



Milestones

By
Maria Cristina Maneschy
(cristina@ufpa.br),
Professor at the Federal
University of Para, Brazil
and member of ICSEF

Brazil's New Fisheries and Aquaculture Law

Brazil's new Fisheries and Aquaculture Law passed in June 2009 has important implications for women. A key aspect of the new law is that it broadens the definition of the term 'fishworker' by including those who perform critical ancillary activities that, till now, had no legal recognition. With this broadening of the definition of 'fishworker', Brazil has taken yet another important step forward. Women working in fishing activities, as harvestors, had already achieved formal recognition with the approval of the Brazilian Federal Constitution in 1988, and the institution of the Social Welfare Law in 1991, that provided rural workers the same kind of social protection accorded to urban workers. Of particular interest to rural women was the recognition of their status as workers regardless of marital status.

The new law adopts a more comprehensive view of fisheries and of the relevant social actors in this field. It ensures recognition of those engaged in fisheries-related activities such as in manufacturing or repairing

nets and gear, and the processing of artisanal fish products.

It is expected that this will provide workers performing fisheries-related activities, most of whom are women, access to welfare rights, notably retirement, accident and sickness cover, and maternity indemnities. Moreover, wherever annual fishing bans are established, they will benefit from the related insurance—normally a four-month allowance involving the payment of the minimum wage for each month of the ban, approximately US\$218 per month. With this entitlement, they will receive recognition as full economic agents, who suffer, just as male fishworkers do, from income shortage during the fishing ban period. Given the major presence of women in pre- and post-harvesting activities, their official inclusion within the sector is expected to greatly increase the enrolment of women in artisanal fishworker's organizations. ■