

MULTILATERAL TRUST FUND



CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR IMPROVING THE FISH TRADE PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES

AFRICA REGION:
BENIN, GAMBIA, MAURITANIA, SENEGAL, SIERRA LEONE

Terminal Statement
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by
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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

The group of five requesting countries in West Africa that this project was designed to assist (Benin, Gambia, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone) had all identified the need for priority assistance to their fishery sectors to enable them to meet the increasingly stringent sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements of the market, in terms of the quality and safety of their fishery products. There was evidence that fishery products were being diverted from the more lucrative export markets because of a failure to comply with their requirements and that the poorly functioning institutional support for exports constrained growth. These issues were related to difficulties in the countries concerned with the interpretation and implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) SPS Agreement and to the limited capacity to deal with the market requirements for value-added products.

Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies (DTIS) carried out under the Integrated Framework of WTO had also identified fisheries as an area that required support to improve trade performance. It was apparent that the overall national economic returns from fishery resources were significantly less than they could be because of the lack of infrastructure and an efficient administration. As a result, much of the resource was exploited by international fleets and the major returns accrued outside the countries. In some countries, the national economy was obliged to accept reduced returns from licence fees, royalties and wages. Furthermore, a policy of increased national participation could not be implemented without an efficient and fully functional competent authority to underwrite sanitary control and quality as an essential component of the overall requirements.

Fish exports from these countries were constrained by insufficient capacity to meet the stringent SPS requirements of the international market. The Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the European Union (EU) had made inspection missions to requesting countries and their reports indicated insufficient guarantees in terms of quality and safety of fishery products. The DTIS reports had noted that there was a lack of human capacity and infrastructure in regulatory framework for fish inspection to meet even national standards and that this severely constrained the market for fishery products. Currently, the EU is the largest importer of fish and fishery products; the United States and Japanese markets are also attractive, but the requirements in quality of safety are very stringent in these markets. Because of the geographical proximity, countries in the West African Region are keen to enter EU market.

Against this background, this project was initiated to build capacity in the fish inspection system of the participating countries to meet international market requirements, above all to understand and deal with SPS issues.

1.2 Outline of official arrangements

Project MTF/RAF/429/STF, “Capacity-Building for Improving the Fish Trade Performance of Selected African Countries” was approved in April 2008, with a scheduled duration of 24 months and a budget of USD 511 840, donated by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) in SPS Measures of WTO. The counterpart agency designated responsible for project implementation was the Intergovernmental Organization for Marketing Information and Cooperation Service for Fishery Products in Africa (INFOPECHE).

Project activities began in April 2008 and, following revision, ended in June 2010, with no increase in budget.

1.3 Objectives of the project

The objective of the project was to develop the capacity built by other project efforts within the countries’ competent authority and industry to ensure that SPS issues were well understood and did not constrain the export of fishery products, as well as to deliver training in safe fish handling to the beach level. The project would also construct a technical and trade information data base and, by its use and networking, contribute to a further important objective: to encourage the dissemination of the findings of the project to other countries in the region.

2. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

2.1 Major achievements

The project was successful in delivering the training to fish inspectors and processors in the participating countries on SPS issues in fish handling, processing and trade; international regulations, Codex Codes of Practices, standards and their implementation; and fish inspection and certification, and their harmonization with international market requirements.

An indication of the project's success is that, during the course of the project, EU FVO inspection missions were conducted in all five countries, following which three of them (Benin, Mauritania and Senegal) were successful in obtaining EU approval for the export of fishery products. Although there were other developmental projects funded by donors in the countries, the fish inspectors acknowledged that the STDF project was a major contributor to the success of these countries. The project was successful in building a team of trained fish inspectors in these countries, able to take the implementation of fish safety and quality systems forward and capable of delivering training for the national staff and to various operators in the value chain.

The project also constructed a technical and trade information database that makes the international regulations readily available for fish inspectors and the processing industry.

The project was also successful in developing a network among the fish inspectors and fish processors in the region, which should be helpful for sharing experiences and sustaining the activities conducted under the project.

2.2 Project activities

The project conducted the following activities.

National assessments of the capacity for fish inspection and certification were performed by one national consultant in each country. The aspects reviewed included legislative framework, infrastructure, human resources for fish quality and safety management, and the strengths and weaknesses of the competent authority, fish industry and support institutions in respect of the capacity of the countries to overcome SPS issues in fish trade.

Regional assessment was performed by a regional consultant, who travelled to all the participating countries. This assessment identified capacity-building needs and opportunities for experience-sharing among the participating countries, and outlined the issues to be covered in the regional workshops intended for training of trainers.

The first regional workshop was held in Dakar, Senegal, from 16 to 21 June, 2009. It was supported by three international consultants and FAO technical staff, with lectures being delivered in English or French with simultaneous translation. Field visits were organized to the fish landing centre, fish processing establishments, fish inspection laboratories to allow the participants to make practical observations. A total of 36 participants from the five participating countries took part, as well as two representatives from INFOPECHE. All the

participants were from the national competent authority and fish processing establishments. The programme included the presentation of the national and regional assessment reports, presentations on international regulatory framework, the SPS and Technical Barriers to Trade Agreements, the EU hygiene package, Codex Codes of Practices, Standards and Guidelines, hygiene in fish handling and processing, the prerequisites and implementation of Hazards Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP)-based fish safety management, audit and verification, traceability, labelling and the application of risk analysis in fish safety management.

