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COMMITTEE FOR INLAND FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE OF AFRICA

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TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR INLAND CAPTURE FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

SUMMARY

The paper presents an overview of inland fisheries in Africa, highlighting issues relating to the ways and means of increasing the contribution of these fisheries. There is substantial potential to increase the contribution of well-managed inland fisheries to social and economic welfare without jeopardizing sustainability. This could be obtained by identifying key issues and constraints that need to be overcome and by addressing – at policy and institutional levels – those processes and mechanisms that continue to lead to overexploitation and poverty. The paper concludes with possible avenues for the development, agreement and implementation of a regional strategy for sustainable inland fisheries in Africa. The Committee is invited to consider, advise, and decide on recommendations for follow-up action

Introduction

1. Sub-Saharan Africa is rich in waterbodies (e.g. lakes, reservoirs, rivers, swamps, floodplains and other wetlands) most of which have important fisheries which provide food, employment and income; but they also serve as sources of water for domestic and irrigation purposes, avenues for transport, and the production of energy.

2. In Africa, at least 10 million people depend directly on the fisheries sector in one way or another for their livelihoods, including an estimated 2.9 million fishers and fish farmers. Fish production was estimated at 8.0 million tonnes in 2005, of this total 2.4 million tonnes (30 percent) came from inland fisheries.

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3. Sustainable management of inland fisheries of African water bodies is therefore of great national and international importance. Most of the bigger lakes and rivers are shared between more than one country and their management poses a challenge because the fisheries are managed under different national jurisdictions and also past patterns of management have generally proved socially disruptive and economically and ecologically unsustainable. There is therefore a continued need to improve the understanding of the causes of vulnerability and poverty in African inland fisheries, to improve information on the contribution of inland fisheries to food security and poverty alleviation and to implement actions to optimize their sustainable benefits.

4. This is in accordance with the NEPAD Action Plan for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development in Africa. For inland fisheries, the Action Plan stresses the development of good fisheries governance through the establishment of enabling institutions, and policy frameworks and actions that underpin the achievement of sustainable benefits from the sound exploitation of aquatic resources through better access to market, improved post-harvest and promotion of enterprise development.

5. There is also a need to respond to COFI's considerations of various options to give greater prominence to small-scale fisheries in FAO's Programme of Work, including the suggestion supported by many Members to allocate more resources to promote sustainable small-scale fisheries. It is essential to develop strategies for enhancing the role of the sector in fostering national and economic welfare including poverty alleviation and food supply that can contribute to the achievement of the millennium development goals. The FAO's Fisheries and Aquaculture Department strategy and programme for Africa is underpinned by the following four strategic goals:

- Optimal socio-economic benefits from aquatic resources
- Responsible and sustainable aquatic production
- Efficient and effective governance systems
- Efficient and effective knowledge and outreach systems.

6. The purpose of this paper is to provide the Committee with a brief overview of key issues, challenges and possible avenues for the development, agreement and implementation of a regional strategy for sustainable inland fisheries in Africa. The Committee is invited to consider, advise, and decide on recommendations for follow-up action.

Key issues of African inland fisheries

7. There is substantial potential to increase the contribution of well-managed inland fisheries to social and economic welfare without jeopardizing sustainability. This could be obtained by identifying key issues and constraints that need to be overcome and by addressing – at policy and institutional levels – those processes and mechanisms that continue to lead to overexploitation and poverty. In order to overcome mismanagement of resources, poverty and food insecurity, capacities need to be built up at local, national and regional levels, benefiting the institutional and human resources concerned.

8. Several initiatives conducted during the past years in the African Region could serve as guidelines for the identification of these issues. Amongst are: (i) the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP) executed from 1999-2007, which addressed poverty by specifically targeting, across 25 partner countries, resource users in artisanal fishing communities, small-scale traders, processors (mainly women), and consumers. Drawing upon the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA), SFLP focused on building capacity to improve the management and social organization of fishing communities and to improve government capacity for policy formulation, planning and management. SFLP positively influenced the incorporation of the fisheries sector into national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in many participating countries and supported changes at the policy and institutional levels in participating countries to address sustainable fisheries management; (ii) the NEPAD-CAADP mentioned in the previous section; (iii) previous CIFAA sessions; and the Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (SFAA).

9. The essential challenge will require implementing a reform process in the governance of inland capture fisheries that will allow their integration into the national policies arena targeting poverty alleviation and natural resource management systems. Here, it will be paramount to give room to the implementation of innovative approaches including the ecosystem approach to inland fisheries management. Priority should also be given to the devolution of management responsibility of natural resources to the user communities (ie. co-management) including fishing communities and other stakeholders whose livelihoods are based on the exploitation of aquatic resources. The shift towards co-management of inland fisheries will be facilitated by the growing trend of decentralisation, which is being put in place in most of the Sub-Saharan African countries.

10. In this context, it will be important to develop an efficient institutional framework that will provide incentives for sustainable fisheries management, which in the long run will result in sustainable development while letting the people concerned gain more revenue and giving them better access to socio economic services (education and health in particular).

