

AMBIENTE



On the occasion of the Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen, the Global Partnership on Climate, Fisheries and Aquaculture (PaCFA) hosted at the European Environment Agency on 15th December a side event on “Fisheries, aquaculture and aquatic systems in a changing climate”. A deeper look was given at the implications of climate change on the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture and its impacts on food and livelihood security. To adapt to this new situation, international, regional and local solutions are implemented.

Main scientific bodies - WorldFish Center, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change -, International and regional organisations - Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Benguela Current Commission -, countries severely affected by climate change - Indonesia, Kiribati - as well as NGOs - Tambuyog Development Center, People’s Justice Coalition for Fisheries and the European Bureau for Conservation and Development - participated in the side event. The meeting was chaired by Cassandra De Young from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

520 million people depend on fisheries in the world. Fisheries and aquaculture contribute significantly to the socio-economic and nutritional development of many communities and are part of their culture. In Namibia, the fisheries sector represents 10% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and in Kiribati, up to 20% of the GDP is derived from tuna licenses, said Dr Robert Kay, member of the Kiribati Delegation representing Mr Betarim Rimon. Furthermore, as stressed by Dr Edward Allison - WorldFish Center-, fish counts for 15% or more of animal protein for 2.9 billion people.

Climate change is unanimously recognized as an additional pressure to fisheries and aquaculture resources. Changes in distribution and abundance of fisheries were underlined throughout the side event. Mr Patrick Lehodey, on behalf of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, gave the example of the growth of the pacific skipjack population which is due to the post-El Niño phytoplankton bloom. In the northern Benguela, penguins and garnets have declined by over 80% over the last 50 years. Sardines and anchovy have been replaced by jellyfish.

Socio-economic consequences of these changes are worrying and the Least Developed

Countries are most vulnerable. Mr Abdul Halim from the People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice explained that the income of Indonesian fishermen has fallen dramatically notably because of the decrease in fish stocks.

Sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture and ecosystem based adaptation are solutions identified to maintain and increase resilience of marine ecosystems. In this regard, reducing overfishing and overcapacity are considered by Dr Keith Brander - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – as a “triple win strategy” enabling to achieve more resilient populations, lower use of fuel and higher yields.

Aware that fish has no boundaries, some countries decided to work together and implement these solutions at regional level. This is the case for Angola, Namibia and South Africa which established the Benguela Current Commission (BCC) and committed to introducing an ecosystem based approach to the management of marine ecosystem. Dr Hashali Hamukuaya insisted on the joint management of shared fish stocks undertaken under the BCC. A similar spirit predominated to the creation of the Coral Triangle Initiative. Launched by several countries of the same region – Indonesia, Philippines etc –, which own 37% of all reef fish species, this initiative has provided numerous positive outcomes. The establishment and effective management of marine protected areas is one of the concrete results mentioned by Mr Hendra Yusran Siry - Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries -.

In the framework of adaptation measures to climate change, Ms Dinna L. Umengan - Tambuyog Development Center – called for the implementation of basic principles such as the recognition of and respect for traditional and customary right of fisher folk and coastal communities to control and manage their fishing grounds. This is the official position of the Southeast Asia Fish for Justice Network, a regional network coordinated by the Tambuyog Development Center. Ms Dinna L. Umengan and Mr Abdul Halim underlined that traditional fisher folk do not share the objectives and actions of the Coral Triangle Initiative Program, considered as an inappropriate solution for climate change.

Even if it is not clearly demonstrated that all changes stem from climate change, this phenomenon is one of the drivers of the change for the sector. More research is needed to further understand and predict passed and future changes, thus enabling vulnerable communities to cope with them efficiently.

This meeting was organized by the European Bureau for Conservation and Development, a member of PaCFA. PaCFA is a voluntary global level initiative among 20 international organizations and sector bodies with a common concern for climate change interactions with global waters and living resources and their social and economic consequences. PaCFA members share a commitment to raising awareness of the vital importance of these issues, developing effective tools and management approaches to address them, and building international development support to implement change and bring about lasting positive outcomes.

Presentations of speakers are available on:

<ftp://ext-ftp.fao.org/FI/Data/FIEP/De%20Young/COP15/www.ebcd.org>

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