

LOME IV

WILL THE VOICES OF THE FISHWORKERS BE HEARD?

The negotiations in the light of the forthcoming Lome convention (*) for what the fishery sector is concerned, involve some 20 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries are going on for the past one year now. The final talks will be held during the months of November - December of this year. The text of the procedures will only be made known by January 1990.

The ICSF - through its European antenna—has aimed from the start of the negotiations to act as a spokesman for the fishworkers, to make their grievances be heard before the representatives of the European Economic Community and the ACP governments. Its objective: to make sure that—having learned the lessons from the Lome III agreements, which had in many instances a very negative impact on the fishworkers communities of the South - certain amendments be adopted.

With the aim of reaching these goals the ICSF had launched a Campaign at three different levels:

- informing European NGOs the important issues related to the development of artisanal fisheries in the South. Following a Seminary organised by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) some propositions have been put forward to modify the official text of the Lome convention.
- The Liaison Committee of Development NOOs of the European Communities on their side have shown their concern for the fishworker's problems by publishing the article below in their monthly review of April 89 (Lome Briefing N° 8). Representatives of the EEC and the ACP countries have taken notice of the text.
- launching requests for eyewitness accounts from African NGOs concerning the situation of the fishworkers in their region, after the implementation of the Lome III agreements: foreign investments, conflicts between artisanal and industrial fisheries, evaluation of marine resources, environmental problems, employment, legislation, etc.. Many eyewitness accounts and interesting responses have reached the Liaison Office, an analysis of these will be published shortly.
- organise a meeting with representatives of fishworker's organisations and scientists from North and South at Lisbon (Portugal) in June 1989 aiming at mobilising fishworkers of the North around issues of marine environment, resource management and the problems arising from the Common Fishery Policy also known as "Blue Europe". The recommendations made during the Symposium (see article on pg 4) will throw some more light on those appearing at the end of the following article.

INDUSTRIAL AND SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES : COMPETITION FOR RESOURCES AND OTHER CONTRADICTIONS

species such as shrimp, lobster and crab are to be found in their territorial waters-i.e. within the 200 mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) – often in the relatively shallow waters of the continental shelf. Moreover, in ACP countries, coastal fisheries provide food and employment for a large cross-section of the community, as well as great potential for local economic and technical development.

To some ACP states, coastal fisheries are an important foreign exchange earner because high-value

The capacity of fisheries to contribute to both national income and food security varies greatly among

* The Lome conventions (named after the capital of Togo, where the first series of talks had been held), are trade conventions between the European Economic Community (EEC) and the 66 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. The first agreements go back to 1975 (Lome I). The present negotiations are known as Lome IV.

countries and regions. In the Indian Ocean area, for instance, Mozambique and Madagascar derive substantial proportions of their foreign exchange from the export of fishery products, but fish contribute little to food security on a national basis. This is largely because these countries, in their need to earn hard currency, have concentrated largely on setting up joint ventures with fishing concerns from industrialised countries, or have offered fishing licences to foreign fleets. Consequently, the required investment effort has been channelled as a matter of course into industrial fisheries even if, in the context of economies burdened not only by debt but also by widespread malnutrition, the development potential for the small-scale fisheries sector is recognised in government plans. The attention paid to the weaker sector is prompted by political as well as humanitarian reasons in countries where underemployment, land ownership patterns, drought, desertification or war have driven substantial numbers of people out of inland areas and into the coastal zones

BROAD PERSPECTIVES: CREATING A SPACE FOR ARTISANAL FISHERIES

The marine fisheries sector is based on a fragile resource base; if mismanaged and over-exploited, it can easily become a non-renewable resource. The extent to which most fisheries in developing countries can continue to be trawled is debatable, since it is widely believed that most known fishing grounds and species are near to or have already reached their exploitable limit. Trawlers and large traditional boats - which are sometimes internationally owned - compete with the local artisanal sector for fish stocks. Well-equipped trawlers can rapidly deplete a healthy offshore resource and then move to shallow waters in search of high-value species- For example, off West Africa, it is clear that some European fleets are becoming less interested in deep sea tuna, are able to adapt themselves to new technology and move to new seas: ruthless trawling of prawn beds on the coast of Guinea Bissau is a case in point.

In many coastal fisheries, such as those of West Africa, there is a role for both large and small interests. However, the larger (and more powerful) should not be allowed to infringe on the activities of the smaller, putting at risk the viability of the smaller fishery and the coastal resource base in order to satisfy short term financial goals, which fishery agreements tend to favour. Trawlers and other industrial vessels throw overboard huge quantities of lower-value fish on which local communities depend, and also often destroy traditional fishing gear, such as fixed nets, which get in their way. Any coastal small-scale fisheries development programme will only be as successful as its ability to seek true complementary and coordination with industrial fish-

ing interests even if this means that the interests of the large boats will have to be curtailed.

