

Inter-regional training and capacity building workshop on fisheries trade, management and development in selected Least Developed Countries

4-7 April 2017, Albion Fishery Research Center, Mauritius

Summary Outcome

1. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in collaboration with the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping of Mauritius organized the above-mentioned interregional workshop from 4 to 7 April 2017. The training and capacity building workshop, which was held at the Albion Fishery Center in Mauritius, brought together **60** senior officials and experts from public and private sector as well as academia from Cambodia, Comoros, Mauritius, Mozambique, Myanmar and Uganda.
2. The training and capacity building workshop had three main objectives: (i) to exchange experience (national and regional) on how to sustainably tap into the potential of fisheries exports through diversification and structural transformation of the sector in least developed countries; (ii) to learn successful experience of countries such as Mauritius to put in place necessary policies and strategies to enhance the role of the fisheries sector in the socioeconomic development of LDCs; and (iii) to strengthen South-South Cooperation and to collectively seek ways and means for meeting international food standards which undermine the export potential of the fisheries sector.
3. Participants addressed the role of the fisheries sector in socio-economic development of LDC and SIDS; closely examined key challenges facing these countries and exchanged views on opportunities and prospects for LDCs and SIDS to become successful exporters in Fisheries. Sharing Country experiences including from Mauritius greatly contributed in helping to understand the development potential of the fishery sector. The fishery sector has great potential to boost growth, employment and food security for a number of LDCs and with inland and coastal fish resources.
4. Sustainably tapping the potential role of the fishery sector in socio-economic development of LDCs requires effectively addressing the demand- and supply- side problems facing them. It particularly requires LDCs and their development partners to view the fishery sector from economic, social and environmental perspectives. In this regard, the full and effective implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda, especially Sustainable Development Goal 14 should be given particular significance. For LDCs, the most significant barrier undermining the realization of the export potential of the fishery sector is their inability to meet international standards especially those related to food safety and quality including sanitary and phyto- sanitary standards. This is mainly due to the fact that LDCs enjoy preferential market access in major fish importing countries such as the European Union. If nationally and regionally imposed standards are harmonized, simplified and realigned with internationally agreed ones, and if LDCs

receive robust targeted technical and financial support to build their capabilities to meet the standards, there is considerable scope for many of them to become successful exporters of fisheries.

5. LDCs submitted the group's position¹ to the World Trade Organization (WTO) regarding fisheries subsidies disciplines. While LDCs are exempt from subsidies reduction commitments contained in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, their capacity to provide export or production distorting fisheries subsidies is extremely limited due to well-known financial constraints. However, LDCs are directly affected by the incentives created by cost reducing subsidies particularly those granted to large-scale industrial fishing. Hugely subsidized fisheries exports from developed and advanced developing countries distort markets for fisheries exports from LDCs, rendering them uncompetitive. Also, lucrative subsidies have led to overcapacity and overfishing, undermining LDCs food security and development prospects. Therefore, LDCs call for disciplining fishery subsidies especially those subsidies (a) granted to fishing vessels or fishing activities, which negatively impact fish stocks that are overfished; (b) provided to vessels or operators engaged in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (the prohibition should also apply to illegal transshipment at sea); and (c) related to capital and operating costs which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing.

6. Participants at the workshop identified the following priority areas for action at the national, regional and global levels:

(a) At the national level:

- LDCs should effectively integrate the fishery sector into national development strategies and budgets. They should also put in place pragmatic, forward looking and proactive policies for the fishery sector. This should include, first, building institutions capable of formulating and implementing policies and strategies; second, enhancing the capacity of scientific, R&D, academic and vocational training institutions with a focus on the fishery sector; third, providing robust support for domestic private sector to upgrade fishery exports and to hook into regional and global fish value chains. Efforts should be made to improve the technical expertise available in the fishery sector in order to increase the likelihood of the sector developing domestic solutions to its most pressing problems, rather than importing solutions that may not suit the specific country circumstances.
- Policies must also strike a balance between income and employment creation in the fishery sector and environmental sustainability of fishing. Government fishing agencies need to have clearly defined roles and responsibilities with strengthened institutional coordination in the areas of monitoring fish stocks, controlling over-fishing and IUU, conducting research, providing technical assistance in quality control, and investing in infrastructure. There is a need for policy coherence

¹ LDC Group Submission on Elements for WTO Fisheries Subsidies Disciplines (TN/RL/GEN/184), dated 22 December 2016

across relevant government ministries and institutions such as ministries of health, agriculture, industry and fishery administrations of LDCs.

- As part of their export diversification strategy, LDCs should endeavor to develop their aquaculture sub-sector but this should be done in a manner that enhances improved management and sustainability of natural fish stock in the long run. In the short-run the emergence and expansion of aquaculture depends on the natural stock, availability of improved varieties (species) of fish seeds and fish feeds, among other things.
- There should be deliberate efforts to enhance public-private partnership in the provision of basic infrastructure such as electricity, cold storage and transportation and communications networks, although the primary responsibility in the provision of infrastructure rests with governments. The provision of primary infrastructure particularly that of water infrastructure for fish processing, and energy infrastructure to maintain cold chains, is vital. Governments must evaluate the constraints facing the sector and invest in common use infrastructure where it will provide the most benefit to the developing industry
- Local authorities need to develop the capacity to collect data on the level of fish stocks/production/exports, possibly through partnerships with international organizations, in order to benchmark industry trends for policy purposes. However, in many LDCs, fishing agencies are under-funded, under-staffed, and lack adequate technical knowledge. Donors can assist with funding, institutional design and technical assistance. The designation of revenues received from fishing agreements for enhancing capacities of domestic policy agencies is a very positive development.

(b) At the international level:

- Non-tariff measures such as sanitary and phytosanitary, certification and eco-labeling requirements as well as technical barriers to trade are emerging key impediments to the export growth and competitiveness of the fishery sector of LDCs. The need to harmonize international standards- not only between and among major importing countries but also between public and private standards has become more urgent today than ever before. Solutions should also be found to realign national and regional standards with those internationally agreed ones.
- Development and trading partners of LDCs need to enhance the provision of targeted financial and technical assistance to the fishery sector of LDCs to help them build human capital and basic infrastructure, and hence allow for a greater quality and quantity of fish and fishery products to be exported by LDCs.

- Donors, NGOs and LDC governments should ensure that fishing agreements with developed country fishing fleets and fish license fees are transparent and involve payments of fair fishing fees, and the provision of capacity building for local governments and fishermen and women. The fish license agreements should reflect or take into account prevailing market value of the fish captured.
- Concrete actions should be taken to discipline production and export distorting fishery subsidies as well as subsidies that contribute to overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, while ensuring exemption of LDCs from any reduction commitments that are not consistent with their socio-economic development.

c) At the regional and sub-regional level

- Several countries usually share fishing stocks, whether the waters are maritime or inland. Monitoring, control and surveillance must be coordinated, and guidelines and regulations to meet international standards harmonized, and regional infrastructure such as transport, trade facilitation and electricity supply developed. Regional organizations such as the IOTC and ASEAN can play a catalytic role in enforcing international and regional rules and regulations as well as controlling IUU.
- As part of South-South Cooperation and with the support of international community (particularly donor countries), LDCs should identify center of excellence for training and capacity building, sharing experiences especially in scientific research, oceanography, marine sciences and remote sensing technologies applicable to the fishery sector. Countries that have such capacities at the regional and sub-regional level are encouraged to make their technical capacities for the benefits of countries of the region through international sponsors and donors.