

**CARICOM Initiatives Toward  
Regional Artisanal  
Fisheries Development**

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Concerned about the deterioration of the regional agricultural sector in the late 60's and early 70's, Caribbean government leaders in 1974 called for the development of a plan for increasing food production in the region. Initiatives in this regard led to the development and elaboration of a regional food plan which was endorsed and adopted by the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community in 1975. In practice the regional food plan was envisaged not as a master plan for the development of the regional agricultural sector but rather as a regional strategy supportive of national efforts and involving certain priority sub-sectors such as: fish and fish products, livestock, oils and fats, fruits and vegetables, cereals and grain legumes, spices and essential oils, agricultural inputs and seeds and other propagating materials. The food plan concentrated on the identification and development of projects in each of the sub-sectors above for implementation in different member countries. In initial conception the projects were to relate to the achievement of strict economic objectives with no explicit consideration of nutrition. Subsequently, however, in light of deliberations and decisions emanating from the Conference of Ministers responsible for Health, and the Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for Education, the nature of the relationship between food nutrition, health and education was emphasized. As a result the regional food plan was evolved into the Regional Food Nutrition Strategy (RFNS) with explicit recommendations regarding the multifaceted nature of the projects within the strategy. Subsequent efforts therefore towards the development of the sub-sectors outlined above were conducted within the broad concepts and goals of the RFNS.

Focus on Fisheries Sub-Sector Development.---Preliminary work on the fisheries sub-sector development started in 1980 with a general economic analysis, which study provided a detailed picture of the status of the sub-sector and covered areas such as resource potential, harvesting, processing, marketing, laws and regulations and the like. The current supply and consumption patterns were addressed. The analysis also attempted to identify constraints to increase the exploitation of the regional fish resources and strategies that could be adopted to overcome these constraints.

Another major initiative, which was taken by the Secretariat in 1980, was the commissioning of a market survey of certain CARICOM countries to determine consumer attitudes to fish and fish products. The survey was conducted in Antigua and Barbuda,

Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. It examined consumer attitudes to fresh, chilled, frozen, dried/salted and smoked fish<sup>1</sup>. Among other things the survey noted that through their meal eating behavior consumers voted overwhelmingly for fish as a dietary staple. The preferred form was fresh fish. It also noted that a major constraint to the expansion of fresh fish utilization was not the resource base, but the inadequate marketing infrastructure that is part and parcel of the fish sector in each country studied.

Following upon these two investigations, the Secretariat worked towards the evolution of a specific strategy for the development of the sub-sector. In doing this, it was recognized that emphasis must necessarily be placed on artisanal fisheries since this component of the sub-sector was responsible for the majority of fish landed in all of the Member States. Consequently, in its development strategy, the Secretariat recommended that emphasis should first be placed on artisanal fisheries development. This strategy was considered and endorsed by the Minister of Agriculture at their Fifth Meeting in Saint Christopher-Nevis, January 1982. Further, the Ministers supported the proposition that the initial emphasis be placed on artisanal fisheries.

Following a fisheries seminar in Jamaica in August 1982, and subsequent consultation with fisheries officers and other officials within the Community, the Secretariat developed specific proposals for artisanal fisheries as well as for training within the fisheries sub-sector. In these proposals it was recognized that in order to achieve some measure of success, an integrated approach to artisanal fisheries development was compulsory. It was further acknowledged that the need for training pervaded the entire sector. These were presented to the May 1983 Meeting of the Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for Agriculture (SCMA) in Barbados for its consideration. The SCMA endorsed in concept the artisanal development proposals. The training scheme too, received support with the recommendation that it be modified to include provisions for a technology development component. With regard to artisanal development proposals the Secretariat is currently redrafting them so as to facilitate discussions with donor agencies in order to secure funding for their implementation. The approach to be taken is that, broadly speaking, two major initiatives would be necessary over the long term. The first would be a project geared for delivery assistance directly to the artisanal fisherman or associates through what may be best conceived as an expensive extension service. The second would be a regional industry supportive project operated through an institution such as the UWI and geared towards work in areas such as: resource assessment, technology development and product development. Perhaps you may recall the need described by the speaker from Belize for the development of products with greater value added. A scheme like this would impact positively on Belize's requirements.

<sup>1</sup> See Study Report on Market Strategy for Fresh and Processed Fish - Systems Group of Companies 1980.

With respect to training, following initiatives by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) towards the establishment of a technical cooperation network for artisanal fisheries training, the Secretariat has decided to cooperate fully with the FAO. To this end, the Secretariat recently participated in a workshop convened to discuss this issue and envisages working very closely with the FAO in implementing the recommendations of the workshop in relation to the training need for artisanal fisheries. The Secretariat also proposes to collaborate with the Commonwealth Secretariat on the mounting of a training course for ocean managers. This EEZ training course would be directed to the middle to upper level managers of CARICOM member countries from areas such as fisheries administrators, natural resources and legal divisions. The course will look at the interactions regarding the development of resources within the EEZ but focussing on the living resources.

Technical Assistance Efforts.--The Secretariat also executes a technical assistance role within the sub-sector. This occurs in a number of ways. Occasionally, donor agencies or governments communicate, with the Secretariat, their willingness to offer training or some other form of assistance within fisheries. In this instance, the Secretariat facilitates the execution of the offer by communicating with member countries and servicing their responses. In addition, the Secretariat has responded to, and will continue to respond to requests from member countries for specific assistance in any area relating to fisheries. This can range from short-term training through project preparation and identification to education and promotion exercises, and seeking counterparts for specific national projects.

Last but not least, over and above its initiative with regard to a general training program mentioned above, the Secretariat has arranged, and will continue to arrange ad hoc training opportunities for fisheries personnel (including fishermen) for member countries.

Relationships with International Agencies.--Over the past two decades, the regional fisheries sub-sector has from time to time attracted the attention of various agencies both regional and international on a global basis. The FAO was initially involved in resource assessment studies, training and general supportive technical assistance. In contrast, the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) interest was demonstrated through bilateral action with various member states and sub-groupings of member states.

Recently, the attention directed to the fisheries sub-sector, and more specifically to artisanal fisheries, has increased considerably with close to one dozen agencies or institutions indicating a desire to offer assistance or participate in the development of the fisheries sub-sector in one way or other. As recently as last week, the Secretariat exchanged ideas with one of these agencies on the question of inter-agency cooperation on regional fisheries projects. There are several factors to be considered inter alia: (1) the size and nature of the projects; (2) the extent of regional resources in support of the

requirements; (3) the size and nature of the support.

It is obvious that there would be need for some coordination of the inputs of these institutions and organizations so as to minimize duplication of effort and increase maximization of output and benefits. To this end the Secretariat is contemplating the convening of a meeting of these agencies so that their respective inputs may be discussed and agreed on within the framework for regional fisheries development which has been endorsed by the Agricultural Ministers who are responsible for fisheries matters.

#### SUMMARY

The discussion above provides a broad overview of the initiatives of the Caribbean Community Secretariat within the regional fisheries sub-sector in general, and the artisanal fisheries in particular. A deliberate attempt was made to avoid details in specific initiatives, but discussion of this is invited in keeping with the interest of conference participants.