Moreover, small-scale fisheries are forced to compete with much larger boats and more 'efficient' technology not only for natural fishery resources, but also for development funds and access to marketing systems under acceptable conditions for the producers. This is despite the fact that artisanal fisheries are the key to sustainable fisheries development and give a greater return on investment. They require less expensive inputs and have the capacity to employ more people in catches and resources available to them more rationally, thus providing high quality food more economically and on a more sustained basis.

Since plans for food security and financial stability compete for the same resources—fish, money and labour - they must be part of the same long term strategy if the two objectives are to be reconciled—In practice, this means that the will to develop small-scale fisheries needs to be strong enough on the part of the government to allow this sector the required conditions - in terms of training, licences, quotas, investment, research, controls, etc.—to fish for both export and for local markets.

Subsidies are certainly needed for investment in those aspects of small-scale fisheries which can hardly be viable from a financial point of view (such as local storage and marketing infrastructures) because of the low purchasing power of local people. However, subsidies cannot provide a strong economic and organisational base: it is also necessary for the small-scale fisheries sector to be in a position to reinvest some of its earnings.

Traditional artisanal fisheries hold great development potential because they bring with them a rich resource base of skill and knowledge and a stable social structure. Also, people with no experience of fishing are increasingly turning towards it for subsistence, food and income. This is especially the case where people are being displaced for economic, political or environmental reasons. These new fishing communities, which do not have a long tradition of fishing behind them, are also in need of appropriate development support. But one should bear in mind that development does not rhyme with assistance, nor with marginalisation.

FISHERIES AND FOOD SECURITY IN A FREE-FOR-ALL TRADING SYSTEM

The significance of the contribution of fish to food supplies in developing countries was noted by the FAG in its most recent World Food Survey (1987). In ACP countries, levels of fish consumption differ widely be-

tween some small island states and landlocked states, where fish is marginal or non-existent in an already protein deficient national diet.

Factors other than price and availability can prevent fish products from getting to where they would be most useful. A lack of adequate transport, storage and processing facilities forces fishworkers to sell to coastal traders for export abroad rather than to their neighbours inland. This process not only deprives local people of necessary food but the very low prices paid for the exported products undercut the indigenous fisherman of the region (the EEC, for example) to which the fish has been exported.

As part of an overall strategy for food security in developing countries, no effort should be spared to ensure that all the actors in the 'developing chain' seek to increase the contribution of fish to protein deficient diets and to make it more broadly available to the poor living in regions without ready access to fish. In order to do this, we must first examine the fisheries trade worldwide. It is clear from published FAG statistics that wealthy countries are buying the fish (sometimes for manufacturing animal feed) which poor countries need to eat, and that to make up the difference, poor countries are buying lower quality fish from wealthier countries. Such anomalies need to be well-analysed, documented and disseminated to engender the political will and the means for exchange.

LOME III: FISHERIES AGREEMENTS IN COMPETITION WITH FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT IN ACP COUNTRIES

Lome III took great strides forward in creating the basis for comprehensive fisheries development which would not only meet the needs of coastal and landlocked ACP states but which also recognised the role (and legitimacy) of fisheries agreements with Community fleets.

Fisheries agreements are the instruments which allow EEC fleets to gain licensed access to ACP waters. In return, ACP states receive financial compensation from the Community and the ship owners, as well as concessions covering employment and training of ACP nationals, transfer of technology, research, on-board observers and use of by-catches.

The EEC is compelled to negotiate fishery agreements with ACP states because of the widely accepted 200 mile exclusive economic zone (EEZs), the recent enlargement of the Community fleet (which nearly doubled with the entry of Spain and Portugal in 1986) and its own nearly depleted fishery grounds. To take

the most obvious example, employment in the Spanish fleet would fall sharply without agreed rights to fish in African seas. If the EEC recognises the need to preserve employment in Spanish fleets, measures could also be adopted to ensure that communities in ACP countries, which are economically even more vulnerable, do not pay the price of maintaining an European fleet.

Besides, the EEC Common Fisheries Policy does not, in practice, give sufficient recognition to the traditional role played by artisanal fishing communities in European coastal societies, although the EEC has increasing power to prevent the shores of Europe from being given up to excessive industrial or touristic development, with resulting high levels of pollution. Better management of the marine environment and natural stocks in European waters would lessen the need for European fishermen to fish in Third World waters.

Although there has been little systematic evaluation, reports indicate that the EEC/ACP fisheries agreements have not been particularly successful beyond satisfying the strictly commercial needs of the ship owners. Little training has been carried out and not much fish has been landed for local consumption because it is not in the commercial interests of the ship owner to do so. Moreover, ACP signatories of the fishery agreements do not have the means to control encroachments by industrial fleets in the inshore areas which are sometimes theoretically reserved for traditional fisheries.

