

Bangladesh Spells Out Strategies for the Future in Fisheries and Aquaculture

The Department of Fisheries, Bangladesh, with assistance from the Fourth Fisheries Project and the co-operation of many stakeholders, has spelled out strategies for the future in various areas of fisheries and aquaculture. Bay of Bengal News takes a look at these strategies.



Bangladesh had formulated a National Fisheries Policy in 1998. It spelled out the country's objectives in fisheries: to increase fish production, alleviate poverty, improve the conditions of fishers, provide animal protein, strengthen foreign currency earnings through export, and promote ecology, biodiversity and public health.

How are these objectives to be achieved? A pathway to the objectives has now been clearly laid out by the Department of Fisheries, particularly by its Fourth Fisheries Project. The "pathway" is in the form of a National Fisheries Strategy and several sub-strategies. The strategies outline management approaches to implementing the National Fisheries Policy, taking into account likely changes in the fisheries scenario over the next 10 years.

The National Fisheries Strategy evolved through a series of studies, papers, discussions and meetings represent one of the largest, widest and most significant consultative exercises of its kind ever undertaken in Bangladesh fisheries. The National Fisheries Strategy includes strategies and action plans for eight sub-sectors.

Common to the National Fisheries Strategy and the sub-strategies is a core of central principles and themes – such as decentralization, people's participation, poverty alleviation, gender equity. The National Fisheries Strategy was also guided by the

Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, and by a number of international agreements signed by the government.

Here are summaries of the sub-sector strategies.

Inland Capture Fisheries Strategy
Aim : Sustainable management of inland capture fisheries for fishing communities and users.

Inland fisheries has over the years been replaced as top fish producer by aquaculture, due mainly to decline and degradation of inland resources. The first priority now is improved biological management that will arrest decline in production.

A few key components of the strategy are: Leasing policy for the resource should be based primarily on resource-user access rather than on revenue generation. Access restrictions are needed to ensure management control over the resource and prevent over-fishing.

Community planning and management interventions such as sanctuaries, control of fishing effort, habitat restoration or stocking should be encouraged to ensure sustainability.

Community participation is essential for the success of the strategies.

Aquaculture Strategy

Aim: To support the continued development of aquaculture as a key supplier of animal protein by (a) providing a regulatory structure to ensure quality inputs, and (b) by providing services to enhance knowledge to promote production.

The aquaculture sector expanded rapidly from the 1970s; many problems have arisen, perhaps because of uncontrolled expansion. The main problems relate to the quality of inputs, especially fingerlings. What's needed is a regulatory framework to ensure supply of quality inputs; a registration scheme for all hatcheries that produce fingerlings; a certification scheme for hatchery-produced fingerlings; and regulations for other input suppliers, such as feed producers.



Aquaculture Extension Strategy

Aim: An efficient, effective need-based extension service provided to all categories of farmers, to help them increase aquaculture production to an optimum sustainable level.

The Aquaculture Extension Strategy was first drafted in 2002, an Action Plan for its implementation was drawn up a year later. In fact, this was the first strategy to be ready. The key principles recognised for the strategy (collaboration, participation, decentralization, etc.) became key principles also for the other strategies. The Aquaculture Extension Strategy focuses on pond aquaculture, but also covers other forms of culture fisheries.

The new extension service strategy will foster collaboration with other extension providers to ensure maximum coverage by the target audience. It is designed to move extension away from dependence on short-term development projects.

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

Aim: To develop systems in the Department of Fisheries capable of monitoring progress towards the objectives of the National Fisheries Policy, and evaluating activities directed at these objectives.

The objectives of the National Fisheries Policy are many and diverse. A system to monitor progress towards these objectives would be complex, and would require many different types of expertise. The Department of Fisheries should play a leading role in establishing and managing the system. It should develop its own capacity for monitoring and evaluation in several areas of fisheries production and development. The Department should also be able to develop and enforce protocols for fisheries data collection sponsored by external organisations. It should establish networks with other departments and agencies.

To develop its own capacity, the Department may have to set up an

integrated Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation wing that will translate findings into improved design of new projects and programmes.

Marine Strategy

Aim: Ensure the sustainable management of marine fisheries by allocating fishing rights to communities and fishing groups, and by providing the regulatory framework for this management.

Industrial fishing boats, mechanisation of traditional boats, more and more people in artisanal and shore-based fishery – all this has dramatically increased in marine fishing effort. Development has been largely uncontrolled, with neither management nor sound knowledge emerging on how the industry is coping. Ownership of the resource has moved out of the hands of fishermen into the hands of wealthy businessmen and traders.

Some of the actions needed: Ensure resource access on a priority basis to poor shore-based fishermen, then to offshore fishermen, then to commercial fishermen. Establish a register of fishermen. Identify and allocate resources to be fished by the poor, formulate management plans, get local institutions to support resource management. Grant access rights to registered fishers to control fishing effort.

Shrimp Strategy

Aim: A shrimp sector recognised internationally for high-quality shrimp. It should be produced using socially responsible and environmentally sustainable production methods.

The shrimp sector has tremendous potential for the national economy and for private sector stakeholders. It needs a regulatory framework, with participation and recognition by all stakeholders. It will bring about standards and regulations fostering sound management of shrimp production. It will deal with all areas of shrimp sector development – production, quality control, marketing and export, environment and social aspects. The regulatory framework will ensure sustainable

increases in the supply and value of shrimp, enhance farmer earnings, improve the socio-economic conditions of local communities and increase foreign exchange earnings. It will ensure that shrimp production does not harm the environment.

Quality Control Strategy

Aim : Ensure that all fish and fishery products marketed either for export or domestic consumption satisfy quality requirements cited in HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) and other protocols – including traceability and social accountability.

The quality control strategy aims at guiding quality control in fisheries over the next 10 to 20 years. The first priority is to ensure that food safety requirements for export are met. The concerns of consumers and importing countries (relating to safety, social equity, the environment) must be met. The product must be traceable from source, to identify any deliberate attempts at contamination.

Human Resources Development Strategy

Aim: To strengthen the human resource capacity of the Department of Fisheries, its partners and primary stakeholders, to ensure that personnel at all levels have the knowledge, skills and techniques to enable them to make productive use of their potential.

The capacity of the Department to plan, organise, implement and monitor staff development is weak, because of the reliance on short-term development projects. Some elements of a human resources strategy to strengthen the DOF: The capacity within the Department of Fisheries, particularly its Training Wing, will be developed to coordinate all aspects of Human Resources Development in fisheries. All training will be coordinated by the Training Wing. A systematic Human Resources Development process will be developed and implemented so that DOF staff, clients and partners are able to meet the sector's challenges.