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REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES (RECOFI)

Seventh Session

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Social and economic aspects of fisheries in the RECOFI region

Executive Summary

This paper summarizes the discussion and outcomes of the RECOFI workshop on the social and economic aspects of fisheries in the RECOFI region and the resulting discussion on this topic at the sixth meeting of the Working Group on Fisheries Management (WGFM). This paper aims to trigger discussion on the progress made in terms of the RECOFI workplan and the task group established at this workshop.

The Commission is invited to:

- note the conclusions and recommendations of the workshop and the sixth meeting of the WGFM on this topic, as well as the role of the Task Group in developing a regional workplan;
- provide guidance on future work and implementation of recommendations from this workshop;
- agree on a way forward for the continued work on the socio-economic aspects of fisheries, including data collection and integration into fisheries management.

INTRODUCTION

1. The RECOFI Workshop on the Social and Economic Aspects of Fisheries in the RECOFI region was held in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain from 22 to 24 April 2012, following the agreement at the sixth session of the Regional Commission for Fisheries, held in Rome from 10 to 12 May 2011. The meeting was convened by the RECOFI Secretary. The meeting was attended by 18 delegates from four Member countries and two observers, as well as the RECOFI Secretariat.

2. The objectives of the workshop included the following:

- understand the situation of the national and regional marine fisheries in the RECOFI region;
- review the availability of data on socio-economic statistics;
- analyse work and other relevant research activities in Member countries; and
- hold a detailed discussion of socio-economic aspects of RECOFI fisheries.

3. Issues that were highlighted included: the need for an improved understanding on the status of socio-economic aspects of the fisheries, affecting fisheries sustainability and fishermen livelihoods; the identification suitable common socio-economic variables and indicators to be used around the region; an outline an integrated statistics and knowledge database for the purpose of socio-economic assessment, and the establishment of network of socio-economists.

WORKSHOP ON THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF FISHERIES IN THE RECOFI REGION

4. The workshop discussed the social and economic aspects of fisheries in RECOFI, reviewed the availability of data on the socio-economic statistics, analysis work and other relevant research activities in member countries and formulated a RECOFI action plan for regional cooperation in assessment of socio-economic aspects through identifying regional socio-economic indicators to be used at both national and regional levels.

5. The integration of the human dimension, including the social and economic aspects, is essential in the context of the ecosystem approach of fisheries management. For this purpose, it was recognized that key issues in social and economic aspects in the management of fisheries and of the people fishing in the RECOFI region must be identified together with necessary information indicators to monitor their status.

6. Country reports were presented and reviewed in order to gain a better understanding of the existing information of individual member countries and the types of information available.

7. It was noted that past studies in obtaining information on socio-economics of fisheries faced a number of challenges; namely accuracy of data and methodology. The approach was emphasized as a key element and working with fishermen in a manner that reflects the importance of their knowledge and experience, was noted for obtaining accurate data. Some participants further supported this point and noted that the reality of the background and education level must be taken into account when approaching this kind of work. The need to support fishermen in the process was highlighted, noting that by ensuring a positive relationship between government and fishermen, the possibility for obtaining good socio-economic information would be enhanced. A number of participants noted activities their countries currently do to support fishers.

8. A set of indicators was presented to the workshop in the categories of macro-economic, micro-economic and social aspects of fisheries, which would be used to guide member countries in enhancing its understandings on the general status of its social and economic condition and in identifying the area of prioritization to plan for types of social and economic issues they need to gather in the future.

9. Discussion highlights were presented, and examples of social and economic aspects to consider for the RECOFI region focusing on macro-economic, micro-economic and social aspects:

- Macro-economic
 - Contribution of fisheries to national economy
 - Domestic consumption of fish
 - Fish imports and exports
- Micro-economic
 - Vessel revenue, profit and cost (fixed and variable)
 - Landing weight and value
 - Vessel characteristics: Engine power, Gross tonnage, vessel value, gears used
 - Working hours/days/year/vessel
 - Market prices for different species
- Social aspects
 - Employment: number of crew on vessel, nationality, primary and secondary sector (and who: women, men, nationals, non-nationals)
 - Vessel ownership (individual or partnership)
 - Method of crew payment (wage, share method)
 - Other income sources of fishers (primary source of employment, etc)
 - Number of household employed in fisheries (primary, secondary)
 - Age, education level of fishers
 - Main threats to livelihoods
 - Social and financial services available (insurance, health, credit, savings etc)
 - Organization of fishers (cooperatives and their roles)
 - How/where marketed, roles and profits of fishers, traders, processors, transporters along the supply chain

10. The above indicators were to be considered by workshop participants when designing the survey questionnaire, which would contribute to the overall objectives of the socio-economic study. Additionally, it was recognized that the data to be collected through the RECOFI Recommendation on Minimum Data Reporting (Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1) would cover some of the socio-economic indicators presented.

