

PROBLEMS OF INDUSTRIAL FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT  
IN THE CROSS RIVER STATE

by

James Essien  
Seastate Seafoods Ltd.,  
Eket, Cross River State

ABSTRACT

The paper describes briefly the industrial fisheries as opposed to artisanal fisheries in the Cross River State. It gives a brief description on the prospect of industrial fisheries in the State and proceeds further to identify the major fish and shrimp resources within the coastal waters.

It deals briefly on the introduction of industrial fishing in 1973 when the State Government invited Japanese Company to carry out a joint exploratory shrimp fishing venture and also the government's efforts to acquire a stern trawler for exploratory fishing. The contributions made by the Seastate Seafoods Company, the Eyib's Nutritional Food and the Arawak Fishing Companies towards the increase in the number of fishing fleet in the State are noted.

The major causes of the decline in the industrial fisheries are briefly discussed. These include the management problems, inadequate financing, lack of qualified personnel to operate the vessels, poor maintenance facility and lack of supporting infrastructure.

It discusses the effects of the development of offshore oil on coastal fisheries. The recommendations include supervised credit, development of basic infrastructure and boat building, standardising equipment for fishing vessels and protection of our coastal waters.

INTRODUCTION

Fishing industry in the Cross River State is dominated by the artisanal fisheries which involves the use of canoes both mechanised and unmechanised. Industrial or commercial fisheries development was introduced only a few years ago. As opposed to the artisanal fisheries, the industrial fishing necessitates the use of large fishing vessels which carry in-board engines and mechanically operated gear. Some of these vessels are equipped with refrigeration units while others depend on ice for the preservation of fish. Since the mechanised vessels ensure easy movements to the fishing ground, the combined benefit of better preservation and storage facilities guarantee improved catch thus ensuring better economic returns to the investor. Such fishery development practices however, are capital intensive. Funds are needed not only to cover the cost of the vessels, nets and equipment but also for the developing of the essential supporting shore based infrastructure such as the coldrooms, ice plant, landing jetty and marine workshop.

PROSPECTS OF INDUSTRIAL FISHERIES IN THE CROSS  
RIVER STATE

The Cross River State which is one of the six maritime states in the Federation is located at the south eastern corner of Nigeria. With a total land area of 28,920 km<sup>2</sup> and population of 4.4 million people, the State has a coastline of 129 km out of the total 900 km coastline for the country. In terms of relative contribution to the national aggregate fish output in the country, the Cross River State is second to the Rivers State. The Nigerian continental shelf attains its greatest width off the Cross River thus affording shelf area of 13,817 km<sup>2</sup> out of total shelf area of 60,000 km<sup>2</sup> for the whole country.

FISHERY RESOURCES

Major fishery resources are made up of the demersal stock consisting

mainly of croakers, sole, sharks and rays, thread fin, cat fishes, grunters. The dominant group, the sciaenids (croakers) which include the drum contributes approximately 8.5% to the catch composition from artisanal marine fisheries. The pelagic stock consists of the bonga (Ethmalosa fimbriata Bowdich) forms the principal catch of the traditional canoe fisheries and constitutes 22.3% of the total catch (Moses, 1980). Other clupeids are the Sardinella cameronensis and Ilisha africana which contribute 5.2% of the canoe fisheries. The richest shrimp grounds are in the vicinity of the Cross River State where the ecological conditions existing in the continental shelf area are similar to those of the Gulf of Mexico which at present contributes about 26% of the world output of shrimp. The available species are the pink shrimp (Penaeus duorarum), Barapenaeopsis atlantica and the Parapenaeus longirostris the deep sea (royal red) shrimp.

#### INTRODUCTION OF INDUSTRIAL FISHERIES

Up to 1973, there was no industrial fishing vessel operating from the Cross River State. In 1973, the State Government invited two Japanese Companies (Mitsubishi Corporation and Michiro Fishing Company) to carry out a joint exploratory shrimp fishing venture. The vessel used was a 265 GRT chartered Japanese double rigged Trawler Nisshin Maru No. 56. Results of the trial fishing were most encouraging. It showed an average daily catch of 0.33 tons shrimps tails and 1 ton fish. Nisshin Maru operated for 187 days and caught 53 metric tons of shrimp with export value of ₦65,475. Also the vessel landed 92 metric tons of fish valued at ₦22,670 and 1.5 tons of cephalopods with the export value of ₦395. Regrettably, the two Japanese Companies could not form the joint fishing venture because their terms were not acceptable to the Government. In 1974, the State Government purchased a 21m Stern Trawler from the German firm, Klockner Industrie - Anlagan of Western Germany at a cost of ₦110,000 to be operated by the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture. The main dimensions were as follows:-

