Overview
There is very little information collected on the total annual fish harvest nor are there sufficient data on fish stocks and their status. Conservative estimates put the country’s sustainable annual marine fisheries production in the range of 200,000 metric tons, with the major marine resources being small and large pelagic, demersal fish, sharks and rays, cephalopods, as well as shallow-water and deep-sea lobsters and shrimps. Although Somalia’s territorial waters, along a 3,300 km long coastline, attract large numbers of foreign fishing vessels little benefit accrues to the local economy as most vessels are not registered and not taxed and their catch is not processed or sold in Somalia.

Key facts

Coastline
Somalia has over 3300km of coastline the longest in continental Africa.

Consumption
Somalia’s fish consumption per capita is 3.3kg one of the lowest compared to the rest of Africa continent (9.1 kg per capita).

Exports
Before 1991, Somalia’s annual fish exports were valued at approx. US$ 15million.

Problems facing Somali fisheries

- **Lack of institutional capacity** to collect data and information required for fisheries policy formulation, preparation of management plans and the definition of management actions to implement the policy and plans, including monitoring, control and surveillance of fisheries;
- **Illegal fishing**, both within the Exclusive Economic Zone and the high seas. The Somali coast is considered as one of the world’s last areas where fishing activities are mostly unreported and unregulated.
- **Limited local capacity** to target offshore resources
- **Lack of basic fish landing and first-sale marketing infrastructure**, fishery jetties as well as lack of basic public services as well as institutional capacity to foster the growth of a modern small-scale fisheries sector capable of producing and regularly supplying good quality fish to foreign and local markets;
- **Significant post- harvest fish losses**, as well as market-oriented demand factors (only selected high-value species are purchased by the main seafood traders in most of the fishing communities).
- **Lack of knowledge about fish trade opportunities and prices** in alternative markets;
**FAO’s fisheries strategy**

Coastal fishing is the source of income for only 400,000 Somalis but has the potential of becoming a significant source of foreign exchange earnings and new employment. Plagued by capacity limitations, stock depletion and the loss of revenue through illegal fishing, the sector is not contributing its full potential to the Somali economy.

Similarly, the potential for aquaculture is not being exploited but if developed, it could become an important source of rural jobs and incomes and result in better nutrition. An assessment of Somalia’s fishing resources and potential is an urgent prerequisite to establish the basis for fisheries planning and management. Improving the lives of fisher folk by increasing incomes, opening up new employment opportunities and gaining state revenue from fishery resources are the expected payoffs of supporting actions in the fisheries sector.

The Plan of Action includes proposals to improve the incomes of fisher folk by increasing post catch fish quality and improve fish markets and cold chain. It also proposes actions to start the process of improving fishing resource management and monitoring including laws and regulations and capacity building within the sector.

- Manage and regulate fisheries for sustainability.
- Develop fisheries extension services
- Build capacity to monitor fishing activities and to enforce fishing laws and regulations.
- Increase awareness and build support among fishermen for sustainable fishing.
- Increase the quality and value of fish products for local and export markets.
- Develop aquaculture

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