

Fisheries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) freshwaters are found to function as an economic buffer and as a safety valve for thousands of people moving in and out of the fisheries according to the opportunities in the national economies. At the same time the stocks tend to be less threatened than many tend to believe. Classical management theory's emphasis on limiting numbers of fishermen and co-management strategies such as exclusive economic zoning may represent a danger to the stability of this situation, even if management may be required to maintain biodiversity. There may be a need also to monitor and establish measures to control investment-driven growth in effort.

This volume contains reports of ten case studies of freshwater fisheries in southern Africa. A synthesis of these reports can be found in FAO Fisheries Technical Paper 426/1. The case studies were conducted in five medium-sized lakes in four countries: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Five of the case studies focus on the biological and environmental effects of fishing while the remaining five are concerned with historical and sociological analysis. In different ways all of them address one or more of the following three features, relevant for the management of freshwater fisheries in the SADC region: Has fishing effort developed in these lakes over the last 50 years? What causes the changes in fishing effort? How do fishing effort and environmental factors compare in their effects on the regeneration of fish stocks?

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