

# PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE COMMERCIALISATION OF FISHERY PRODUCTION IN ONDO STATE.

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## ABSTRACT

The paper examines the Fisheries Resources and activities in Ondo State. As a result of the geographical advantage via location along the atlantic coast the potentials and constraints of coastal artisanal fisheries in Ondo State are assessed.

Practical suggestions and approaches for a successful commercialisation of fishery production are given. These include: (a) Identification of useful and reliable Fisheries institutions, (b) Inauguration establishment and coordination of a Fishery Development Agency, (c) establishment of Aquaculture Technology centres (ATC), (d) Provision of Fishery Development Fund, (e) Standardisation of Fishery Consultancy Units etc.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ondo State is one of the six coastal states in Nigeria. This unique situation presents a benefit of direct access to the rich resources of the Atlantic ocean via the Ilaje/Eseodo. Okitipupa and Irele Local Government areas.

In addition, the state is blessed with numerous inland waters that exude tremendous advantages of fish production. These are rivers, streams, reservoirs, dams and man-made production ponds. Notable among these are rivers Ogbese, Owena, Oluwa, Ose, Ero, Oye, Usése, Oni, Oshun etc; the major dams include Ero, Egbe Owena, Ose/Owo, Awara, Itapaji and Owani. While activities along and within the coastal fringe of Ilaje/Ese-Odo and Okitipupa seem to be organised and highly competitive, fish farming and aquaculture in the hinter-dry-lands is yet to show any traditional or scientific improvement.

## 2. FISHERIES RESOURCE & ACTIVITES IN ONDO STATE

Fish is a ready supplier of high quality animal protein which comes from marine, brackish-water and fresh water sources. Tobor *et al.* (1977) in a nation wide statistical survey between 1975 and 1976 estimated the total number of artisanal fishermen as 308740, whose catches include fish and shrimps. The finfishes are (i) the croakers, cartfish, shynose, snappers, groupers, sardines and the tilapias associated with the brackishwater areas.

In Ondo State, the fisheries resources come largely from artisanal activities which are restricted by ecological factors to the extreme southern part of the state bordering on the Atlantic Ocean. Suffice it to say that there are increased activities in the fishing industry through industrial and increased investments in aquaculture. While the regular finfishes are captured as available through natural regeneration and uncontrolled (human) abundance, selected and choicy species are culture in earthen ponds, reservoirs and dams.

*The capture fisheries can be divided into:*

- (a) Commercial trawl fisheries which are operating from a few bases along the coastline and
- (b) Artisanal fisheries, most of which operate on the sea from numerous coastal settlements and other scattered huts in the inland swamps, creeks, estuaries and canals.

## 2.1 Trawl Fisheries

Trawl fisheries involve the utilization of highly sophisticated vessels called trawlers. They are usually capital intensive, with an attendant use of electronic equipments and highly trained technical manpower.

There are inshore and offshore trawling. However trawling is limited to inshore in Ondo State as of today. These vessels are owned by the Cooperative Societies with special assistance from the Federal Government under the inshore trawling project.

In a report submitted by FACU during the early days of the Ondo State ADP, it was reported that about 6 'Green Revolution' vessels, 13 metre small trawlers and 1 medium sized 24 metre shrimp trawler were in Ondo State. Production from some of the vessels are processed at Igbokoda terminals or sold directly to consumers or middle men.

The vessels are mostly non-refrigerated consequently they have to carry ice which is purchased from the terminal. Examples of fish species common in inshore catches include: Croaker, catfish, sole, shiny nose, shark, Trygon, muller, threadfin, butterfly, Ray etc. It is necessary to include here that a few individuals have one or two small vessels that go on voyages regularly.

## 2.2 Artisanal Fisheries

The term artisanal fishery encompasses all small scale fisheries activities which usually involve the use of dug-out canoes and other traditional fishing arts obviously developed over the years to adapt to local conditions. The artisanal fishery as practised now is generally labour intensive and characterised by low productivity resulting in meagre per capita income and a subsistence living.

*These fisheries are practised in the following areas:*

- i. Along the open coast
- ii. In brackish waters, lagoons and creeks
- iii. In freshwater, rivers and lakes.

### 2.2.1 Coastal Artisanal Fisheries

Ondo State shares about 74 kilometre of the 950 kilometre length of the coastline of Nigeria. Along the coastal belt, fishing provides employment for over 85 percent of the non-industrial labour mostly in the artisanal sector, (Arawomo *et al.* 1985).

There exists a total of 76 settlements along the coast of Ondo State whose major occupation is artisanal fishing the estimated fishing population is about 6,000 adults, out of which about 1,090 are members of fishermen cooperative societies (FDF 1987). Investigations further show that average age of the artisanal fishermen was 42 years, ranging between 30 and 69 years. A mean of 26 years of fishing experience was also recorded. It thus shows that a virile fishing population exists. The traditional fishing canoes are mostly of the local type dugouts of 6 to 8 in length and the larger Ghana type canoe of 9 to 11m. Their capacity for

carrying fishing gear and crew and catches and their fishing range are limited and they can normally operate only under fair weather conditions (Arowomo *et al.* 1985). As a result of the Federal & State Governments Canoe Motorisation Project, the use of out-board engines have become pleasant. Thus an increase in fish output has been ensured. However, the impact of motorisation has been limited and has not been spread out evenly along the entire communities. Government policy is to channel aid and supply only through fishermen cooperatives.

Fishing activities are mostly carried out within five nautical miles from the shore. This involves an individual or a family unit. Between 1985 and 1987 the total number of 1,500 canoes (made available through surveys) operated along the coast, out of which 270 were mechanized with outboard engines ranging from 6 HP to 25 HP (FACU Report 1987).