11. Adequate information must exist upon which to base decisions. This means that research and knowledge sharing facilities must be available to all stakeholders to gather, analyse, interpret and communicate the social, economic and biological information needed for proper decision making. These include evaluation of the resource including actual values of catches, values of ecosystem services and of environmental externalities.

Approaches to assessment and management

12. In accordance with the NEPAD Action Plan for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development in Africa, and other national, regional and international initiatives like the CCRF, SFLP, PRSPs and working through FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries, a proper strategy for the development of inland fisheries in its standard form would involve several approaches. Some of which will include:

Appropriate policies

13. The political will must be present at all levels of society to adopt an integrated approach and to implement the policies that will make it possible. Many river basins traverse a succession of different ecological zones and several political boundaries in their course to the sea. Therefore, what is needed is a basin approach across national boundaries. Unfortunately existing lake and river commissions usually pay little attention to fisheries management. The partner countries should contribute by (re-enforcing) strengthening and encouraging the basin commissions to integrate fisheries development and management issues in their mandate, and ensure participation of inland capture fisheries stakeholders in decision-making processes. Governments should promote and implement appropriate natural resources management policies either by creating more flexible central structures or by devolving management to local institutions. Candidate institutions for such devolved responsibility are river and lake basin commissions (where present) and local mechanisms such as parish councils that take the fisheries sector into consideration. This means for example that the fisheries sector (throughout the basin) should be properly consulted whenever a dam is built or an irrigation project is planned for.

Facilitating mechanisms

14. Mechanisms must exist to allow fair negotiation. A number of mechanisms are available from commissions dedicated to international river and lake basins, through various levels of government to stakeholder groups of various kinds. Non-governmental organisations can also play a valuable role in representing specific interests. At the local level, fishers associations and others should also be associated. At all these levels efforts should be deployed to support capacity building to permit all parties and stakeholders to participate efficiently in negotiation and decision making.

Enabling legislation

15. A national legislation should be clearly defined if sustainable inland fisheries management is to take place. Such legal frameworks should recognize and specify the rights of fishermen in relation to other users of the resources. Further, as reinforced by the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the Convention on Biological Diversity, legislation should be in place to protect and sustainably manage natural resources including freshwater fish.

Other prerequisites to sustainable management

16. Sustainable resource exploitation and management also require the development of alternatives to income generating activities through livelihoods diversification, the recognition and valorisation of traditional knowledge and the improvement of the gender balance. The fulfilment of this last condition is crucial because despite the fact that women commonly represent over half of the human capital in the fisheries sector and play a central role within communities, in fisheries development contexts, women remain largely invisible, and policies and planning often overlooks critical gender issues.

17. Climate change issues should not be overlooked as their impact on inland fisheries may comprise productivity and livelihoods of fishing communities.

Overview of international / regional programmes and activities

18. There is a range of international and regional efforts supporting sustainable inland fisheries (see CIFAA/XV/2008/Inf.4 paper on Overview of efforts in support of African inland capture fisheries during 2006-2008, NEPAD Environment Action Plan, AU/NEPAD Action Plan for the Development of African Fisheries and Aquaculture, and recommendations from previous CIFAA sessions). As an example, Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) is the regional body responsible for the management of the fisheries in the largest African lake. LVFO was established in 1994. It has been a valuable partner to FAO in the region and many useful experiences have been gained along the way that can be applied elsewhere. Currently the lake's fisheries are guided by a Fisheries Management Plan (FMP, produced in 2002). The plan is based on fisheries co-management, involving the fisheries communities in fisheries management through beach level institutions working with local and central government officers. Central to the plan is building an enabling policy and legal framework in the Partner States for fisheries co-management and building capacity at all levels.

19. There are a number of issues that distinguish Lake Victoria from many other African fisheries. First of all Lake Victoria has a thriving fisheries industry, and the value of the fishery is widely recognised in the three countries sharing the lake and its resources. Second, the fishery is the best studied in Africa with a long data series; and finally the landings from the lake are based on a small number of mostly exotic species. Fisheries in rivers and smaller waterbodies in contrast are often not recognised as having any value. They are typically poorly studied and documented. Most fishers are part time workers including subsistence fishers. Landings commonly display an extremely large variety of species. The fisheries in rivers and smaller waterbodies are much more sensitive to environmental perturbations (including those induced by humans: water abstraction, dam construction, pollution, draining, deforestation, etc). All these impacts need to be included in the management framework, which is not easily done by an organisation which is working exclusively on fishing.

20. Another useful learning experience has been the elaboration of the Convention for the Sustainable Management of Lake Tanganyika that lays down the principles for an inter-institutional and integrated management approach of the lake. The agreement was ratified by the four littoral states (Burundi, DR Congo, Tanzania, and Zambia), and later followed by the

establishment of the Lake Tanganyika Authority. The process was initiated in 1992 and has involved a range of development partners including FAO.

21. Equally in the West and Central sub-regions The FAO/UK (DFID) Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP) developed institutional, community and Pilot projects in some countries with the aim of improving livelihoods of artisanal fishing communities including inland fishery communities from 2000-2007. The SFLP actions were focused on policy improvement, capacity building of stakeholders, gender balance, livelihoods diversification and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS within the fishing communities.

