



POWER TO THE FISHERS' COMMUNIQUE ON THE FIRST INTER-DISTRICT DIALOGUE SERIES WITH FISHERFOLK

Preamble

The Power to the Fishers (PTF) project organized an inter-district dialogue on Thursday, 13th May 2021 at the Windy Bay Guest House in Winneba. The inter-district dialogue provided a platform for fisherfolk to voice their concerns and misgivings within the sector and further offer solutions towards enhancing the industry and improving their livelihoods. The fisherfolk were drawn from the project's 5 beneficiary districts – Awutu Senya, Effutu, Gomoa West, Ekumfi and Shama districts. Topics for discussion during the dialogue were;

- Fish smoking technologies and fish quality assurance
- Closed season for sustainable fish stock management
- Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and impacts on fish stock
- Premix fuel distribution and access

Recommendations and deliberations which arose from the thematic dialogue session in the plenary were as follows;

- The high cost of the Ahotor oven compared to the Chorkor oven serves as a disincentive to the adoption of the Ahotor oven. The Government of Ghana (GoG) and the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MoFAD) should subsidize the cost of the Ahotor oven to facilitate widespread use and adoption of the improved smoking technology.
- There is little to no appreciation for Ahotor-smoked fish by the general public leading to low demand. Fish processors have little economic motivation to adopt the Ahotor oven despite it being a healthier option and having several other benefits. The GoG and MoFAD must ensure that the general public has enough education on the Ahotor oven and its benefits in order to create markets for fish smoked with the oven. This will also encourage fishing communities to desist from the use of less efficient ovens which are detrimental to the health of fish processors and consumers.

- The concept of the closed season is widely welcomed by fisherfolk and its potential to sustainably rebuild fish stock is well understood. However, the industrial and semi-industrial vessels – which make vast catch volumes – will have to limit their sea-faring activities for rebuilding of fish stock to be realized. The GoG must prolong the closed season for industrial trawlers; artisanal fishermen should have a closed season for one month (preferably in July) while industrial trawlers should have a closed season for three months (from July to September). Both artisanal and industrial vessels should commence their closed seasons at the same time.
- The announcement of the closed season must be communicated ahead of time, at least 3 months before commencement, to enable fisherfolk find other alternatives to boost their incomes during the period.
- Duty bearers over the period have pledged to fight the IUU menace but to date little has been done. MoFAD and Fisheries Commission (FC) should intensify measures in combatting IUU.
- Fisherfolk welcome the call to desist from unapproved means of fishing as it negates the gains made by the observance of the closed season. MoFAD, FC, and the marine police should enforce the existing laws and punish offenders.
- Lead fisherfolk have been engaged severally on ways to enhance the sector while little engagements have been held with the wider fisheries audience along the coast – who happen to be the chief culprits of fisheries-related offences. MoFAD and the FC should extend their interventions and educational sessions to the wider fisherfolk audience.
- MoFAD must ensure that the task forces along the landing beaches are strengthened through further capacity-building exercises and provided with some level of authority. This is to effectively control IUU fishing and thereby protect the marine resource from exploitation.
- The National Premix Secretariat (NPS) under MoFAD must ensure that the composition and administration of premix committees and the distribution of premix fuel in fishing communities are managed by the chief fishermen and his council of elders. This should be void of interference by the ruling government. The tensions and disputes relating to access to premix fuel stem from the involvement of political party operatives and the winner-takes-all syndrome.

Conclusion

In attendance were 31 participants including the secretary to the municipal chief executive (MCE) of Effutu Municipality, the acting Central Regional Director of FC, zonal and technical fisheries officers and lead fisherfolk from the five project districts.

The Power to the Fishers project is funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by CERATH Development Organization (CDO). Views expressed here is an aggregation of deliberations communicated by sector stakeholders during the PTF inter-district dialogue and in no way suggestive of the EU's opinions.

SIGNED

Derek Adabie

Project Manager, PTF

14 May 2021