region, which particularly devastated the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, FAO issued a flash appeal to mobilize funds to support immediate relief efforts and to facilitate needs assessments, strategic planning and projects aimed at recovery and reconstruction. The Fisheries Department will play a key role in the important longer-term task of helping the peoples of the Indian Ocean secure a better and more sustainable future than the one they have lost.

Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme

The Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP) is a partnership between the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, FAO and 25 West African countries. It aims at reducing poverty in coastal and inland communities, where small-scale fisheries play a key role in everyday life. The Programme, launched in 1999 and continuing to 2006, uses the sustainable livelihoods approach in conjunction with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. The SFLP works by mobilizing active community participation in identifying and solving specific fisheries-related issues.

SFLP encourages government departments and agencies representing fisheries and other sectors to work together to resolve employment problems and reduce poverty in fisheries-dependent

communities. It is also engaged in improving national poverty reduction strategies within partner countries. Twelve countries within the West African region are presently participating in three pilot projects, addressing issues of inland fisheries co-management, participatory coastal fisheries management and post-harvest fisheries livelihoods.

Partnerships with other donors and international organizations are strongly promoted and implemented. The Programme is proving to be a highly effective way of contributing towards the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, gender equality and empowerment of women, fighting HIV/AIDS and improving access to health programmes, and environmental sustainability.



Programme of Global Partnerships for Responsible Fisheries (FishCode)

When members adopted the Code of Conduct in 1995, they asked FAO to respond to the special needs of developing countries for its implementation. FishCode was thus established by the FAO Fisheries Department as a multidonor umbrella programme to promote responsible fisheries. It is now the principal way the Department combines regular and donor partner trust fund resources to support practical application of the Code and related instruments. Partner contributions are encouraged from both public and private agencies.

FishCode Programme activities at regional, national and global levels include technical assistance and scientific advice, human capacity building, workshops and specialized survey and study missions. Projects are formulated on the basis of priority needs identified in consultation with FAO members. They further take into account outcomes of COFI meetings, the UN Millennium Development Declaration, the 2001 Declaration of the Reykjavik Conference on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem, and the fisheries-related themes and goals of the Plan of Implementation adopted at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

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