

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the great political, economic and social heterogeneousness of countries covered by IDAF Programme, the challenges they are faced with in terms of artisanal fisheries development, are almost alike. This document tries to underline both the common aspects and the particularities characteristic of each country. It doesn't have the pretension to be exhaustive, but rather tries to give a synthetic view of the situation in the artisanal sector in West Africa. Since the accuracy of data is still often very relative, the focus will be on trends. This document also tries to show the evolution of economic policies in favour of artisanal fisheries, what seems particularly useful at a time when the economies of the countries of the region are undergoing deep changes. The present document will be updated every year in order to serve as an analysis and reflection tool.

The twenty countries covered by the Programme for integrated Development of Artisanal Fisheries in West Africa (IDAF) extend from Mauritania to Angola. The potential¹ of this region's marine waters is estimated to be 3,155,000 tons a year, that is 47% of all Africa's marine waters potential. However, those countries are politically, economically, culturally and socially very heterogeneous. Similarly, the abundance of fisheries resource is very diverse. Thus, Guinea-Bissau which has a population of one million inhabitants has a potential estimated at about 300,000 tons a year, while the potential of Cameroon (12 million inhabitants) is estimated at 62,000 tons. But this diversity shouldn't hide the common challenges these countries have to face in the fields of socio-economic development and resource management. Confronted to a rapid population growth and an international economic crisis which doesn't spare Africa, all the governments of the region have declared that the optimal exploitation of natural resources was a priority.

The quality of the data that fisheries administrators and analysts have remains an unsolved problem. Indeed, despite the efforts undertaken since many years to improve their quality, those data are still often questionable. That is why a great care is recommended and rather than the accuracy of figures, it is the rough estimate and trends that this document will try to bring out. This is particularly true of socio-economic data² for, up to now, fisheries administrations and research centers have given priority to biological data, especially those related to catches and fishing effort. It is only recently that some efforts were undertaken to identify and quantify the socio-economic characteristics specific to artisanal fisheries. The insufficiencies of information systems create problems for both development planning and the monitoring of actions undertaken, and resource management. It is to be hoped that, despite the budget restrictions that many administrations in the region are subjected to, certain actions will still be undertaken to improve knowledge about this field³

¹ Potential is the volume of fish that can be caught without threatening the possibilities of stock renewal

² Bonzon and Horemans, 1988

³ See Weber and Durand, 1986 who recommend the preparation of a bank of simple indicators whose statistical monitoring would be ensured everywhere, what will permit to follow the evolution of the Sector

The objective of this document is to give a picture of the situation prevailing in the artisanal fisheries sector in the 20 countries of the region, as well as the trends in the sector these last years. It also tries to underline certain aspects which deserve a particular attention from the administrators of the sector, as well as from their development partners.

After the introduction, the second chapter describes the environment surrounding the sector. In this chapter the stress is put on the description of the general trends of the economy of these countries. The most recent data about fisheries production are given too. Also, a brief description of both means of production and utilization of fisheries products is provided. The third chapter deals with the policies implemented to develop the sector. The constraints and opportunities are brought out, the efforts to favour resource management are described as well as the regional and subregional policies in artisanal fisheries. The main administrative and research institutions are quickly reviewed. The fourth chapter is a general survey of the foreign assistance, whether multilateral or bilateral, given as donation or loan to the sector.

The sources used to write this document are essentially threefold: the official data mainly those published by FAO and the World Bank and specifically the data base of FAO's fisheries Department: FISHSTAT⁴ elaborated by the service of fisheries information, data and statistics and FIPPDAT⁵ elaborated by the service of fisheries development planning. Another source of information is the trip reports written by the personnel of the Programme. The third source is the reports presented by the Programme's liaison officers during their annual meeting. What is of interest in these reports as well as in mission reports, is that they contain recent data which are most often unpublished although unfortunately sketchy.

This document will be updated every year after the meeting of the liaison officers of the Programme for the Integrated Development of Artisanal Fisheries in West Africa.

⁴ FAO, 1993

⁵ FAO, 1991