



AUDA-NEPAD
AFRICAN UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY



POLICY BRIEF

Strategy for Institutional Coordination Between RECs and RFBs and Strengthening Their Relationships with NSAs

Preamble

This Policy Brief is the consolidation of the outcomes of the deliberations of the AFRM Working Groups and the Think Tank Executive Committee inaugural meetings and workshops organized by African Union-Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resource (AU-IBAR) in collaboration with AUDA-NEPAD, held in Abidjan Cote D'Ivoire from 7th to 11th March 2022. During these meetings, the AFRM Working Groups identified and prioritized key issues that should be addressed for effective development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in Africa. The Policy, Governance and Institutions Working Group identified and prioritized “Identification of strategies for institutional coordination between (Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) and strengthening their relationships with non-State Actors (NSAs)” as the main area of concern for the development of a policy brief. This Policy Brief on strategies for institutional coordination has therefore been prepared from the deliberations and inputs of the Think Tank Executive Committee on the aforementioned priority issue.

Summary

The social and economic value of Africa’s fisheries is vast. However, Africa is not taking advantage of her own fisheries potential for expansion and growth of economic opportunities, while her population continues to live in an environment of food and nutrition insecurity, hunger, poverty, unemployment and low incomes. The sustainability of these potential benefits is under threat due to uncoordinated governance arrangements, weak institutions and disjointed policies. There are many stakeholders and different institutions such as RECs, RFBs, States and NSAs that are involved in fisheries and aquaculture policy development and implementation, and yet exploitation of fisheries and aquaculture resources is not fully optimized.

The Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Africa Fisheries and Aquaculture (PFRS, 2014) states that the Regional and sub-regional cooperation among stakeholders, presently operate in an isolated manner and their actions are generally fragmented or incoherent. It is therefore, important to strengthen south-south cooperation and develop institutional cooperation mechanisms among RECs, RFBs, NSAs to ensure coherence and efficient coordination of fisheries policies and aquaculture development. In

order to sustain the activities of RECs, RFBs, States and NSAs that enhances governance, institutional cooperation is crucial for efficient financing of such activities. In forging the needed synergies between actors, it is important to establish systems that enhance effective delivery of policy prescriptions. For example, a system could be developed where the RFBs serve as technical arm of RECs.

Key Issues

- The inadequate or weak inter, intra and bilateral institutional linkages should be strengthened as well as the development of institutional coordination mechanisms among RECs, RFBs, State and NSAs to ensure coherence, consistence and coordination of fisheries policies and aquaculture development.
- Ineffective fisheries and aquaculture management and development need to be improved in order to enhance the continent's food and nutrition security, job creation and income generation within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
- The duplication of efforts should be identified and addressed by the various stakeholders in order to ensure effective coordination of fisheries and aquaculture management and development. This is because currently, there are uncoordinated management interventions at both national and regional levels.
- The limited and often non-existent linkages between RECs, RFBs, and NSAs have contributed to policy incoherence, inconsistency, disjointment and or failure.
- Inadequate capacity of some of the stakeholders' institutions to accommodate and perform duties/responsibilities, requires sustained continuous training especially in contemporary and emerging areas in aquatic resource management such as policy, governance and cross-cutting issues (such as climate change).

The Main Actions Needed for Effective Institutional Coordination

- Enhance coherence and coordination for effective regulatory enforcement amongst stakeholders' institutions at national and regional levels, through periodic policy reviews.
- Facilitate implementation of reforms in the fisheries and aquaculture sector suggested by policy reviews.
- Learn from successes of Best Practice achieved from institutional cooperation among RECs and RFB such as: -
 - » Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and (Regional Fisheries Committee for the Gulf of Guinea (COREP);
 - » Lake Victoria Basin Authority (LVBA) and East Africa Community (EAC); and,
 - » Established linkages within RFBs, for example the MoU between the RFBs operating at the Atlantic Ocean, the parties of the MoU established in 2015 Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation Bordering the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO), Subregional Fisheries Commission (SRFC), Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) and Regional Fisheries Committee for the Gulf of Guinea (COREP).
- Strengthen the African platform of regional institutions for fisheries, aquaculture and aquatic systems (APRIFAAS), to develop a forum where all the continental fisheries resource governance groups,

which include RECs, RFBs, RFMOs, Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) as well as NSAs periodically convene a general assembly to deliberate on priority issues.

- Strengthen and improve on the gains of the African NSA coordinating platform in fisheries and aquaculture as well as the Regional NSAs coordinating platforms.

Policy Recommendation

- Review policies to assess the current situation of cooperation among RECs, RFBs, Member States (MSs) and NSAs with the view to developing policies and strategies that enhance cooperation and coordination of governance issues.
- Assess and develop mechanisms necessary to strengthen institutional, human and financial capacities.
- Analyze and develop mechanisms required to institutionalize cooperation that is necessary to sustain coordination among stakeholders.

Conclusion

It is important to domesticate and customize international instruments and enhance coordination amongst Member States (MS) for effective and efficient governance across the continent. Development of strategies for sharing information and facilitating unified common voice through harmonization of common policies should be prioritized. This becomes a more critical practice when negotiating agreements. The MS and RECs should strengthen linkages, ensure policy coherence and institutional coordination especially in regulatory enforcement including ratification of international instruments. Policies and governance reforms for the sector will be required for the implementation of the recommendation actions.

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