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Length overall               | - 20 metres  |
| Length between perpendicular | - 17 metres  |
| Main engine                  | - Deuz 325 B.H.P. and fish hold cooling down to 1 <sup>o</sup> c |

During the period April 1974 - March 1978, the vessel made 45 voyages totalling 140 fishing days and landed 82,813 kg. This works out at the average record of approximately 600kg fish per day and 20kg shrimp. The vessel was used mainly for training and exploratory fishing.

The Eyibs Nutritional Food started fishing operations with Calabar as the base in 1978 with three double-rigged shrimp Trawlers namely "Ubekang", "Okposso" and the "Seagull". These are steel vessels of 22 metres long propelled by caterpillar engine. Operating also from Calabar were three vessels, Nathan Primerio 1-3 belonging to the Arawak Fishing Company.

The Seastate Seafoods Limited based at Ibeno started operations in June, 1978 with 2 double regged Trawler and later on the State Fishermen Association acquired one stern Trawler of about 14 metres in length from the Federal Government. By 1980 the number of fishing fleet had grown to 10 but at present, this number reduced to four due to enormous operational problems.

#### STRUCTURE OF INDUSTRIAL FISHERIES

Bottom trawling for demersal stock forms the major domestic industrial fisheries in the Cross River State. There is no purse seining or mid-water trawling for pelagic fishes. The main species of fish caught are croakers, grunters, sole, thread fin, cat fishes and weak fish. Trawling for shrimp has not been effective because of poor facilities. Fish landings from the vessels vary from 1 ton to 2 tons of fish per day for double riggers depending of course on the tide and season.

On the whole, the landings are dominated by small fish; the percentage position by size are 70%; 25% medium fish and 5% big fish. The average price per ton is ₦800. In spite of the problems of preservation and storage, there are no serious difficulties in the marketing of the fish product.

### PROBLEMS OF INDUSTRIAL FISHERIES

Industrial fisheries in the Cross River State has not progressed satisfactorily and contribution from this source to the overall production does not exceed 4%. The report on the fisheries of the Cameroun Republic which is the closest neighbour on the other hand shows that industrial fishing industry contributes 57% of that country's total fish landings.

It would appear that most of the investors moved into the industrial fishing business without adequate knowledge of the inherent dangers. The problems of planning for the fishing trips, control of operational staff as well as the control of funds pose serious difficulties. There is an instance where Technical Partners had contributed to the ruin of the Company and in some cases the venture had to be crippled because of wrong specifications of the vessels and engines and provision of ineffective refrigeration equipment. Some of the major problems are discussed below:-

#### MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

These vary greatly according to the size and type of the company. Generally lack of effective control of funds of the business and poor control on the operations of the company at all stages have contributed to poor performances of the fishing companies.

#### Inadequate Financing

In almost all the cases studied, the operations had to be crippled by lack of adequate financing. Funds provided were planned just to cover the cost of fishing vessels, and adequate provisions were not made for the acquisition of spare parts and nets. The development of the supporting infrastructure such as ice plant, coldroom, workshop and landing jetty are often not provided for in the budgets.

#### Poorly Qualified Personnel

The level of fish production in a vessel depends on the quality of the Captain and the Engineer. At present, there are no sufficient qualified and experienced indigenous captains and engineers to man the operations effectively. Also the services of really good technicians to take care of the electronic equipment in the vessels are not readily available.

#### Lack Of Maintenance Facility and Spare Parts

There is no facility for slipping the fishing vessels in this State. The nearest locations are Port Harcourt and Burutu. The bills are exorbitant. In most cases the vessels are delayed up to four months.

Most of the fishing vessels were imported into the State without parts. The main and auxiliary engines, the electronic devices, electric bulbs and battery cannot be secured in this country. Replacement of the worn out parts had never been easy and any minor defect holds up operations indefinitely.

#### Dishonesty of Some Crew

There has been serious complaints regarding the behaviour of some crew on board the fishing vessels. The allegations are that part of the fish caught during the trip are sometimes sold to unauthorised persons. Initially the practice was limited to the exchange of fresh fish for drinks and frozen food but right now the practice has dege-

nerated to exchange of fish for money.

