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The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2010

Facing challenges and seizing opportunities

The current global economic crisis, food price volatility and increase in weather events constitute global challenges – including for the fisheries and aquaculture sector. However, the sector also provides opportunities to improve livelihood prospects, ensure resource sustainability and foster economic growth.

The fisheries and aquaculture sector is crucial to food security, poverty alleviation and general well-being. In 2008, the world consumed 115 million tonnes of fish, and demand is expected to rise. Fish and fishery products are a vital and affordable source of food and high-quality protein – in 2008 **fish as food reached an all-time high of nearly 17 kg per person,** supplying over 3 billion people with at least 15 percent of their average animal protein intake.

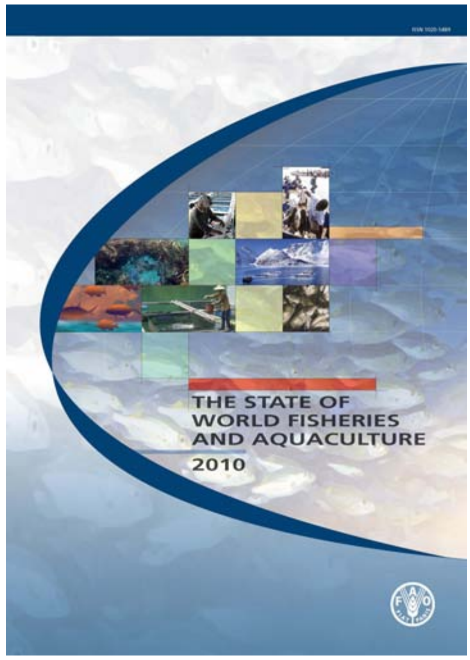
Employment in fisheries and aquaculture has grown faster than the world's population and employment in traditional agriculture. In 2008, almost 45 million people were directly engaged in the sector. Add to these the important secondary sectors such as handling and processing, and women represent half of those involved. Altogether, including the family dependants of these workers, **fisheries and aquaculture support the livelihoods of about 540 million people** (8 percent of the world population).

Overall, global markets for fish and fishery products are expanding, representing a growing source of foreign currency earnings for many developing countries. In 2008, **world exports of fish and fishery products reached a record US$102 billion,** up 9 percent on 2007. Despite a dip in 2009 (when food prices soared), data for 2010 indicate that fish trade is recovering – and the long-term forecast remains positive, with a growing share of fish production entering international markets.

The increasing demand for fish also highlights the **need for the sustainable management of aquatic resources.** The generally increasing trend in the percentage of overexploited, depleted and recovering world marine stocks

KEY MESSAGES

- Fisheries and aquaculture are a vital source of food and protein for billions of people worldwide.
- Aquaculture is the fastest-growing food-producing sector (+6.6 percent p.a.) and set to overtake capture fisheries as a source of food fish.
- The role and importance of inland fisheries in poverty alleviation and food security must be better reflected in development and fisheries policies and strategies.
- Responsible management and policy decisions, including incentive regimes, can reverse rent drain and foster sustainable fisheries and aquaculture growth.
- Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing can be combated by trade measures and a global record of fishing vessels.
- Measures to prevent, mitigate and cure problems associated with abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) are required.



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The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture, the flagship publication of the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, presents a world review of fisheries and aquaculture including trends and statistics. It highlights issues debated worldwide and profiles future scenarios with the aim of providing the most current global view and perspectives on fisheries and aquaculture.

