



# JOINT ACTIONS FOR SECURE AND SUSTAINABLE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN **WEST AFRICA**



2020

WORKING TOGETHER FOR  
**SMALL-SCALE  
FISHERIES**





## SMALL SCALE,

# BIG BENEFITS

### Overview

Artisanal fisheries, based on the use of non-industrial fishing vessels such as pirogues and canoes or fishing from land, using a range of gears including gill nets, purse seines or hook and line, may be small in name but have a significant impact on the socio-economics of the communities that rely on them.

Small-scale fisheries, which form part of the culture of coastal, lakeside and riparian communities, may date back generations, with knowledge handed down from one generation to another, as part of the social system within the communities. While their contribution to the economy is not well-captured or reflected in national statistics such as GDP, their importance to food security and job creation can be vast.

Small-scale fisheries account for more than **75%** of total fish production

In the six member countries of the FCWC, small-scale fisheries account for more than 75% of total fish production and often provide the main source of certain nutritional elements for communities, including vital animal protein, fatty acids, vitamins and minerals.<sup>1</sup>

#### Small scale fisheries at a glance:

- **90%** of the global fisheries workforce, work in small-scale fisheries.
- **50%** of the small-scale fisheries workforce is female.
- **95%** of small-scale landings are destined for local consumption.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> FCWC Fisheries Management Plan

<sup>2</sup> FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries



# Food and nutrition security

While the fish caught by small-scale fishers, mainly small pelagic species such as sardinellas, sardines and anchovies, may be low in terms of monetary value, their nutritional value and role in food security for the communities that eat them is enormous.

In western Africa almost 10% of the population was estimated to be suffering from under-nourishment in 2015, largely due to unbalanced diets with high amounts of carbohydrates from cereals and sugar but insufficient protein and nutrients. Fish can go a long way to alleviate this, as fish are high in protein and precious omega-3 fatty acids. In addition, as these fish are small and typically eaten whole, all the valuable micronutrients contained in the skin and bones, which are often lost when preparing larger fish, are consumed.

Throughout Africa, fish is mainly captured in the wild. In situations following disasters such as droughts and floods, whole crops may be wiped out and food production seriously affected, but often fish is still available in the sea, lakes or rivers. These situations are becoming more common due to climate change related disasters, that have devastating impacts on vulnerable communities. The availability of fish can play a vital role during these periods of disaster to reduce food insecurity and improve resilience.

## Small fish, significant nutritional benefits

- **Omega-3 fatty acids:** brain development of the growth of foetus and child.
- **Iodine:** brain development in children, and thyroid function.
- **Vitamin D:** mental development, healthy bones, functioning of immune system.
- **Vitamin B12:** metabolism, neurological function and red blood cell formation.
- **Vitamin A:** immune system and healthy eyes.
- **Zinc:** immune system, cell growth and the growth of foetus and child.
- **Iron:** blood cell formation.
- **Calcium:** healthy bone development.



## Employment

Employing more than 90% of the world's 120 million people forming the capture fishers and fish-workers workforce, small-scale fisheries provide much-needed employment and income generation opportunities.

While the figures on employment are likely to be vastly underestimated due to the informal nature of the work, in Nigeria alone, nearly two million people are recorded as employed in small-scale fisheries underpinning the local economies and reducing poverty.

Importantly, employment in small-scale fisheries is several times higher per tonne of fish harvested than in industrial fisheries. Small-scale fisheries are also important for reducing unemployment in rural and isolated locations, as often fishing and local processing occurs where roads and infrastructure are limited. In addition, many small-scale fishers are self-employed and are directly involved in providing food for their households and communities.

### The big role of women in small-scale fisheries

Women play a vital role in small-scale fishing activities, especially in the processing and marketing sectors where they are responsible for 90% of the work. Drying, salting and smoking fish, processes used to increase product shelf life, are mainly undertaken by women and are a vital help to food security.

In spite of this role, women, and their children, are the most vulnerable group in the region. Not only do they work long hours processing and selling fish, but they are also responsible for household duties and childcare.



# Economy



While small-scale fisheries landings vary considerably between member States, with Ghana and Nigeria landings the highest, the small-scale sector is important in all countries. However, this is just a fraction of the sector's contribution to the economy.

