

NAMIBIA

Introducing sustainable fisheries management

Prior to independence, Namibia's coastal waters were heavily overfished due to uncontrolled access allowing distant water fleets to fish beyond catch limits. At independence in 1990, the new government introduced a fisheries policy including new legal and management frameworks. One of the first acts of the new Parliament was to declare Namibia's 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). A system of fishing rights was introduced to limit entry to the fisheries sector within the EEZ. All vessels had to obtain a license to fish within the EEZ. Total Allowable Catches (TAC) were set each year based on the best available scientific evidence. The TAC was distributed among rights-holders in the form of non-transferable quotas.

Implementation of the new policies and the EEZ was effective and based on a rigorous system of monitoring, control, and surveillance. The monitoring system included dockside monitoring of all landings, the placement of observers on most major vessels (costs are charged to the industry) and deployment of three fisheries patrol vessels, an aircraft, and a helicopter. As a result, foreign trawlers were prosecuted for illegal fishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) has declined dramatically. The fisheries sector is currently more than 90 percent Namibian owned and processing fish domestically has created value added and employment. Revenue from licences and quotas is used to finance the state of the art monitoring, control and surveillance system.

Rather than introduce subsidies to encourage national capacity in the fisheries sector after independence, Namibia used taxation, particularly quota fees in the context of a rights-based system. It has been argued that the implementation of a rights-based system has led to larger fish stocks, improved compliance, and an efficient industry that supports the sound management of fish stocks and earns healthy profits (Nichols 2004). Moreover, limiting access to the resource for each participant has allowed the government to extract some of the profits in the sector, which have been channelled back into the sector.

Impact on biodiversity

The recovery of fish stocks has been variable, with some stock recovering well (hake and horse mackerel) while others, despite reduced harvesting levels, are adversely affected, due to other environmental factors (sardines).

Replicability

Namibia has successfully reformed the management of fish stocks and focused on developing the fishery sector as a national asset in terms of sound management of fish stocks and promoting national employment in the sector via domestic fishing effort and processing. The legal framework exists for other countries to follow suit – however, sustainable management of the fisheries sector requires institutional capacity to effectively implement sound management practices.

Lessons learned

Resources and technology are essential to set up effective monitoring, control and surveillance systems which are essential to manage fishing effort and harvest at sustainable levels. In general, sound fisheries management requires sufficient resources and political will.

Management strategies need to be refined to cope with the impact of environmental conditions on fish stocks.

Sustainable marine resource management relies on collaboration with neighbouring states (in this case, Angola and South Africa). International collaboration can still be improved as can the consultative process between the Government, industry and other stakeholders.

Sources: Kashindi, M. (1999); Nichols, P. (2004); World Bank (2005).

