

Fisheries agreements

Trojan horses

In the name of a Common Fisheries Policy, the European Union is merely dumping its own problems on to countries like Senegal

As the largest source of hard-currency earnings, fish exports from Senegal play an important role in the local economy. Among the countries of the ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) region, Senegal is the largest supplier to the European Union (EU). It makes up 80 per cent of all fish imports from ACP. However, ACP fish imports represent only a very small proportion of the total value of imports of fish to the EU.

Senegal's fish exports comprise both frozen fish and fresh fish. The export of frozen fish is done by an industrial sector supported by foreign capital, while fresh-fish export is by relatively small merchants from the informal artisanal sector.

While exports of fresh fish have increased by 50 per cent during the period 1988-1992, exports of frozen fish have stagnated. The buoyancy of the fresh-fish export trade reflects the buoyancy and dynamism of the artisanal fishery. The crisis in the frozen-fish market reflects the crisis in the industrial sector.

Both these sectors are represented by two families of owners' organizations, with quite different demands. UPAMES represents the fresh-fish traders and supports the artisanal sector. GAIPES represents the frozen-fish sector, which demands exclusive export rights and greater access to fish products.

GAIPES exclusively exports cephalopods and shrimps as well as a few other species—all in the frozen form—to Japan and Europe. All the shrimps go to Europe, while half of the exports of cephalopods is to Europe, and the other half to Japan. UPAMES sends all its fresh fish, packed in ice, to Europe. Italy accounts for 38 per

cent of the market, while France takes up 35 per cent and Spain, 15 per cent.

Despite being the largest ACP exporter of fish to Europe, Senegal is ranked only fifteenth in the 'league table' of fish exporters to Europe, accounting for 3.6 per cent of the value of all European imports from third countries.

Fish exports to Europe from Senegal are unlikely to increase, but the export of fish from other countries in the region, particularly Mauritania and Guinea Conakry, is likely to have an impact on prices received in Senegal.

The artisanal fishing community—both producers and merchants—have benefited from the export of fish. However, it is also clear that exports have disturbed the fishery, putting pressure on many species such as grouper. The result has been a decline in catch.

Although it is difficult to prove so, with attention increasingly turning to export species which are mainly demersal, fewer pelagic species are available for local consumption.

Lower returns

Further, there is evidence that the costs of motorization and the impact on the environment through overfishing is leading to lower economic returns.

When the CFA franc was devalued, it was expected that this would lead to price increases for the fish producers. However, there has been an overall drop in prices.

From the perspective of French fishermen, the export of fish from Senegal has never been a direct target of criticism, since they make up just a small percentage of imports. Only a few species are meant for

a specific African market. These do not compete with local fish in the larger market. Competition from aquaculture products such as sea bream from the southern European countries of Greece, Italy and Spain is more significant than imports from Senegal.

In the current situation, French fishermen want to ban fish imports, while wishing to export their excess capacity. A minimum price structure or levies on imports can be used to help producers in Senegal through fiscal transfers. There is also a need to discourage export of excess capacity, particularly through the re-flagging of fishing boats with African flags.

Many French boats are no longer economically viable in Europe, and the devaluation of the CFA franc works against their economic redeployment in Senegal. EU subsidies encourage the export of older boats, while newer boats remain in Europe. This was evident in the case of the new EU agreement with Argentina, where transferred EU boats are replacing existing tonnage.

Fishworkers need to benefit more directly from the opportunities available through the 'easy-export' channels currently exploited by middlemen. Their capital investment in trucks, ice and cold storage facilities is minimal due to excellent road links to the beach and air freight passage to Europe.

Meanwhile, against the advice of the EU-funded Oceanographic Research Centre (ORC) in Dakar, the EU proposed that the quota of deep-water fish allocated to the EU fleet be increased by 57 per cent. The ORC has warned that fish stocks off Senegal are so seriously depleted that there needs to be quota reductions. Ironically, the EU provides a grant of 400,000 ECU (European currency unit) to the ORC, but chooses to ignore its advice.