Common materials used for fishing include drift net directed at the demersal and mid-water fish species. Encircling nets are frequently used for the capture of Pelagic fishes especially during the dry season.

Mode of fish disposal is usually by immediate sales while fresh and/or alive. However, presentation and processing is by smoke drying using a variety of methods which include drum kilns, mud kilns and wire-gause tripod-stand fire places.

#### **2.2.2 Brackish Water Fisheries**

The creek range that spans from Crop (Mahin, Lagos) to Igbokoda has been established to be relatively shallow, as a result activities within this area has been limited to the area of main lake. Consequently records report available on the scope and landing from Ondo State affect brackish water areas. Fishing gears used by the fishermen include cast net, traps, gill net, hooks etc.

#### **2.3 Freshwater - Lakes, Rivers, Dams.**

Fishing activities in these areas exist but not properly documented, a few full-time fishermen are found to exist along River Ogbese, Ose, Owena. These fishermen supply fish to the women fish-mongers along some of our major roads e.g Fiwasaiye Bus Stop, Owena village market (along Ondo - Akure Road) Laje Road Junction (along Ondo - Akure Ore) etc. Most of the fish mongers supply their fish live to major Hotels, Restaurants and eateries in Akure, Ondo, Ore and Okitipupa.

#### **2.4 Fish Ponds - Aquacultural Activities**

Aquaculture or fish farming is the management and rearing of fish in areas that allow human intervention. These could be open lakes, reservoirs or man made fish ponds.

Fish farming started in the early 70s in Ondo State. The practice though usually combined with other farming activities has gained a tremendous awareness and participation that as at today over 200 fish ponds exist in Ondo State, most of the ponds are owned by governments, Institutions, and private individuals. Records show that about 180 hectares of water surface area is put under aquaculture. It is pertinent to mention here that due to the juvenile stage of aquaculture development in Nigeria (in Ondo State in particular) the expected positive results (adequate stocking, high yields and profits) are in most cases elusive.

### 3. Constraints - Artisanal Sub-sector

1. *Accessibility:* Due to the geographical disposition of the coastal/brackishwater area, they are largely inaccessible to markets and other service facilities.
2. *Inadequate fishing inputs by way of improved crafts and gears:-* outboard engines, netting, floats, leads etc.
3. Inadequate funds and irregular funding to alleviate the high investment required for mos. of the activities.
4. Uncordinated resource use plan which leads to multiple sea use conflicts, encroachment and input destruction.
5. *Environmental pollution:* Though issues of oil pollution do not exist at present in Ondo State, natural hazards created by water hyacinth had spread across most of our fishing grounds.
6. Poor extension service which is largely due to poor staff motivation, inadequate logistic support services and necessary information.

### 3.2 Constraints - Aquaculture

1. Lack of experts mostly needed in areas of pond design and construction, fish genetics and breeding, fish feed and nutrition, fingerling transportation management etc.
2. Shortage of Trained professionals and technicians to carry out advisory extension and training services.
3. High capital cost in pond construction
4. Inadequate supply of fingerlings which leads to reliance on fingerlings from the wild.
5. Practical suggestions/approaches to fish production:
  1. Identification of useful and Reliable Fisheries Institutions:

Although the State boasts of fisheries Institutions such as the Federal Fisheries, State Ministry of Agriculture & Cooperatives, Federal University of Technology and the College of Agriculture, the realisation of the roles and objectives and thus their contribution to fish production is continuously and largely hampered by bureaucracy and administrative bottleneck.

Effective utilisation of these institutions can only be achieved by creating a Fisheries Development Committee comprising of principal officers from these Institutions. A defined role and objective should be prepared and enforced with an edict, thus removing laxity, laziness, administrative arrogance and non-performance.

It should be noted and emphasised that the State Ministry has no business producing fish. The failures and the attendant shortcomings of the ADP are obvious pointers to this statement. In the case of the Federal University (and of course other Universities in the Federation) milling out of fisheries graduate does not increase fish production per se.

**2. Inauguration, establishment and coordination of a Fisheries Development package that includes:**

- (a) Establishment of 4 fish seed multiplication centres at Ondo, Akure, Ikare and Aramoko.
- (b) Establishment of two pilot fish feedmills to supply quality feeds for table fish and fingerlings.
- (c) Construction of laboratory field offices in four centres in the state.

This package should be designed and carried out by the Fisheries Development Committee. The Committee should be under the Governor's office.

**3. Establishment of Aquaculture Technology Centres. These centres are suggested to be sited at Ondo and Ado-Ekiti respectively.**

*The functions should include:*

- (i) Pond site selection, inspection, surveying and pond designs.
- (ii) Pond clearing, excavation and pond alignment.
- (iii) Monk and channel design, construction and erection
- (iv) Hiring of fishing nets to fish farmers
- (v) Mending and repairs of fish farm inputs.

All these functions are to be rendered at subsidized rates if and when necessary. The centres are expected to be fully equipped with modern aquacultural equipments, tools implements, fish farm guides and brochures.

**4. Government should provide a Fisheries Development Fund. This fund can be in form of an initial loan from the Farmers Congress Account to be paid back after some years of operation. The fund is to be allocated to both the Fisheries Development Committee and the Aquaculture Technology Centres.**

**5. Rural banking must be further encouraged, financed and compelled to embrace fish farming in their agenda. All Community Banks and the Peoples Banks should be compelled to devote a percentage of their fund to rural fish farming.**