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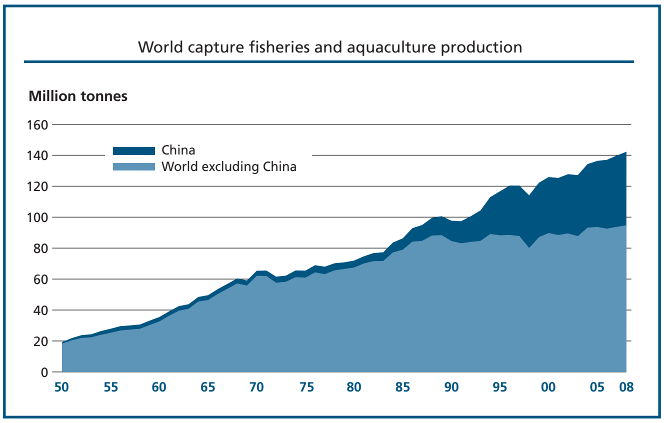

compared with the decreasing trend in those that are underexploited and moderately exploited gives cause for concern.

Fisheries management has moved towards sustainability policies, leading to wider acceptance of the **ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF)** – an integrated approach for balancing societal objectives with the state of the fishery and its natural and human environment. Ensuring inclusion of the human dimension to the EAF can provide an effective vehicle to address the wide range of complexities that affect fisheries management.

In recent decades, the gap between the potential and actual economic benefits from marine fisheries has widened dramatically – costing the world economy an estimated US$50 billion per year in forgone resource rent. Ensuring that the world's capture fishery resources make their full potential contribution to the global economy calls for major steps, including efforts to establish **effective resource investment programmes** and rebuild the resources themselves.

Inland fisheries, although often undervalued, are a core component in the livelihoods of millions in both developing and developed countries. Some 61 million people are involved in the sector – over half of them women. Although 2008 produced a record 10 million tonnes of fish, substantial declines in inland fishery resources have been caused by irresponsible practices, habitat degradation, etc. Improved awareness and appropriate action are required in order to conserve aquatic ecosystems and **safeguard the resources that form the basis for inland fisheries.**

On a more positive note, a look at aquaculture policies in Southeast Asia – where fish is a fundamental part of people's diets – reveals that **well-planned government interventions** built on comparative advantages and fostering an enabling incentive environment can lead to economic growth, food security and better living standards.

Today, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is recognized as a major threat to achieving sustainable fisheries. **Trade measures are increasingly being used** to prevent IUU-sourced fish and fish products from entering international trade flows.

Beyond trade measures, a proposed **Global Record of fishing vessels, refrigerated transport vessels** and supply vessels could prove vital in combating IUU fishing. It is envisaged as an online database of vessels that would also assign a unique vessel identifier for each entry, provide vessel-related information and create the transparency needed to help stop IUU fishing.

In recent years, attention has focused on **issues associated with abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG).** The many negative impacts of ALDFG, such as "ghost fishing", navigational hazards and amassed marine debris, have increased with new technologies and greater capacity. Reducing these impacts requires the use of preventive, mitigating and curative measures.

In aquaculture and aquatic ecosystems, increased competition for limited resources heightens the risk of mismanagement and long-lasting damage – from transboundary aquatic animal diseases to the introduction of alien species. **Biosecurity, an integrated approach for managing the risks** associated with such conflicting uses, promotes systematic risk analyses and assessments. Understanding and applying risk management can guide sustainable growth of the aquaculture sector and safeguard the long-term health of ecosystems, protecting the people dependent on them.

Risk management also extends to seafood consumption. While the health and nutritional benefits of eating fish are well established, it is also essential to understand and prevent any harmful effects such as the accumulation of contaminants in certain species. Consumers require guidance on how to minimize risks while maximizing the benefits of fish consumption.

Private standards and certification schemes are becoming significant features of international fish trade and marketing. However, the demand for and impact of ecolabels and other schemes is not uniform across markets, species or products. Greater understanding is needed of their actual effects on trade opportunities, especially for developing countries.

New technologies can help meet fisheries management objectives, as seen in the **wider use of the Internet and geographic information systems (GIS).** These can integrate diverse data and different perspectives, leading to comprehensive solutions to the advantage of all stakeholders. Effective linking of the international fishery community's expectations with the potential offered by the Internet can also narrow the digital divide in fisheries science between nations.

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