Grave misgivings

Fortunately, the EU Fisheries Subcommittee, which gave advice on the 1993 Senegal Accord negotiations had grave misgivings and actually recommended the rejection of the proposed agreement. The National Fishworkers Union of Senegal (CNPS), which represents 8,500 fishermen and women, is against the current agreement, which concludes in December and involves US\$35 million over two years.

The much larger EU vessels often run through nets and fragile boats, mainly at night, killing many Senegalese fishermen and causing great economic loss. In 1991, twenty-four small-scale fishermen died in such collisions, six miles of the shore.

The EU fisheries agreements cost European taxpayers tens of millions every year, but come under no serious scrutiny and get virtually no media attention. The process of negotiation is both

The new agreement

The just-concluded two-year agreement between EU and Dakar gives the European fleet the right to deploy 84 tuna boats and a certain number of trawlers for a total capacity of 13,000 GRT. The negotiation was particularly hard, especially on coastal fishing, thanks to the local lobby led by artisanal fishermen

For the first time, the representatives of the artisanal sector were able to participate in the negotiations, even though they were invited at the last moment. Through fishworkers organizations like CNPS, the position of the artisanal fishermen were taken into account. The government, provoked by the fishermen, wanted to practically cut off European access to the coastal fishing grounds, which the artisanal fishermen claimed as their means of livelihood.

Another convincing gain from the participation of artisanal fishermen was that 200,000 ECUS will be directly allocated to the development of this sector. Although the Director of Maritime Fishing has affirmed that 'an understanding will be reached with all the professionals in the framework of general interest', it is not certain give and how this amount will be distributed.

Nevertheless, the financial compensation by the EU for fishing rights has been cut. The EU will transfer to Senegal 18 million ECUS in two years, against 32 million ECUS estimated in the previous agreement. This reduction is because the actual catch is less than estimated.

The EU regards the financial compensation accorded in the last agreement more as a 'right to explore' than real compensation for the fish caught. The distribution of this kitty has been decided by the government itself—15.8 million ECUS will go to the treasury, but the rest will be devoted to the development of fisheries.

Besides strengthening the Centre for Oceanographic Research and the Training Scholarships, Dakar has decided to reinforce surveillance.

The quantity of tuna to be unloaded in Dakar for local canning factories has been maintained at 16,000 tonnes per year. The Senegalese authorities, wishing to encourage European boats to unload the fish in Senegal, demanded 25,000 tonnes, but the EU pointed out that the

European catch in Senegalese waters 'had not exceeded 10,000 tonnes in 1993'. Paradoxically, a document from the Ministry of Senegalese Fisheries Affairs says that 'the unloadings have always been higher than the fixed tonnage'.

The Senegalese government delegation wanted to 'strike a balance between take, which assures profits, while safeguarding resources'.

—This report is from Béatrice Goréz of ICSF's Brussels office

undemocratic and covert. The first payment was made in December 1992, four months before the European Parliament had a chance to vote on it. In its own waters, EU fisheries policy has led to the devastation of fish stocks. Now it is threatening the stocks of other countries. The only real beneficiaries are the merchants and consumers. Their short-term gain is at the expense of Senegalese and EU **fishermen**.

In Senegal, 40 per cent of the fish exported is caught by the small-scale sector. These fishermen receive a pittance for the high-value sea bream, grouper and sole which they catch. Although this sells in the EU for prices of up to twenty fold those paid in Senegal, it is still relatively cheap, compared to fish caught in the EU. CNPS

and the group of European NGOs called the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Agreements (CEFA) would like the next hearing on the Senegal-EU fisheries agreement to discuss these issues.

They are especially concerned about the potential impact of the accord on the live and livelihoods of Senegal's 35,000 small scale fishermen. **3**

This piece draws from the experiences of Marc Andre, a fisheries economist based in Guilvinec, south Brittany, who visited Senegal in November 1993 at the request of CNPS and the local fisheries committee in Guilvinec