11. The objectives of this study were agreed to be the following:

- determine socio-demographic characteristics such as age structure, sex, marriage status, family size, and education level, etc.;
- highlight socio-economic conditions of the fishermen;
- estimate costs and earnings of fishing vessels in selected fishing areas;
- describe the common problems of selected fishery areas;
- describe relations between the fishermen and their organizations, and indicate the effectiveness of the organization from the member's point of view as well as fisheries co-management; and
- outline recommendations for decision makers to be used in local fishery management and stakeholders' livelihood development plans.

12. Workshop participants were reminded of the Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 entitled "Recommendation on minimum data reporting in the RECOFI area" (Appendix I). In accordance with Article V of the Agreement for the Establishment of the Regional Commission for Fisheries, the Commission agreed that the recommendation would take effect on 1 January 2012; all Member countries are bound to comply with this recommendation. Focusing on social and economic aspects, there were certain priorities which were already agreed at the Workshop on Fishery Stock Indicators and Stock Status, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, in 2009, including that the social and economic importance of the fisheries sector should be measured by the extent of its contribution to the local food supply and its contribution to exports both in value and quantity. A hierarchical tree for social and economic aspects was presented, and it was emphasized that this would be needed for future work in this area to be clear on the goals and how these would be achieved. It was highlighted how different types of information could be collected, including gathering this information from existing census and administrative records if available.

13. A work plan for the socio-economic study was proposed, for the discussion and modification by the participants.

14. The workshop came to the following main conclusions:

- i. There is a general need to enhance the collection of socio-economic information with a matter of priority by the member countries;
- ii. Non-fisheries related activities have substantial and sometimes serious impacts on sustainability of fisheries and fishers livelihoods and the enhanced communication and collaboration with the relevant sectors need to be taken into consideration;
- iii. The social and economic contribution and issues must include those by the secondary and tertiary sectors, in addition to the primary production sector;
- iv. There are challenges in collecting socio-economic information and the further collaboration with other ministries, e.g. those responsible for statistics, economic, rural development, need to be addressed;
- v. Information available and data collection method varies across member countries (amount, quality);
- vi. Dynamics of employment (crew, owners, captains, hiring labor) and licensing is an important issue;
- vii. Fishing as a full-time/part-time activity as well as those under recreational/occasional/subsistent fishers – all people fishing should be considered;
- viii. Economic compensation for management measures (closed seasons) are in place in some countries as well as different kind of subsidies, which should be taken into account;
- ix. Fishers are often hold less power in the supply chain and are reliant on the decisions of middlemen for income.

15. The workshop made the following recommendations:

- i. The regional work plan on socio-economic work should be formulated to support technical capacity development to advance knowledge on the socio-economics in the region.
- ii. Such work plan must be applicable, practical and useful, including the recommended socio-economic survey questionnaires in manner that can be easily understood by the target questionnaire respondents and with clear definitions of terminologies used.
- iii. Social and economic aspects must be integrated and incorporated into the RECOFI fisheries management framework to ensure a more holistic approach in line with the ecosystem approach.
- iv. The Task Group would be established to address the above mentioned issues with a Terms of Reference (below).

16. The workshop agreed to use the draft questionnaire that was presented as the basis for work of the Task Group gathering the required information using the technical resources available in their respective countries. The workshop also considered a potential in developing a regional field project on the social and economic aspects of fisheries in the region. The workshop emphasized the need to enhance communication among all RECOFI members as well as with the relevant organizations such as the GCC fisheries committee to technically cooperate for adequately responding to the challenges faced by the regional fisheries including their social and economic performance.

17. It was felt that the workshop had constituted an important and first ever opportunity to discuss the fisheries social and economic issues in the region. This was much appreciated and it was hoped that this participatory and collaborative process will be continued.

SIXTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

18. The WGFM recognized that there is a need and purpose for this socio-economic work and agreed on the merit for including the consideration of the social and economic aspects related to management decisions based on considerations of the state of the fishery resources. The WGFM noted

the need to integrate socio-economic information and data collection within fisheries data collection frameworks to better inform management approaches and decisions.

19. The socio-economic questionnaire that had been introduced at the workshop and further developed and modified by the Task Group was presented, showing the case of Bahrain as a first example for the region. The contribution of Bahrain was noted, as well as the good progress in the development of this questionnaire, and it was highlighted that additional information related to the demographics and social questions need to be included to better understand the context of fishermen (age, education, income etc.). The WGFM noted the importance of the role of subsidies in the RECOFI fisheries sector and that this dimension should accordingly be incorporated into the continued development of this work.

20. The WGFM recognized the need to continue to develop the questionnaire and for member countries to compile it and report to the Task Group Coordinator, and for the Task Group to continue in the development of a regional work plan, taking into consideration the comments made and the ongoing work in individual member countries.