

Fisheries: Increasing the contribution of small-scale fisherfolk

Since the start of the Somali civil war and the subsequent collapse of the state in 1991, the country's 3,330 km (2,000 miles) of coastline- the longest in Africa- remains the country's most untapped resource.

Domestic fresh fish consumption is limited to coastal areas because of poor infrastructure, which has restricted access to fish for a large portion of the population. This is also coupled with the lack of familiarity with fish, seasonality of supply and a tradition of meat-eating among the Somali communities. While traditional tastes and lack of consumer education programs to promote fish consumption have confined the market to certain coastal areas, the shortage of meat experienced particularly during the recurring droughts has diverted some demand towards fish, especially among low income groups like internally displaced people (IDP).

Somalia's fisheries sector lacks key equipment such as jetties and fishing boats. Lack of research and training opportunities for fishing communities and the absence of a regulatory framework for the industry and serious limitations in the cold chain compound the problem further.

Sustainability in Fisheries

FAO's mission is to facilitate and secure the long-term sustainable development and utilization of the Somalia's fisheries and aquaculture. FAO is acutely aware of the fundamental social and economic role played by these two sectors in:

1. Achieving global and national sustainable food security.
2. Providing self and paid employment for fishing and aquaculture related communities as a means of alleviating poverty in these fishing communities and stemming rural/urban drift.
3. Contributing to national and international trade.
4. Generating national income.

Underpinning these basic social and economic objectives is the requirement for fisheries and aquaculture to be responsibly managed. This implies preventing overfishing, promoting sustainable aquaculture, co-ordination and delivery of effective research and extension services and the empowerment of people, especially women tasks for which many FAO Members are not fully prepared.

FAO's fisheries sector therefore provides technical assistance in all aspects of fisheries and aquaculture management and development to the Ministry of Fisheries and the Fishermen's Organisations. Activities include promoting fish handling and processing techniques, proper use of ice, construction and maintenance of insulated fish boxes and fish silage production.

Activities also include training in usage, design and implementation of small-scale fisheries training schemes to foster income generating activities, pilot consumer education schemes, improved management cold chain. All these policies and strategies aim at sustainable and responsible development of fisheries and aquaculture in inland and marine waters of Somalia.

FAO also plans to support a small-scale fishing vessel licensing system, safety-at-sea schemes in the target areas as well as provision of technical support for the review of the current fisheries legislation.