



# FAO FISHERIES and AQUACULTURE

A MISSION FOR GLOBAL RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT  
AND USE OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE



THE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE 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 2.8 billion people with almost 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 250 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 2005 people around the world consumed an average of 16.6 kilos of fish each – a volume that has nearly doubled since 1961. 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 and aquaculture production for 2005 was over 141 million tonnes.



## **The ecosystem**

**Impacts on fisheries** can originate from 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 fishing on target species and those caught incidentally as well as indirect impacts through the food chain. Overfishing can be a result of many factors: demands from growing populations, unlawful fishing activities, excessive fleet capacity and certain types of fisheries subsidies. Habitat-damaging practices can also have negative impacts.



## Fish for trade

International exports in fish and fishery products reached a record of more than US\$77 billion in 2005 – a nearly 40 percent increase since 2000.

In general, trade flows from less developed to more developed countries. In 2005, developing countries' share in total fishery exports was 48 percent by value and 57 percent by quantity. Developed countries received about 77 percent of those exports. 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.** Over half the stocks are fully exploited (52%) and are producing catches close to their maximum sustainable limits. Approximately one quarter are overexploited (17%) or depleted (7%) or recovering from depletion (1%). In the mid-1970s, only an estimated 10 percent of stocks were in these combined states. Fish stocks are troubled by factors inside and outside fisheries.

## Meeting responsible fisheries challenges

The challenges to achieving long-term 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/221128/A. Urcelayeta



FAO/23828/D. Minkoh

## The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries

Against a background of profound concern over the growing threats to world's fisheries and their ecosystems, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries was unanimously adopted by Members of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 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 and Aquaculture 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).



FAO/22134/A. Urcelayeta



## The role of the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department

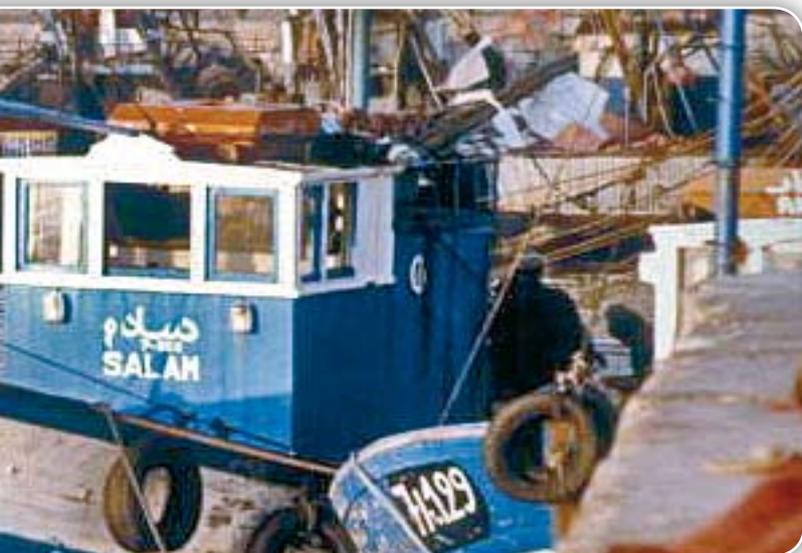
### The FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department

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 **Fisheries and Aquaculture Economics and Policy Division** which includes the **Fishery and Aquaculture Information and Statistics Service**, the **Fisheries and Aquaculture Management Division** and the **Fish Products and Industry Division**. Activities are implemented by Fisheries and Aquaculture Department staff attached to FAO headquarters and regional and subregional 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 and Aquaculture 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, non-governmental organizations and the international community. COFI has also been used as a forum for the negotiation of global agreements and non-binding 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 and aquaculture in the field

Under the FAO reform and its decentralization process, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department is targeting activities at all levels to promote the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, focusing on the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture. This also ensures high technical standards in field projects and programmes. Activities in the field are based on extrabudgetary resources and Technical Cooperation Programme funds. The projects, programmes and activities, as well as emergency relief such as for the Indian Ocean tsunami, executed or implemented at country, regional, interregional and headquarter level, make up the Department's field programme.

In fact, the Department relies heavily on extrabudgetary resources 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 commitments have been also growing steadily.

The Department currently operates over 100 technical advisory and assistance projects focused on various responsible fisheries and aquaculture issues at country, regional or global level, some of which are described below.

During the last biennium, the governments of Iceland, Japan and Sweden provided trust fund contributions for a cluster of global and regional projects to strengthen the ecosystem approach to fisheries, safety-at-sea, regional fishery bodies, training and awareness initiatives and

selected aquaculture issues, such as integration in coastal area management.