Proposed framework of activities for strategy development, for CIFAA and FAO

22. Based on climatic factors Africa can be divided into five major eco-zones/eco-regions: The desert, the Sahel, the Savannah, the equatorial and the coastal zones. Each zone presents a combination of rural and industrial practices that produce a characteristic set of challenges and opportunities for the fisheries sector. In these eco-regions rural and industrial activities flourish in terms of livestock, agriculture, fisheries and extraction activities. These various sectors interact in a number of ways, some advantageous to other sectors, some detrimental.

23. Inland Fisheries tend to be particularly vulnerable to the impacts of other activities because they depend on adequate water supply and appropriate habitat conditions. Competition between the various sectors for land, water and environmental services means that the integrated management of natural resources is needed. Any attempt to develop such a system relies on agreements between the interested parties as to the allocation of such resources.

24. Negotiations on the part of those responsible for fisheries should endeavour to secure the basic conditions necessary to ensure that fish assemblages flourish and that fishery resource users prosper through the socio-economic benefits (livelihoods and food security) which they gain through sustainable management of aquatic resources based on efficient and effective governance systems.

These various targets and concerns are reflected in the FAO strategy for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa document recently developed by FAO's Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. The resolution of these concerns is guided by a set of operational objectives of which the more prominent could be summarised as follows:

- Promote policy reforms for greater economic efficiency and social development within a pro-poor policy framework;
- Promote the use of an ecosystem approach to fisheries;
- Promote the effective representation and participation of stakeholders;
- Improve knowledge exchange on policies, strategies and methods with emphasis on South-South cooperation, promote regional communication and strengthen outreach mechanisms.

Synthesis of key issues and targets, and proposed action, for discussion and decision

25. Based on the above overview some key issues that could be identified for discussion and decision are summarised as follows:

- The assessment of the status of the inland fisheries resources and the associated aquatic environment including their contributions both to national economy and poverty alleviation;
- Create an inventory of surface waterbodies to allow for estimates of fisheries potential (specific proposals for this can be found in Jenness *et al.* 2007[1];
- The identification of trends and perspectives for planning and management of inland fisheries;
- The analysis of past and current patterns of influences on fisheries from other sectors: existing conflict areas;
- The identification of trends in land and water resource uses likely to influence the fisheries sector: potential conflict areas;
- The assessment of the range and severity of the impacts on fisheries resources resulting from the degradation of freshwater environments;
- The examination of the limitations affecting the fishery sector as reflected by existing legislation, institutional arrangements, economic and environmental pressures, etc.;
- The analysis of the trends in financial and manpower support to national authorities in charge of inland fisheries management and environmental protection;
- The identification of priorities for research, education, communication and extension.;
- The identification of the needs and mechanisms for trans-sectoral national and international collaboration;
- Options for environmental management of inland fisheries with due account of major opportunities and constraints influencing fishery sector development and management of the aquatic resources;
- How African basin organisations should proceed to integrate selected fisheries issues in their scope of responsibility?

Way Forward

26. The activities proposed in paragraph 25 should be debated at the country level and all stakeholders must be consulted. Based on the outcomes of these discussions each country should define their priorities and their needs for assistance.

27. However, in addition to the individual efforts of countries, much could be gained by greater collaboration between countries in larger regional programmes for specific basins or regions. Such synergies would make full use of the available capacity of the participating countries through sharing of knowledge and expertise on common problems. With limited financial support to start with, working groups to coordinate the development of such proposals could be established for example under CIFAA. Translating the strategy into workable implementation plans at the national or regional level would, however, require external assistance and support in many cases. CIFAA could make a significant contribution as a neutral forum for further developing proposals and planning implementation and may also assist with the identification and liaison with development partners. FAO's regional and subregional offices are capable of providing further technical guidance and advice on development of legal and institutional agreements and may also assist with the execution of technical surveys.

28. Depending on the priorities of the individual countries and on the availability of funds and in-kind support that countries could provide, CIFAA, working in cooperation with other international organizations where possible, could assist in a variety of ways, ranging from providing technical support for the establishment of consultation structures, up to training at

[1] **Jenness, J.; Dooley, J.; Aguilar-Manjarrez, J.; Riva, C. 2007.** *African Water Resource Database. GIS-based tools for inland aquatic resource management.1. Concepts and application case studies* CIFA Technical Paper. No. 33, Part 1. Rome, FAO. 167 pp.

national and sub-regional levels in the management of international resources and in the negotiation and resolving of controversies.

Suggested Action By The Committee

29. The 15th CIFAA Session is invited to review the paper and discuss and advise upon the following:

i) whether a strategy for inland fisheries in Africa is needed;

ii) whether the proposed themes and issues for action are relevant and their priority;

iii) what should be the next steps in elaborating on and finalising the strategy, including timing;

iv) what is the specific technical support needed from CIFAA and FAO;

v) which other partners (including donors) should be approached.