

Artisanal fishing subsidies: CAOPA's advocacy in favour of the sector

Actors from the African artisanal fisheries sector met on 14 and 15 May 2019 in Dakar to share experience on fisheries subsidies and sustainable development.

The 48-hour meeting was organized by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) in partnership with the Ministry of Trade, Consumption, Informal Sector and SMEs of Senegal, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Centre for Trade, Integration and Development (Enda CACID) and the West African Fisheries Policy Network (WAFPN).

The aim is to support the members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) of the region in their efforts to successfully negotiate new fisheries subsidy rules at the WTO.

The President of the African Confederation of Professional Organizations of Artisanal Fisheries (CAOPA) made a presentation on the theme, *"Fisheries Subsidies and Sustainable Development: What lessons can be learned from the experience of actors in the sector"*?

In his presentation, Mr. Gaoussou Gueye recalled the importance of artisanal fishing in Africa. According to him, 12.3 million people work in fisheries in Africa, including more than 7.5 million men and 2.3 million women in artisanal fisheries.

In sub-Saharan Africa, fish represents on average 22% of protein consumption, and in some countries, this level exceeds 50%, he said.

Talking about subsidies and sustainability in African artisanal fisheries, CAOPA's president notes that *"transparency remains the key to sustainable resource management"*. Therefore, he added, the notification of subsidies should apply to all countries without exception, as required by the [standard FiTI](#). Transparency should be for all subsidy programs along the value chain, not just the harvest (e.g. processing plants).

Taking a typical case of Senegal, the lecturer pointed out that 10,000 engines were offered to actors without taking back the old engines. This has resulted in an increase in fishing effort and an inconsistency with government policy to reduce artisanal fishing effort.

In the case of zero-rated fuel

The President of CAOPA finds that "the use of zero-rated fuel is important for African artisanal fisheries to contribute fully to food security. But there is a lack of control, so this is difficult to justify in the case of IUU fishing and stocks that are identified as overexploited.

With regard to the differential treatment for artisanal fisheries in developing countries at the WTO, Mr. Gueye noted that sustainable artisanal fisheries must be carried out on the basis of the criteria of the guidelines of the World Organization for Agriculture (FAO). Otherwise, he added, national legislation could extend the definition of artisanal fishing to categories that are currently excluded.

Because, *"without the development of a fishery, subsidies to fishing (industrial and artisanal) will result in overexploitation, so no subsidy in the absence of fisheries development"*.

Gaoussou Gueye, on behalf of the artisanal fisheries actors, argues that *"subsidies in fisheries should be used above all to develop services that benefit the entire coastal community. Because coastal communities, especially women, are nowadays forgotten by governments that invest little in services and infrastructure at the level of coastal communities: access to (solar) electricity, drinking water, sanitation, schools, etc."*

To conclude, he asked that public funds could help to improve this situation.

It should be noted that the three main issues were on the agenda of the Dakar meeting:

What is the general situation of marine fisheries and subsidy policies in the world, and particularly in West Africa?

What impact could WTO rules on fisheries subsidies have on subsidy policies and fisheries in West Africa, and what are the possible implications for the region and its various actors?

How can an agreement be designed to reflect the interests of West African countries and promote sustainable development in the region?

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