Extensive collaboration is also maintained with the World Bank, regional Development Banks, the WorldFish Center, and several international NGOs. 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 resource management operate in the Mediterranean basin, which thus far receive support from Italy, Spain and the European Union.



FAO/ACEH 0859/A. BERRY

### Emergencies and fisheries rehabilitation

Extrabudgetary 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 supported urgent relief efforts and projects aimed at recovery and reconstruction.

The Fisheries and Aquaculture Department has played a key role in the rehabilitation of fisheries, aquaculture and livelihoods. Several projects, valued at some US\$20 million, are currently underway in Banda Aceh (Indonesia) and Tamil Nadu (India); with yet others in final negotiation. These will assist the Indian Ocean countries to develop sound fisheries strategies and to restore infrastructure such as small landing sites and marketing networks, as well as aquaculture production capabilities and diversified livelihoods opportunities for fisheries communities. The Department's continued involvement underlines the crucial need for coordinated international efforts to ensure the longer-term goal of helping the peoples of the Indian Ocean secure a better and more sustainable future.

## 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 as a multidonor umbrella programme to promote responsible fisheries. Currently supported by a network of over 20 partner agencies, it serves to coordinate donor support and to foster synergies between various responsible fisheries initiatives – in keeping with the principles of the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. FishCode is now a principal means through which the Department mobilizes resources to support practical application of the Code and related instruments. Partner contributions are encouraged from both public and private agencies.

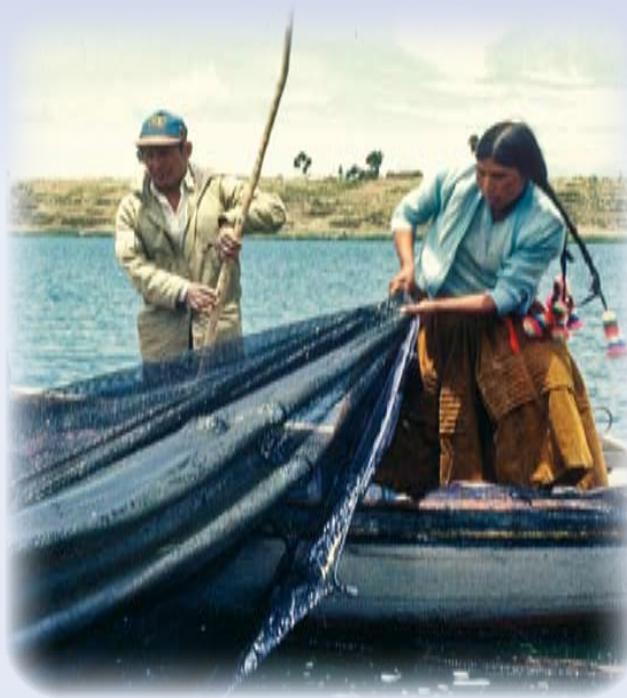
Programme activities at regional, national and global levels include technical assistance and scientific advice, human capacity building, workshops and specialized survey and study missions. They are formulated on the basis of priority needs identified in consultation with FAO Members, and further take into account outcomes of COFI meetings, the Millennium Development Goals, the 2001 Declaration of the Reykjavik Conference on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem and the fisheries-related themes of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. Major FishCode capacity-building initiatives in progress include: promotion of the International Plan of Action to deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and the Strategy for Improving Information on Status and Trends of Capture Fisheries; training and awareness for responsible fisheries; support for small-scale fisheries, including fair and equitable participation in ecolabelling and certification schemes; and “CCRF+10” – an action agenda for a decade of Code of Conduct implementation.

### 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 mid-2007, 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 in 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.



FAO/17429/A. Odoul

### The Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and Aquaculture

The FAO Code of Conduct has served to highlight the benefits of an ecosystem approach to marine and inland fisheries and aquaculture. The main purpose of the ecosystem approach is to plan, develop and manage all fisheries in a manner that addresses the multiple needs and desires of societies, without jeopardizing the options for future generations to benefit from the full range of goods and services provided by aquatic ecosystems.

Some key principles addressed are:

- fisheries and aquaculture should be managed to limit their impact on the ecosystem to an acceptable level
- management measures should be compatible across the entire ecosystem and all scales of activities
- precaution in decision-making and action is needed because knowledge on ecosystems is incomplete
- governance should ensure both human and ecosystem well-being and equity

The key challenge to sustainable fisheries is translating high-level policy goals into operational objectives and actions. **The Fisheries and Aquaculture Department** carries out projects around the world to assist developing countries in the implementation of the ecosystem approach.

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