

**Status of Artisanal Fisheries
in the Caribbean:
Summary by the Rapporteur**

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As the rapporteur of this session, it is my task to provide a summary of the 13 presentations made by fisheries officers in the region concerning the status and problems of artisanal fisheries in their countries. In doing so, I shall try to provide a bridge to the next portion of this conference which will deal with the present and possible efforts of donor countries and organizations to improve the conditions of artisanal fisheries in the Caribbean.

As might be expected, there was a great deal of similarity in the descriptions of the fisheries and in the constraints that were present. Most of the speakers emphasized the need for training of all kinds, from that of extension workers operating on the beach to scientists and administrators who could handle the sophisticated problems of fisheries management. There was also great stress on the deficiencies in marketing ranging from the need for ice and storage facilities on the shore to a system of distribution of fish throughout the country. Other frequently mentioned constraints included the lack of data and knowledge about their fisheries resources, enforcement problems, especially those involving foreigners, the need for boat and gear improvement, weaknesses in fishermen's organizations, such as cooperatives, and the prevalence of fish diseases, particularly ciguatera. The measures taken by the governments to improve the fishermen's situation were also quite similar, consisting of duty-free importation of fishing gear, subsidies or rebates on the purchase of fuel and low interest loans for purchase of boats and gear.

Despite these similarities, there are significant differences among the fisheries of these 13 countries which must be carefully considered in any program for development and management. While all of these fisheries may be judged to be small in comparison with the fisheries of some of the major fishing nations, there is, nonetheless, a considerable range of size among them. For instance, it is reported that Jamaica has some 9,000 fishermen, while St. Kitts has 900 and the British Virgin Islands has 180. In all cases, many of these are part-time and seasonal. It follows, therefore, that the scale of any assistance programs must be tailored to the scale of the fishery in order to be cost-effective. It also would tend to argue for cooperative efforts whenever possible to achieve economies of scale.

There are other differences, some dealing with geographical features or locations, the nature and extent of fish species in the nearby waters, as well as the degree of exploitation of these resources. There are also institutional and social

differences dealing with fishing and consumption patterns of the people.

In considering what may be done to remove the constraints, it may be helpful to make some simple classifications. Some of the problems are quite discrete and specific, a solution for which is relatively simple, short-term, and not requiring a complex interregional pattern of cooperation. The need for ice and storage facilities, while requiring capital, and therefore perhaps some foreign assistance, is a case in point. Quite different as a kind of constraint but still falling within this category is the lack in many countries of legislation to provide the framework for the administration of their 200-mile exclusive economic zones (EEZ). Such legislation is ultimately a national matter, requiring no capital investment, and once done can be left intact until amendments are needed. (The same cannot be said, of course, for what must be carried out as a result of the legislation in the need for data, stock assessment, enforcement capabilities and all the other elements that comprise the management of an EEZ). It should be noted in this connection that an FAO legal consultant in the region is providing valuable assistance to the individual countries employing some workshops to accomplish the objective.

On the other hand, some of the constraints are such as to require a long-term and complex solution, embracing the efforts of more than one country. This is the case for the need for information about the state of the stocks and the extent of their exploitation. Involved is the need for research and the development of statistical gathering systems, and the training of professional staff. Furthermore, the close pattern of so many small EEZ's, the intermingling of stocks, not to mention the high cost of all these needs, dictates a very extensive network of cooperation among these countries in the management of their fishery resources, which are very limited at best.

A very closely related matter is the necessity of surveillance and enforcement within the zones. While this is a matter of national responsibility, the costs again are so high and the individual area of any one country's EEZ so small, that some joint sharing of the expenses is almost mandatory, if it is to be efficient and cost-effective.

Quite another set of problems, in which solutions are long-term in achieving, deals with the fishermen themselves and the social contrasts they face. Like any other fishermen they tend to be very traditionally oriented, both in their use of gear, their areas and pattern of their fishing. In Belize, for instance, which attacked its fisheries problem in a sophisticated and comprehensive fashion, it has been difficult to get the fishermen to shift from lobsters to fin fish, a move which the managers feel is needed in terms of differences in the state of the stocks of these species. Other officers spoke of the "time-worn" nature of many of the fishing techniques which continued to be used even in the face of available and more efficient methods. In a number of countries, the need for some sort of an organization for joint fishermen activities was mentioned, but the difficulties with cooperatives were often stressed. On the other hand, the representatives of Belize,

Dominica, Guyana and Jamaica indicated the successful roles being played by cooperatives in their countries. One very helpful use of the cooperative structure in Belize is the involvement of key cooperative members in the national fishery advisory committee, thus enabling the fishermen to have a voice in the development of the management process and be a part of it.

Some of the problems facing the Caribbean countries in their administration of artisanal fisheries involve a conflict in the use of the same resources, not only at the international level but within the local level as well. While some of these local difficulties involve large- versus small-scale fisheries, they more likely arise as a conflict between the artisanal commercial fishermen, on the one hand, and the sports fishermen, on the other. These latter are joined with relatively powerful charter-boat businesses and others related to the tourist industry. In such cases, the weak political leverage of the fishermen is further reduced by the lack of any adequate overall fisheries management plan that might provide guidelines for the resolution of such conflicts.

In concluding this summary of the presentations made on artisanal fisheries, I should like to mention a few points that are of overriding importance. In the first place, it is clear that the fishery resources themselves are extremely limited and that the establishment of 200-mile exclusive zones is not by itself going to provide a panacea. This was perhaps most dramatically stated by Mr. Ballah in his keynote address. Given this situation, there is an acute necessity for the rapid development of a management capability and system. However, such a capability and system cannot be afforded or established on a national basis but must be regional in nature. Unfortunately, the mechanics for the regional effort are somewhat lacking and the elimination of the FAO/WECAFC project, as pointed out by Mr. van Buurt, is particularly regrettable. This points up the unique role of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute in the region. Indeed, a distinct challenge is offered to the GCFI and the organization will carefully have to consider how it can best meet the acute needs for the management and development of artisanal fisheries in the Caribbean.