Minor inspection equipment was purchased from the project funds.

Five national training workshops were held. The national consultants and participants of the first regional workshop served as trainers for workshops held in each country, as follows: Benin, from 9 to 15 June 2009, (23 participants); Gambia, from 16 to 20 November 2009, (30); Mauritania, from 8 to 13 April 2010 (25); Senegal, from 7 to 11 December 2009 (20); and Sierra Leone, June 2009 (20). The workshops were intended for training both inspection staff and fish handlers and processors, and were primarily practical. They included demonstrations of hygienic fish handling on board fishing vessels and in fish landing centres, and of the role of inspectors at different segments of the food chain. The national workshops were supported by one international consultant in each country.

The national consultants, supported by two international consultants and by FAO technical staff, developed a technical and trade database containing: international regulations (WTO SPS and TBT Agreements, EU legislation related to fish trade, United States and Japanese regulations); the national regulations of each of the five participating countries; Codex Standards, Guidelines and Codes of Practices; country profiles of each of the five participating countries; the main commercially important fish species in the countries; and market reports, prices and other trade-related information. The database is available both in CD format on the Web.

A second regional workshop was held in Banjul, Gambia, from 31 May to 4 June 2010. The progress made at national level was reviewed. The draft technical and trade database was presented to obtain feedback from users to make it more useful. Two international consultants and FAO technical staff supported the workshop and 25 participants from the five countries benefited from this regional workshop.

A third regional workshop for policy-makers from each of the participating countries was held in Banjul, Gambia, on 30 and 31 August 2010. There were 22 participants, with at least one participant from each country at the level of deputy minister, parliamentarian or

secretary to the Government. The workshop was intended to raise awareness among policy-makers regarding investments of human and financial resources needed to support fish inspection and certification system in the participating countries.

In addition to these activities supported by the project, FAO sponsored the participation of the five national consultants in an advanced course on the application of risk analysis in fish safety management, held at the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies, Zaragoza, Spain from 19 to 23 January 2009.

2.3 Results

Between the first and second regional workshops, participants reported the following.

The national governments now have available a national strategy to tackle SPS issues, with a supporting action plan. Following national assessments, infrastructure improvements required by industry, support institutions and government to meet the standards were delivered to the industry and to national governments.

Skills in government, supporting institutions and industry were improved by capacity-building through regional and national workshops. The reports, CD-ROMs and manuals of the regional workshops remain in institutions, laboratories and factories for future reference and a user-friendly technical and trade database created by the project remains in the public domain through the FAO Portal as a useful information resource.

Some of the specific results are given below.

Among the expected outcomes were the national assessment reports. While performing the national assessments, national consultants reported their experiences in using the FAO Guidelines to Assess Capacity-building Needs in Official Food Control Systems. They found this a very useful guide. In particular, Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) analysis was mentioned as an important tool in assessment and, subsequently, in national action plan development.

After the first regional workshop, the trained staff gained confidence in organizing national workshops with the support of an international consultant. The training at the regional workshop thus had a multiplier effect in the countries. At the second regional workshop, the participants said that the national training had assisted them during the inspection mission by EU FVO. Although only three of the five countries emerged successfully from the inspection, the benefits derived from the training helped the two remaining countries to obtain a favourable assessment in some aspects of fish handling and

processing. For example, in Sierra Leone, the EU FVO mission in October 2009 noted that the staff of the competent authority was receiving training in hygiene requirements, official control systems and quality assurance programmes. The national consultant reported that, following the national workshop, fishermen and fish handlers were being trained, and the landing sites and beaches where fish are landed were being cleaned daily. Fishermen now spread fish on cleaned tarpaulins, instead of on beach sand, which was the earlier practice. Despite this, the EU FVO mission pointed out a number of deficiencies in processing establishments and laboratories carrying out the analysis and Sierra Leone was not included in the list of countries eligible to export fishery products to the EU. However, the national consultant estimated that, as a result of improved handling practices after the national workshop, post-harvest losses had been reduced from 15 to 10 percent in some areas in Sierra Leone.

At the second regional workshop, the participants expressed the need to sensitize policy makers to SPS issues. Accordingly, a third regional workshop was organized and high-level policy-makers found it very useful. The workshop was attended by a deputy minister (Sierra Leone), members of parliament (Gambia and Senegal) and high-ranking officers of the ministry of fisheries (Benin, Mauritania and Senegal). This is important as support from policy-makers to the competent authority (CA) in the future is essential. In some regions, the artisanal landing sites along the coast are bare sand, with no facilities or potable water. There is thus a need for investment in infrastructure, with facilities complying with hygienic requirements. Policy-makers indicated that their understanding of the issues and their importance in improving fish trade had been considerably enhanced by the workshop.

