

Expanding fish trade in West Africa

Further develop capacity in selected countries related to the export of fishery products through the construction of a technical and trade information database. Additionally, the objective was set at designing and launching a technical and trade database system to disseminate the finding and results of this project to interested stakeholders.

STDF/PG/134

Status

Completed

Start Date

01/06/2008

End Date

30/06/2010

Project Value (US\$)

\$704,340

STDF Contribution (US\$)

\$523,840

Beneficiaries

Benin

Mauritania

Senegal

Sierra Leone

The Gambia

Implementing Entities

Ministry of Industry, Investment, and Commerce (MIIC), Mali

Partners

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Background

Fish and fishery products are among the most heavily traded food products in the world. Export of processed fish products in West African countries prevents exporting countries from extracting full profits from their fishery resources. This situation has incentivized the value addition process in order to enhance the exportation capacity of fishery products in accordance with international SPS standards. Because of the geographical proximity, countries in the West African Region are keen to enter EU market, which is the largest importer of fish and fishery products. Other high-end potential markets include the United States and Japan and have equally stringent quality and safety requirements. The governments of five African countries – Benin, The Gambia, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra-Leone – have requested funds from STDF to support the Capacity Building Program for Improving the Fish Trade Performance. Requesting countries have identified a need to meet stringent SPS requirements and improve poorly functioning institutional support for exports. Additionally, the Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies report has reaffirmed that insufficient quality and safety of fish products severely constrained exports and, consequently, the wellbeing of local farmers.

Results

Identification of SPS capacity-building needs in the five countries

A detailed analysis of the fisheries sector was carried out for each of the countries taking into account the status of fish resources, the organization and socio-economic importance of the artisanal and industrial fishery subsectors, as well as aspects relating to the utilization and marketing of fishery products. This underpinned a diagnosis of existing arrangements for facilitating the fish trade, as a basis for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the competent authorities in fishery product inspection and certification and thus identifying SPS capacity-building needs.

Awareness raising concerning non-tariff barriers

The project raised awareness among fishery product inspectors and processors in the five countries concerning SPS issues and international rules, including the relevant Codex codes of practice and standards, and their implementation, as well as inspection and certification methods for fishery products. This awareness-raising also took the form of facilitating access to national and international regulations applicable to fishery products as well as market data compiled in a technical and commercial database on CD.

Capacity building for competent authorities and industry managers and promotion of good practices

The project trained inspectors and processors in Good Hygiene and Manufacturing Practices (GHP, GMP), including hygienic handling of fishery products in processing establishments and at landing sites. The various beneficiaries clearly understood the stakes involved in compliance with SPS requirements both during controls and inspections by inspectors and also in the context of "self-assessment" and HACCP plan preparation by industrial operations and hygiene/quality managers. This is a prerequisite for any fishery product exporting activity.

Sharing of experience and information among competent authorities in the region

Through the three regional training workshops organized, the project helped to develop an informal network among participants from the competent authorities of the five participating countries, who can thus share their experiences with regard to the difficulties faced in carrying out controls of fishery products and learn from the good practices successfully tested in neighbouring countries.

Recommendations

Careful identification of capacity-building needs prior to the start of a project based on country's realities and using as much as possible local expertise is a key element to achieve high impact training

The project's great asset was the "tailor-made" training designed and developed for locals by locals (national or regional) who have a thorough knowledge of countries' needs. This genuine project strength stems from a sound design and implementation phase that made use of field practitioners to formulate and provide SPS trainings in line with field's realities and perfectly adapted to local infrastructure. Detailed identification of training needs taking into account past technical assistance programmes allows for a progressive learning approach. This is useful to avoid duplication of effort and to develop new skills, as well as for gathering baseline data in the context of results-based management so as to be able to measure progress and take corrective action if required.

Better knowledge of sanitary requirements promotes better public/private understanding

Enhancing the capacity of competent authorities and enterprise quality managers enabled them to better grasp export-related health issues and share the common objective of placing on the market products that are of good sanitary quality and comply with international standards. A proper understanding of upstream fish quality and safety systems and of certification requirements enabled them better to disseminate this training to national

officials and operators throughout the food chain. It also helped the public and private sectors to develop a framework for regular consultation leading to an enhanced understanding of and preparedness for the constraints of fishery product markets.

The value chain approach is a way of ensuring that upgrading takes place evenly throughout an industry

Sectoral projects should as far as possible adopt a value chain approach. The strengthening of the public-private partnership, the creation of cooperatives, and vertical integration, where small industries take responsibility for training suppliers, are among the possible ways of building capacity for as many stakeholders as possible in a given industry. This will help make such projects more sustainable.

Market diversification is a catalyst but raises new challenges

Market and product diversification can be a catalyst for approaching new SPS issues. Studies aimed at exploring supply diversification potential are a good starting point for identifying SPS capacity-building needs in connection with diversification.

The information generated by a project should be disseminated as widely as possible

Technical assistance projects often generate a wealth of information, which is sometimes not kept, and even less disseminated so that it can be used by others. Implementing agencies should systematically endeavour to publish and ensure access to all the reports of consultants involved in a project, so that this wealth of information can be exploited and technical assistance optimized.

Short-term and medium-term project evaluations can provide useful lessons for future projects

In order to measure both a project's achievements and its long-term impacts, it is recommended that two kinds of evaluation be envisaged: (i) a post-operational evaluation to be carried out at the end of project activities in order to examine achievements and draw practical lessons concerning implementation; and (ii) an ex-post evaluation at a later stage to assess its impact.