



fair-fish certification scheme for artisanal fishery

see presentation: <http://www.fair-fish.ch/files/pdf/english/fair-fish-pres-en.pdf>

The fair-fis association has been founded in Switzerland in 2000.

The goals of fair fish are to develop and promote fair methods in production of fish:

1. Respecting the needs and the suffering of the animals (e. g. wild fish has to be caught by methods allowing short duration of capture and stunning and killing each fish immediately after it is taken off the water),
2. Protection of species and environment,
3. Appropriate compensation of the producers,
4. Best quality of production in order to reduce waste of a high value raw product.

These goals are not contradictory, but mutually reinforcing.

To give an example, catch and killing prescriptions at the same time

- a) reduce the range of applicable fishing methods to the most extensive and therefore the most sustainable ones and
- b) provide a better quality of fish meat (lowest possible impact of stress hormones a.s.o.).

Pilot project in Senegal

We first tried to cooperate with fish farmers and professional fishermen in Switzerland in order to set up a Swiss test market for labelled fish. Unfortunately, the feedback of Swiss producers was rather weak. So we took the chance of co-operation with artisanal fishermen in Senegal offered by a Swiss development organization in 2003.

In summer 2004, we started a pilot project to export «fair fish» from senegalese artisanal fisheries to Switzerland. First small importations began in March 2006. In 2007 we carried out a feasibility study for exportations of a bigger scale ordered by Migros retail chain. During the study, the fair-fish directives and instructions have been brought to a thoroughly defined state in order to be externally controllable. By end of April 2007, the fair-fish labelled fishery in Senegal has been certified against these directives by the Société Générale de Surveillance (SGS), as well as by Friend of the Sea.

fair-fish is still the only third party certified fishery label that gives artisanal fishery of a Southern country access to the market of a Northern country. In the same time, it is the only fishery label assessing for fair trade and animal welfare criteria, as both fair trade and animal welfare organizations have not yet developed initiatives in fisheries.

The gain for fishing villages

While the situation of artisanal fisheries in Senegal gets more and more difficult because of the increasing number of people leaving their drying ground and looking for a living on fishing and because of the uncontrolled depletion of marine resources, the potential gain for fishing villages by co-operating with fair-fish is considerable:

- giving artisanal fishermen in the South a non-anonymous access to quality markets in Northern countries
- prices fixed together with the fishermen, at least 10% above the price offered by local fish merchants, combined with the guarantee that fair-fish will buy the quantity ordered if fish conform with label prescriptions,
- preserving the traditional role of fisherwomen in the fish market,
- fair trade prime (additionally 10% of the fisherman's price) given to the local communities to help them create alternative income beyond fishery
- life jackets for fishermen involved as well as health insurance for them and their families
- exclusion of child labor in fishery and control on school attendance of the children of involved fishermen
- assistance in defining sustainable fishery criteria as quota and biological rest periods (as an initial must, fair-fish allows but the catch above minimal size and of species which are not overfished, depleted or endangered, and only by extensive methods which cause little bycatch and little environmental impact)
- preserving an increasing proportion of the catch to the local market as catches for fair-fish will grow
- empowerment by training fishermen and fishwomen to cope with demands for food safety, hygiene and traceability and by integrating them in the decision making of the local fair-fish licensee (the two associations of involved fishermen and fishwomen are to get a 15 percent share each of fair-fish-trade Sénégal LLC).

If fair-fish gets the chance to enlarge its pilot project to an economically sound level, it will offer

- a chance to artisanal fisheries in other developing countries to preserve their stocks while getting access to the quality markets of developed countries, and
- a chance to fishing villages to diversificate their mostly monoculture based and therefore precarious local economy.

Achievements, problems and next possible steps

Based on our feasibility study accomplished in April 2007, Migros acknowledged that the implementation of ambitious fair-fish standard is technically ready. Nevertheless, the managers of Switzerland's biggest retail chain were afraid of the economical risks and thus decided to leave the project.

After struggling to cover unpaid development costs and after several attempts to restart the project on a lower scale, we are now on the eve of a new launch together with a German importer and another Swiss retail chain. We want to prove that the fair-fish certification scheme is ready and could be implemented in other countries as well.

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