The three regional workshops under the project thus helped to establish a good network among the concerned CAs in the participating countries and facilitated information-sharing and learning from each others' experiences.

CA officers from the five countries reported that the database CD-ROM would be very useful in their routine operations, acting as a ready source of information on regulations and markets. Internet access is limited in most of the areas in which they operate. CA officers recognized that the database needs to be continuously updated and that inputs need to be provided for this. As the regional intergovernmental organization with a mandate to provide a marketing information service, INFOPECHE could assume the task of updating the database. With this objective, INFOPECHE was involved in two regional workshops under the project.

2.4 Assessment against identified deliverables

FAO carried out an assessment of the project performance against the expected outputs. This was carried out during the third regional workshop in the presence of representatives of policy makers and international consultants. The results are given in the Table.

2.5 Conclusions

During the third regional workshop, the representatives of the policy-makers stated that the project had achieved the expected outputs, although some limitations still existed.

The five countries reported the completion of a national assessment activity, with the significant involvement of a broad range of stakeholders outside the government. This was further supported by a regional assessment. An important outcome of the assessment is that the five countries developed a national plan of action to strengthen their national fish inspection systems. There was a positive response to the FAO Guidelines to Assess Capacity Building Needs in Official Food Control System, particularly the SWOT approach. All five countries used these guidelines throughout the project implementation.

The project was able to build a team of well-trained CA officers to sustain the activities conducted. Legislations in some countries were fully harmonized with international market requirements, while other countries were in the process of doing this at the time this report was written. SPS issues are now better understood and the national authorities are confident of dealing with newly emerging issues.

Three of the five countries were successful in obtaining EU approval for export and this should significantly improve fish trade performance in these countries. The two remaining countries also achieved some degree of progress and were on the path to improve market access.

The Technical and Trade Database serves as a ready source of reference for international regulations, Codex Standards, Guidelines and Codes of Practices. A very active network of fish inspection and certification system was established in the five participating countries.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The project achieved many aspects of food safety and SPS but further critical needs were identified during project implementation. The countries' representatives advocated a second phase of the project to those cover areas not assisted by the project. These include the following.

In the recipient countries, participants called for more assistance in the drafting of inspection and HACCP manuals, risk analysis and traceability systems. It is recommended that these be drafted and that capacity to implement such systems be built.

Bivalves are important resources in the five countries, but these products are high-risk food because of microbiological hazards and biotoxins. If the bivalve industry is to develop, it is essential to design a seafood sanitation programme to monitor shellfish growing and harvesting areas for faecal contamination, and the presence of toxic algal species and biotoxins. The participating countries currently have no or little knowledge in the area of shellfish safety management.

Currently, aquaculture contributes very little to fish production in the region, but there is growing interest in developing this mode of fish production. Attention should be given to the marketing of aquaculture products, which needs additional inspection and certification requirements, such as the implementation of a residue (pesticides, antibiotics and chemotherapeutic agents) control programme. Capacity needs to be built in this area.

Table

PROJECT OUTPUTS/DELIVERABLES AGAINST ASSESSMENT

Project outputs/Deliverables	Assessment
<p>National assessment reports on strengths and weaknesses of the CA and indication of the needs for improvement. If there is a national strategy to tackle SPS issues, there should be a supporting action plan for implementation.</p> <p>An assessment of the infrastructure improvements required by industry, support institutions and government to meet the standards will be delivered to the industry and to national governments following national assessments.</p>	<p>National assessment reports made available, with indication of action plans to deal with hygiene, market access and SPS issues.</p> <p>Delivered through national training workshops.</p> <p>Minor equipment support provided through the project.</p>
<p>Improved skills in government, supporting institutions and industry resulting from capacity building through regional and national workshops. This will include a group of people trained to deliver improvements in basic hygiene and quality maintenance to the beach level.</p> <p>The output from national workshops will respond to the specific needs through staff training and also training of trainers in capacity-building delivery methods.</p>	<p>Delivered through three regional and five national workshops. About 150 people from different segments of fish value chain trained.</p> <p>Curricula for national workshop developed through consultative process to respond to the needs.</p>
<p>Improvement of hygiene and quality from capture through landing will have a direct beneficial effect on the poor in terms of public health and employment.</p>	<p>Partially achieved as indicated by EU FVO mission reports and subsequent EU approval for export from three of the five participating countries. In the two countries that did not obtain EU approval, reports indicated improvement. Improved trade was expected to benefit various operators in fish value chain, while better hygiene in fish handling would improve fish safety and public health.</p>
<p>Creation of a Technical and Trade Database: a comprehensive technical and trade database of immediate and direct value to government and industry in the participating countries, providing up-to-date information on regulations, analytical methods, information on fish markets and prices as well as other documents are often difficult to obtain</p>	<p>Database developed and evaluated by participants in regional workshops.</p>
<p>A strengthened network of African fish inspectors and fish quality experts, linked to the International Association of Fish Inspectors (IAFI), with complementary synergies and experiences.</p>	<p>Partially achieved through regional workshops and participation of national consultants in IAMEZ course and IAFI Seafood Congress, Agadir, Morocco.</p>