In some instances - as is the case of some Spanish and Portuguese freezer-ships fishing off Mozambique 'whenever shrimp catches are not landed locally, they are not counted for. Since the catches are marketed outside its control, there is loss of income for the ACP country in whose waters the catches are made, as well as unrecorded depletion of stocks. ACP countries would therefore be justified in insisting that one of their officials should be present on board larger vessels fishing within the framework of fishery agreements with the EEC (as Canada has done in its recent agreement with France) and that fish caught by European vessels in the EEZ of an ACP country be considered as originating in that country (which the EEC refuses in the current negotiations).

As for research, programmes arising from agreements appear to have concerned mainly high-value migratory species such as tuna, destined for export, rather than local species which can best be exploited by small-scale fishermen for local markets. This is unacceptable when one considers the worsening food supply for the poorest in many ACP countries and the significant contribution to domestic and regional food supply which is made by small-scale fisheries.

A report to the European Parliament regarding an agreement with Madagascar declared that EEC/

ACP fisheries agreements should be included in a food strategy backed by the EEC. Within such a strategy, there is evidence to show that strong local fishworkers' organisations can mobilise to keep fish marketing circuits short in order to keep prices down, and to ensure that trading concerns do not favour export too strongly.

Recognising existing EEC development programmes, fisheries agreements could be linked directly to a programme of support for appropriately improved processing, storage and marketing techniques and organisation, building on already established local networks. In artisanal fishing communities, these networks usually have a strong basis in traditional social structures in which women play a central economic role. Ill-considered disruption of these networks can have a negative impact on household income and consequently on the wellbeing of other members of the family. For women, 'development' has often meant an increased work load and lower income. Artisanal fisheries projects in particular have tended towards improving the efficiency of fishermen rather than looking at the needs of all the participants in the local industry. New programmes should ensure that women's income and skill levels are not lowered by technological changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The ICSF would like to make the following recommendations to the EEC and ACP officials involved in the Lome negotiations:

1. A partial redirection of the funds paid by the EEC in exchange for capture of tuna and other species by European fleets towards development programmes for small-scale fishing communities would greatly enhance their capabilities. Not only fishing should benefit these programmes but also all the associated local industries on which so many people depend for food and income. The Lome Convention should aim to provide an impetus to demarginalise the small-scale sector in ACP countries, by helping to make it viable. The EEC should examine ways of encouraging investment in small-scale fisheries, without reducing the foreign exchange earned by the ACP states from activity in the fisheries sector as a whole.
2. In recognising the development role of organisations of fishworkers and fishing communities, the EEC should fishworkers organisations, especially in the areas of support for basic education and local training programmes and for appropriate credit systems which encourage the autonomy of fishworkers' organisations. Grass roots participation should be both in micro-projects, which come within the scope of the Lome III Convention, and in development programmes initiated by the ACP government and administrated by DG VIII.

3. In fishery agreements, inshore zones for the exclusive benefit of local small-scale fisheries could be agreed upon, in conjunction with a programme for protection of resources within the fragile and increasingly threatened marine environment and for research on inshore resources and socioeconomic needs of fishing communities.
4. The Commission itself could hold joint evaluations by DG VIII (Cooperation and Development) and DG XIV (Fisheries) of the impact of fishery agreements on small-scale fisheries in ACP countries. Such evaluation should help the EEC and ACP countries to alleviate competition for resources and to identify other possible contradictions in their policy for cooperation in the fishery sector.
5. The Commission could also examine the ways in which fish could be used in triangular food aid to stimulate local markets and South-South trade (with appropriate investment in transport and communication means to open up fish marketing networks in inland areas).
6. Exchanges should take place between ACP countries on other levels, for instance, those involving market information and scientific and technical research, with a view to promoting regional cooperation in fisheries. But fishworkers' organisations and research institutes in EEC countries should also be encouraged to share their experience in the field of social security cover, management, fish marketing and resource management with fishworkers' organisations in ACP countries. Private joint ventures may be a means of enacting professional cooperation of this kind

DEMAND FOR COORDINATED POLICIES

A new Lome Convention must provide the means (both political and budgetary) by which the EEC and ACP states can seek complementarity to ensure that fisheries agreements signed within the terms of the Lome Convention effectively serve the dual objective of gaining fair access for European fleets to new grounds while supporting autonomous rural development for food security in ACP states.

However, within the Commission there is an administrative disjunction between these two objectives, as they are pursued by separate Directorates General (VIII and XIV). The negotiations for 'Lome IV' should address this problem and ways should be sought to coordinate and harmonise the policies which govern fisheries agreements and fisheries development as a whole.