

Report on the Technical Committee on Fisheries of the Fourteenth Session of FAO

by

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1. The Technical Committee on Fisheries of FAO - not to be mixed up with the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) established under Article V of the FAO Constitution - met in Rome from the 27th October to the 2nd November 1967 just before the Fourteenth Session of the FAO Conference.

Mr. G. N. Mitra (India) was elected Chairman. 58 Member Governments were represented and some Observers from international bodies were also present.

Activities 1966-67

2. In reviewing the activities of the biennium 1966-67 the Committee noted that there had been established a FAO Council's Committee on Fisheries and that the Fishery Division had been transformed to a Department of Fisheries with two Divisions - The Fishery Resources and Exploitation Division, and the Fishery Economics and Products Division.

3. The Committee also noted the contribution of the Department to the preparation of the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna. Three ratifications or adherences to the Convention were noted, four additional countries had signed the Convention but not yet ratified.

4. The Indicative World Plan studies had proved to be a stimulus and they were also related to the fresh presentation of some basic concepts in Chapter IV of the "State of Food and Agriculture 1967" on "The Management of Fishery Resources".

5. Many members of the Committee stressed the importance of the inland fisheries as a source of protein supply. The fewer field activities concerned with inland fisheries compared with marine fisheries were, however, a reflection of requests by Governments rather than of programme decisions by the Department.

6. The dangers to fisheries of all sorts of pollution - airborne pollutions included - and dangers from the application of insecticides were discussed and the Committee emphasized the need of more research.

7. The increased attention to resource surveys was noted especially the recent initiative of IOC in inviting joint actions with FAO in regard to the Caribbean and Mediterranean seas, and the Kuroshio Current area. There was, however, some disappointment concerning such work in the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf.

8. The necessity for study of international trade possibilities in fishery commodities was emphasized as was also the current work in fishery economics especially in the direction of identifying and describing elements which make fishery enterprises profitable.

Programme 1968-69

9. The Committee found the proposals in general well integrated and balanced. It approved nine new posts and the meetings schedule and urged that a balance be maintained between worldwide and regional conferences.

10. However, there was expressed disappointment that Budget proposals did not provide for the rate of development over three successive biennia visualized for the Department at the 13th Session of the Conference and it was recommended that adequate funds be made available. It was also recommended that the question of regional outposted officers be revised in the light of structural determinations to be made by the Conference.

11. The increasing responsibilities of the Fishery Liaison Office were recognized in secretariat services to COFI and to the Department's Regional Fishery Councils and Commissions, and also in the Department's liaison with international organisations concerned with fisheries.

12. The Committee unanimously stressed once again the importance of training in all its aspects and at all levels and pressed for faster action on the follow-up of recent surveys and urged that such training should be undertaken in developing countries preferably on a regional basis.

13. It was recognized that FAO should take the lead in fishery development and research programmes in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico areas, co-operating but not seeking to supplant related activities of other organisations and the Committee recommended that the suppression of the Regional Fishery Officer post in the Latin America Northern Zone be reconsidered. Arrangements for the Persian Gulf Area could perhaps be solved through a sub-committee from the Indian Ocean Fishery Commission.

14. The Committee particularly emphasized the need for the work of the Fishery Resources and Exploitation Division on inland fisheries and fish culture; on pollution in all its fishery aspects, and on fishing vessels, methods and operations. It also recognized the importance of stock assessment, including the exploration of new resources, and endorsed proposals to convene conferences on Marine Pollution, Food-Chains in the Sea, and the Mechanization of Small Craft.

15. The valuable services of ACMRR were recognized and there was a wish that ACMRR should meet annually. A similar body for inland fisheries was suggested.

16. Continued collaboration with ILO on vocational training and with IMCO on safety of fishing operations was noted with satisfaction.

17. Collaboration with IOC and other organizations concerned with marine science and technology should be selective to matters of priority from a fisheries point of view. The co-operation with ICES in appraising the resources off N.W.Africa was endorsed.

18. The Committee approved some changes in the organization of the Fishery Economics and Products Division for instance the establishment in 1969 of a Fishery Education and Services Branch.

19. The Committee urged studies on investment criteria and endorsed an International Conference on Investment in Fisheries in 1969. It also recommended, subject to available funds, a symposium on processing, distribution and marketing of fish to be held in the African region.

20. The Committee noted that many nations needed assistance in developing fishery legislation and urged that collaboration with the Department of Public Relations and Legal Affairs be intensified.

21. The further development of the activities in fishery statistics was noted with approval.

Future trends

22. The Committee reaffirmed the necessity to follow the plans envisaged by the 13th Session of the Conference over three full biennia. It also called for more effective technical and organizational support for regional fishery bodies.

23. Many delegations knew about the proposals concerning the organization's general structure. As this was a matter already placed before the Council and would go directly to the Conference it was not considered appropriate to review the various proposals of the future programme in detail at this stage. The Committee, therefore, recommended that organizational proposals that might result from Conference action should be placed on the agenda of the Committee on Fisheries for consideration of their implications for future work.

24. As had already been evident the question of training was a key to the development in many countries and trainers, instructors and teachers must be trained in the environment in which they would work.

25. In order to play its proper role the Department should keep in touch with other organizations especially activities arising in reference to the UN General Assembly Resolution 2172. Here the ACMRR would provide advice. The need for more work on inland fisheries was re-emphasized and attention was drawn to the increasing risk to these fisheries by pollution. More attention should also be given to brackish and coastal waters. International arrangements for the provision of marine environmental data were also considered important.

26. The IBRD and area banks in their identification studies were finding gaps in available information and filling these gaps must be part of long-term IWP work.

27. More effort must be applied to economic studies and to studies of fish products as commodities in international trade; to preparation and marketing of fish protein concentrate etc.

28. Studies of economic effects of fishery regulations should be continued as well as studies of the means used by governments for increasing the rewards of fishing to their nationals, including restraints of foreign landings and subsidies. Much remains to be done on costs and earnings and the factors determining the prices of fishery products are also inadequately understood.

29. The Committee expressed the hope that the Yearbook of Fishery Statistics would continue to extend its coverage and improve its accuracy.

30. A proposal to replace the "World Fisheries Abstracts" by a review journal was placed before the Committee and it was agreed to consider this matter at the next session.

Review of Statutory Bodies in the Field of Fisheries

31. The Committee took specific action as follows:-

It noted that the Committee on Fisheries, having accepted the report of the Working Party on the Rational Utilization of the Fishery Resources of the Indian Ocean, had terminated the latter's existence.

It recommended the abolition of the Regional Fisheries Commission for Western Africa in view of the establishment by the Council of the FAO Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic.

It recommended the abolition of the Panel of Fishery Experts and noted a change of title in another Panel to "FAO Panel of Experts on Fish Utilization".

The continuation of all the remaining fishery bodies was recommended.

32. The Technical Committee then discussed the danger of overlap between the work of the Committee on Fisheries and its own work and also other questions of relationship between the two committees but it was felt that it was not yet possible to come to firm conclusions.

Indicative World Plan for Agricultural Development (IWP)

33. In general it could be said that the input from the Department of Fisheries had led to a greater integration of many basic lines of its work. The plan would also be of great value, not only in national planning, but in preparing advice for IBRD and area Banks, and in consideration of international conservation and resource management problems. This should lead eventually to an estimate of the total world potential for fish production. The Committee recommended that the Department should support and contribute to this activity and expressed great interest in the publication of results from time to time.