



The Importance of Capture Fisheries in Food Security in Ethiopia

Food Security: Fish plays an important role in a nutritionally rich diet for many Ethiopians. Access to fish varies regionally; where fish is available it contributes significantly to a healthy diet. "...Eating habits have been shifting in favour of fish in areas and communities where there is regular and sufficient supply. In those communities, annual fish consumption can exceed 10 kg/person." (FAO)

Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper: Ethiopia's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper briefly mentions the importance of fisheries in the context of improved water resource management. Analysis by the African Development Bank indicates that sustainable fisheries management is vital to food security, poverty alleviation and economic growth; however, there have been no efforts to establish best practices in fisheries management within Ethiopia thus far.

Economic Benefits: Fish serves not only as a source of protein; it also contributes to the local and national economy. Improving fisheries management will allow fisheries to grow promoting even greater economic development. Fish play a significant role in imports, exports and domestic trade throughout Ethiopia. In 2001 the gross value of fish caught in the country was worth \$3,563,000. (FAO)

Fisheries Potential: Fisheries already play an important role in the Ethiopian economy and the diets of citizens. Studies show that growth in the fisheries industry is not only possible but also necessary to feed the growing population. "Current annual per capita fish production is less than 240 g."(FAO) To feed a growing population that traditionally is under-nourished, fishery production must increase at the subsistence and artisanal levels.

Work Force: Capture fisheries in Ethiopia help sustain local communities directly. Primarily artisanal, fisheries benefits are able to stay within the national context. "The fishery is predominantly artisanal, currently involving 15 000 fishers (of which 5 000 are considered full-timers), fishing from 2 342 boats (366 motorized steel or wooden vessels, and the rest are reed or raft vessels), with some 17 240 nets and 28 000 hook gear. Gear in use ranges from a variety of traps and spear, to gillnet and beach seine, and hooks on hand and longline." (FAO)

Fisheries Structure: A formal structure for fisheries associations already exists. With assistance, the sustainability and prosperity of these associations will contribute significantly to Ethiopia's development and secure access to capture fisheries. "Of the circa 5 000 full-time fishers, 2 790 are organized under 68 fishermen's cooperatives or peer groups, of which 669 fishermen (24 percent) are registered under in 19 fishermen's cooperatives. Between 1994 and 2001, fish production more than doubled, but the composition of the catch varies greatly." (FAO)

Improved Management: Overall, proper fisheries management benefits a society in many distinct ways. Ethiopia, like most of Africa, suffers from malnutrition, poverty, and economic stagnation, and environmentally unsustainable practices. Improving fisheries will contribute to poverty alleviation, economic growth, proper nutrition, and ecological growth. Fisheries can become self-sustaining; with proper guidance and support, establishing best practices in fisheries management will help reverse many development challenges.



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UN Food and Agriculture Organization: http://www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/FI-CP_ET/en

Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper: Ethiopia2004.

African Poverty Reduction Strategy Programs and the Fisheries Sector: Current Situation and Opportunities. by Reid Thorpe, et al. African Development Bank, 2004.

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