### Declining Productivity

The stock of fish in our coastal waters is gradually declining due to the incidence of pollution and the unrestricted fishing pressure from the fishing fleet not only from other parts of Nigeria but also from the neighbouring countries. Moreover the installation of rigs for the offshore drilling operations has greatly reduced the area available for Trawl Fishing.

### Lack Of Government Support

It seems that the policy of the Government is to support artisanal fisheries development. To achieve this objective, gigantic artisanal fisheries development projects including subsidy schemes which guarantee up to 50% reduction in the prices of fishing boats, engines and nets are sold to the artisanal fishermen. Also there has been no supervised credit scheme for this sector. Actual cost of the training of captains and engineers for the vessels at the Federal Fisheries School is considered to be too high. There is a strong need for the protection and conservation of the fisheries resources of the State by ensuring that encroachment in our inshore waters by foreign vessels are effectively controlled.

### CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

As a result of the problems listed above, the industrial fisheries development in this State has not progressed satisfactorily. Generally, the indigenous efforts in the management of industrial fishing are not quite rewarding. In order to improve the situation the following suggestions are offered.

State fisheries organisation should take bold steps to introduce the operation of the supervised credit scheme for the benefit of the industrial fishermen. Such a project will provide accessible source of supervised credit financing to support the acquisition of vessels and equipment. This will also enable the fishermen to obtain loan facilities to finance heavy bills on repairs of the vessels.

The need for the development of boat yards capable of producing fishing vessels with standardised engines and auxilliary equipment must be stressed. At present, the fishing vessels are imported with various types of engines and equipment without serious consideration on the availability of the spare parts in this country.

The Federal Government efforts towards the construction of the Fishing Terminal at Ebughu to provide basic infrastructure such as the Ice Plant, Cold Store, Workshop, Landing Stage, and Slipway will go a long way to improve the services needed by the industrial fishermen. For such services to be effective, the need for the arrangement for efficient management of the port to ensure that the repair jobs are not delayed is very necessary.

The subsidy scheme now enjoyed by artisanal fishermen should be extended to the industrial fishermen. This subsidy should be built into the scheme for the training of the essential crew for the vessels and also in the scheme for the improvement of gear and craft for the industry.

Since fishing is an extractive industry, serious efforts will have to be made to protect the industry. The efforts of the Inspectorate Division of the Federal Department of Fisheries are most commendable.

At present, checks and control imposed by this division affect the indigenous fishing vessels and not foreign vessels. In order to guarantee effective control of the operation of the foreign fishing vessels, complementary efforts from the Navy will go a long way to

help to protect the fisheries resources of this country. It seems desirable that the State Fisheries Organisation should set up a small Industrial Fisheries Unit charged with the responsibility of assisting the small scale fisherman in the preparation of the feasibility studies, financing acquisition of craft and routine inspection of the vessels on point of delivery to ensure that the specifications are in order.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cross River State, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Fisheries Division (1979) Progress Reports 1969 - 1979

Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development, University of Ibadan (n.d) Integrated Rural fisheries development project, final report

Moses, B.S. (1980) Fisheries of the Cross River State of Nigeria: A preliminary report. Fisheries Division, Calabar

Office of the Governor, Department of Parastatals (n.d). Preliminary report on Seastate Seafoods Limited

#### DISCUSSION

N.I. Azeeza: Is there any way of penalizing culprits who are involved in dishonest sales of trawler catch?

A.A. Olaniwajo: There is no need to standardize the type of engines to be used. Also there are crash training programmes for training crews at NIOMR with FDF in cooperation.

E.O. Odiong: The paper should have compared the performances of other States trawler industries so as to give a general view.

R.E.K. Udolisa: The problem in the fishing industry can be traced to the type of craft in use. Some buy shrimpers to trawl for fin fish. Poachers are menacing our waters and are even armed. What can be done?

S.O. Talabi: The problems highlighted typifies the whole industry. Icing is not the best method for preservation but is what we can do for now. Artisanal fisheries work in NIOMR indicates that sea water in refrigerated collers can keep fish up to 20 days.

J. Essien: Information available show that in other States companies are experiencing similar problems. Only few companies have folded up and some have merely changed hands.

Part of the sea Fisheries Act stipulates that all catches must be landed at port and not disposed off at sea. Confirmed reports of contravention will be taken up seriously. With the new patrol vessel to be purchased, more surveillance will be mounted.