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y la
Alimentación

FISHERY COMMITTEE FOR THE EASTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC

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FISHERIES SECTOR PROJECT IN THE FRAMEWORK OF NEPAD

I. BACKGROUND

1. Under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) African Heads of State and Government have adopted an overall vision of Africa's development. Its objective is to eradicate poverty, achieve food security and build the foundations of sustainable economic development on the continent. The vision for agriculture *inter alia* aims to improve productivity of agriculture to attain an average annual growth rate of 6 %, with particular attention to small farmers and women.

2. NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Plan (CAADP) has been developed in collaboration with FAO. It has been cast to deliberately focus on investment into the following three mutually reinforcing "pillars" (i) extending the area under sustainable land management and reliable water control systems; (ii) improving rural infrastructure and trade-related capacities for improved market access; and, (iii) increasing food supply and reducing hunger.

3. During the second half of 2003 FAO, at the request of the NEPAD Secretariat, developed draft strategy plans for livestock, fisheries and forestry in NEPAD member countries. The strategies were tailored to fit into the (CAADP).

II. THE DRAFT NEPAD STRATEGY FOR FISHERIES

4. The draft NEPAD strategy for the fisheries sector rests upon two characteristics, common to most African countries; (i) that the fisheries sector is highly dependent upon interchange with the rest of the world, both through exports of fish but also through imports of machinery, equipment and gear; (ii) the importance of fish as a source of animal protein in the diet. Both of these characteristics will prevail in the coming decades and therefore a NEPAD fisheries strategy could, or should, provide support for their continued existence.

5. The document starts from the assumption that in the near term African states are unlikely to significantly modify prevailing policy objectives for the sector. So those responsible for the sector are expected to continue to aim for the sector: (i) to provide secure livelihoods; (ii) to remain a reliable source of food for Africa; (iii) to generate foreign exchange and thus supply products that are competitive in international markets; (iv) to become a source of capital formation and accumulation, and, (v) to become a medium for technology development.

6. After reviewing the near term future for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa and observing that during the 1990s it has become evident that wild fish stocks, accessible to African fishermen, are increasingly reaching a state of full exploitation, and, unfortunately in some instances going beyond that state, the draft strategy document concludes that the past strategy of expansion does not hold any more. It must be revised and emphasis placed on a combination of (i) control, containment and domestication of capture fisheries; (ii) encouragement and expansion of the aquaculture sector; and, (iii) increasing value added for all locally consumed and exported fish products. The document then provides some suggestions on how this might be done and estimates the amount of investment that the sector on its own most likely would not be able to fund.

7. However, the document stresses that at present overall and absolute priority must be given to better management of the present fishing effort. If not, there is a serious risk that the quantities landed by capture fisheries will fall rapidly, which would have disastrous consequences for fishery dependent households and communities.

8. The draft text ("Towards a Comprehensive African Fisheries Development Programme") will be made available to the Commission meeting. The draft has subsequently been shortened and combined with strategy documents developed by FAO for livestock and forestry.

III. SUGGESTED ACTION

9. During the coming decade African unity on fishery policy matters will have a growing importance also for the future of West African capture fisheries. Members, apart from providing suggestions for the policy, may also wish to consider the possibility to develop a joint CECAF statement emphasising the need for an African policy in order to ensure harmonious sustainable development of the sector both within Africa and in its relation with foreign markets.