The bulk of the catch is landed locally; pelagic species are generally smoked or dried and distributed domestically or exported to neighbouring countries. This provides a network of benefits, with the value chain highly dispersed and reaching some of the most vulnerable societal groups.

In contrast industrial fishing employs far fewer people, has a short value chain with the benefits accruing to a few individuals, very often the owners and operators of foreign-owned vessels in faraway countries.

## Small-scale fisheries support blue growth

The blue economy is dependent on healthy oceans and fish stocks, maritime security and a compliant fisheries sector. Participation of small-scale fishers in resource management helps to prevent overfishing and habitat degradation. Demonstrating effective monitoring, control and surveillance of industrial fishing operations helps to increase respect for, and compliance with, fisheries regulations by small-scale fishers.





## Recognising the challenges of small-scale fisheries

It has been estimated that around 81% of the total marine fisheries catch in the FCWC region is landed by small-scale fishers.

However, the small pelagic fish stocks, which form an important component of the landings, are under pressure from increasing demand, fuelled partially by population growth and enabled by the open access nature of the fisheries. While the numbers of canoes are rising, catches are falling.



## Migrant fishers and resource management

**Why does this happen?** Fishers migrate in order to follow the trajectories of migratory small pelagic species, or to focus on areas where fish were concentrated, such as spawning aggregation areas.

**The scale of migrant fishing:** Most of the catches by these migrant fleets are unreported in national statistics. Where catches are monitored, the fishing location is not noted – and catches are automatically treated as being domestic catches.

**What is the effect?** Catch data is under or unreported in coastal State, and over-reported in the migrants home State. This misleading data on catch origins makes it difficult to provide accurate scientific advice on the status of stocks and inhibits the development of effective management plans.

**Regional aspect:** There is increased potential for violent conflicts as migrant fishers are seen as the cause of environmental degradation and depleted fish stocks.



## Saiko – a big threat to Ghana's small-scale fishery

**What is it?** Industrial trawlers target the same catch as the canoe fishers and sell it into the local market.

**Who is involved?** Overseas operators working through Ghanaian companies with trawlers flying Ghana's flag.

**The scale of Saiko:** 76 trawlers caught 100,000 tonnes of fish in 2017, sold for over USD 50 million at landing sites – approximately the same amount of fish would be caught by 12,000 canoes or 100,000 fishers.

**What is the effect?** Saiko has a major impact on small-scale fishers, their families and local communities, affecting the economy and food security. Scientists estimate that stocks could collapse by 2020 unless Saiko is eliminated.

**Regional aspect:** Transhipment between industrial and small-scale vessels takes place across the FCWC region and is not a challenge to Ghana alone.

**In 2020, the FCWC will focus attention on small-scale fisheries and will work together to take action to ensure that the food security, employment and economic benefits of our small-scale sector are preserved and enhanced. We will do this through:**

- Developing a FCWC Regional Integration Plan for the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines).
- Supporting the action plan to implement the SSF Guidelines within the African Union policy framework, developed through regional consultation in 2018 for stakeholders in West and Central Africa.
- Linking our understanding of small-scale fishing and at-sea transhipment to enable the effective implementation of the FCWC Strategy to Combat Illegal Transhipment at Sea
- Raising awareness on the need to consider small-scale fisheries in national policies e.g. disaster management, development, and food security. This will help to increase resilience and adaptation to climate change and promote a solid foundation for sustainable blue growth.
- Increasing understanding of fisheries management experiences such as the use of closed seasons to manage fishing effort and to protect spawning stocks.

- Promoting awareness around the challenge of creating decent work conditions and adequate safety measures for all the workforce involved in small-scale fisheries, including potential tracking of small-scale vessels to improve MCS tracking and safety.
- Improving data collection systems to demonstrate impacts of management measures, and the social and economic contribution of small-scale fisheries.
- Engaging highly mobile fishers (migrants) as potential partners in ecosystem-based management efforts.

The FCWC adheres to the guiding principles of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries:

- Human rights and dignity.
- Respect of cultures and non-discrimination.
- Gender equality and equity.
- Consultation and participation.
- Rule of law.
- Transparency and accountability.
- Economic, social and environmental sustainability.
- Holistic and integrated approaches.
- Social responsibility.
- Feasibility and social and economic viability.



Find out more about the FCWC at:  
[www.fcwc-fish.org](http://www.fcwc-fish.org)

Our partners:

