



The Importance of Capture Fisheries in Food Security in Ghana

Food Security: Average per capita fish consumption in Ghana is estimated at 20-25kg, or close to 10kg higher than the world average of 16kg. Fish is recognized as the most important source of animal protein in all regions of Ghana. Estimates suggest that over 60% of animal protein in the Ghanaian diet comes from fish. Fish makes up 22.4% of food expenditure in all households and 25.7% of food expenditure in poor households. Undoubtedly, fish is extremely important to Ghanaians for food security, particularly among the poor. Marine and fresh water fish stocks are already showing signs of depletion. Ghana is a net importer of fish and can ill afford further declines in fisheries productivity due to unsustainable practices. The situation is made more troubling as exports are driving up domestic fish prices and nearly a quarter of children below five are undernourished. (FAO)

Economic Role of Fisheries: The fisheries sector plays a vital role in the national economy. It contributes 4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), provides employment to the labor force and contributes to the foreign exchange of the country, is a major source of animal protein consumption, and assists in the alleviation of rural poverty. Regarding foreign exchange earnings, Ghana fish exports are among the top three most important non-traditional exports. "There is no doubt that in food-deficit countries the earnings from international trade in fishery products contribute to ensuring food security at the aggregate level." (FAO)

Employment: It is estimated that over 150,000 fishers are engaged in marine capture fisheries. It is also estimated about 1.5 – 2 million people rely on and/or provide support to these fishers; these include their wives, children, close relatives as well as canoe carvers, input suppliers and office workers for industrial fleet. 500,000 fish workers engage in processing, distribution and sales of fish. However, "artisanal fishers, numbering 123,000 in 2001, are losing out in the competition with industrial fishing for exports. There is strong evidence to suggest that their regular fishing activities have been affected due to the uncontrolled influx of trawlers into coastal waters." (FAO)

Supply and Demand: Ghana is known to be only 60% fish self-sufficient and because fish availability from local sources is seasonal, fish is imported to fill the seasonal and annual deficits. The UN Food and Agricultural Organization estimated the total annual supply of fish for direct human consumption, including imports, at close 600,000 tons. The demand for fish in the country exceeds the annual supply by 360,000 tons. This is nearly as much as domestic annual production, which will need to increase significantly in coming years to prevent food insecurity.

Poverty Reduction: A 2004 report by the African Development Bank lists Ghana as one of ten African countries where fisheries "appear to be a significant motor of growth." The report further identifies Ghana as one of three countries for which their Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan adequately covers the important role fisheries play in national development and poverty reduction. According to the 2005 Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy, "the bulk of the poor, especially women, are engaged in agriculture – food crops, livestock and fisheries. Therefore accelerated development in agriculture will have direct benefit on poverty reduction in the villages and help to slow-down the rural-urban drift." (Ghana National Development Planning Commission)

Other Donor Programs: The World Bank is in the planning process for "Revitalizing the Ghanaian Fisheries Sector for Wealth and Sustainability".



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Resources

UN Food and Agriculture Organization *found at:* http://www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/FI-CP_GH/en

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