AN OVERVIEW OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN KENYA *

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Introduction

Inland fresh-water fisheries are the most important fisheries in Kenya, with Lake Victoria dominating in fish production, contributing over 90% of the total fish landings in the period 1990-2005. Besides Lake Victoria, other fresh-water fish source include lakes Turkana, Baringo, Jipe, Naivasha, several dams and rivers spread across the country collectively producing 3% of total fish production. Marine and aquaculture fisheries constitute 4% and 1% respectively of the fish landed.

Figure 1. Map of Kenya showing major lakes and wetlands

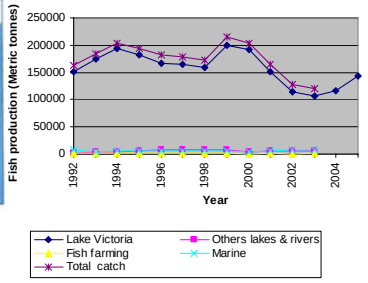

Figure 2. Fish landings in Kenya 1992-2005 (Fisheries Department Annual Reports)

Trends in Catches

There has been a decline in total fish production since the peak of **214,712 metric tons** in 1999. This decline has been attributed to the decline in catches from Lake Victoria

Figure 3. Lake Victoria Basin (ILEC, 2005)

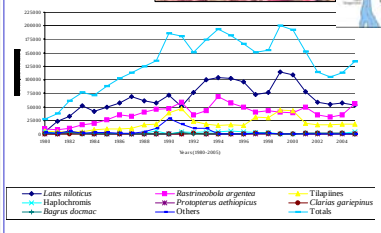

Figure 4. Fish catches by species from Lake Victoria, 1980-2005 (KMFRI database, 2006)

Main Commercial Species

Lake Victoria

There are only three species of significant commercial importance in Lake Victoria; **Nile perch** (*Lates niloticus*) 43 %, **Nile tilapia** (*Oreochromis niloticus*) 10 % and **dagaa** (*Rastrineobola argentea*) 43 % of catches, all other species contribute about 5 %.

Indian Ocean

Lobsters, prawns, crabs, octopus and squid are the main marine commercial species, but contribute only 4% of total fish landings.

Number of Fishers

Generally the **number of fishers has increased substantially** over the last decades. There has been an increase in number of fishers on Lake Victoria but a decrease in other fisheries

Thus, there seems to be increasing fishing pressure only on Lake Victoria, while other lakes - probably due to low productivity - are being abandoned

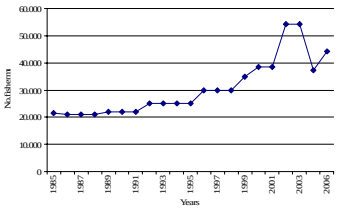

Figure 5. Number of fishers on Lake Victoria from 1985 to 2005 (Lake Victoria Frame Survey, 2006)

The fast increase in the number of fishermen and fishing vessels, particularly from the mid-1990s, may be directly attributed to the increased scope of marketing Nile perch, which has attracted fishermen from other lakes, and even from other sectors

Exports

Nile perch is the dominant fish species in the export trade, accounting for over **90 percent** in volume and value of Kenya's total fish exports.

The exported products of Nile perch include fillet, whole body (gutted, headless), fish maws and Nile perch bladder.

Other fish products exported from Kenya are mainly marine products, such as crustaceans (lobsters, prawns, crabs and fresh-water crayfish), mollusks (octopus and squid), other marine fish and small quantities of live fish.

Export Markets

Nile perch has in the past been exported to the **EU** and it is the most valuable market for Kenyan fisheries products

Israel is the most important single importer of Kenya's fish by volume, taking 42 percent in 2001 (Figure 6)

Kenya exports fish to at least 26 countries, markets include Far East countries (Japan, Australia, China, Hong Kong, etc.), Americas (USA and Canada) and others (Middle East and African Countries)

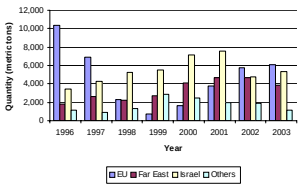

Figure 6. Nile perch exports by market regions (Kenya Fish processors and Exporters Association)

Economic Importance of Fisheries

The fishing industry is currently earning the country approximately 6.5 billion Kenya shillings and **0.5% of GDP**.

The fisheries sector is relatively young in export trade, compared to Kenya's traditional primary export sub-sectors such as agriculture.

Fish trade started in the early 1980's, with the establishment of the Nile perch processing industry.

However, Nile perch remains the main-stay of fisheries export market and account for over 80% of fish export in quantity and value (~4.5 billion Kenya shillings).

Government Policy

The government recognizes and is committed to the policy of sustainable development through judicious exploitation and use of the natural resources.

The **Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development** is responsible for policy formulation in the development and sustainable use of fisheries resources.

Kenya has legislations that provide for the management, development, conservation, exploitation and utilization of the fisheries resources (**Fisheries Act** CAP 378, 1989-Revised, 1991).

Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute is the institution mandated by the government to carry out research on fisheries in the country. It executes its research activities under six programmes namely; **Fisheries**, **Aquaculture**, **Environment and Ecology**, **Post harvest handling**, **Social economics** and **Information and database**.

Kenya as a member of fisheries organizations or bodies such as **Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization** (LVFO), and **FAO**, it is also a signatory to most of the regional and international conventions, protocols and agreements that contain guidelines for management of fisheries resources.

Summary

The importance of the fisheries sector in Kenya cannot be overemphasized. Fish has traditionally been the most affordable source of animal protein with an average national per capita consumption of 3-5% and providing employment to 0.8 to 1.5 million Kenyans. Most of the fish landed comes from Lake Victoria. Total value of landings is about 6.5 billion Kenya shillings per annum and earns about US$ 50 million of foreign exchange through export, contributing 0.5% to the GDP.

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