

POLICY BRIEF

Lessons Learned and Best Practices from Contemporary and Emerging Issues in African Fisheries

The African continent’s rich aquatic resource endowment creates the potential for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors to significantly increase their contribution to food security, per capita fish consumption and economic development. The sector, as a whole, is underperforming due to high post-harvest fish losses, weak fisheries management, and the undeveloped state of the aquaculture industry. The African Union’s Agenda 63, African Continent Free Trade Agreement (AfCTA), Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture (PFRS) provide a policy framework to address the challenges and opportunities within the sector. This policy brief considers contemporary and emerging issues in fisheries and aquaculture, identifying key lessons and best practices which enable value chain development. The key recommendation is to empower public-private-community institutions and collaboration at national and regional level to build fishery and aquaculture value chains based on an integrated ‘blue economy’ approach.

I. Key Findings

- Many African Union member states lack the basic institutions and management arrangements required to achieve the PFRS objectives; however, many positive examples were identified where sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development is taking place, resulting in the creation of sustainable livelihoods and jobs, economic growth and enhanced food security.
- An overarching ‘best practice’ characterizing the successful sector development examples, was public-private-community collaboration to build fishery and aquaculture value chains. Interventions to grow aquaculture production and enhance fisheries have historically tended to be public sector driven, usually under the national fishery department’s mandate, focusing on primary production regulation and technical issues. The present ‘best practice’ analysis indicates that African fishery and aquaculture governance and sector development is gradually moving towards a more integrated and enabled value chain and a blue economy approach involving multiple public and non-state actors working together. However, progress across the African Union member states is uneven and thus more explicit policy, advocacy, institution building and projects promoting an integrated value chain approach are required.
- Empowering initiatives that can unlock the potential of the fisheries and aquaculture fishery and aquaculture value chains that were observed, included (1) greater

inclusion of the commercial sector as an aquaculture development partner, for example as technical partners, credit providers and mentors for emerging aquaculture enterprises; (2) building industry associations; (3) integrated government support for critical infrastructure, blue finance, zoned and environmentally approved access to land and water for aquaculture; (4) established standards organizations serving all member states for product certification; and (5) coherent and harmonized trade tariffs, business permits and taxes. The policy lesson is to promote vertical and horizontal integration and cooperation in building value chains, using tools such as the Blue Economy, an Ecosystem Approach, and regional cooperation through regional fishery and ecosystem management organizations as well as regional economic communities and non-state actor associations.

- The case studies analysed revealed that a key success strategy to build value chains was the facilitation of collaborative partnerships of strong and responsive governance institutions including national government, regional fishery and economic institutions and non-state actors (private sector associations, NGOs, social enterprises and international development agencies). The present study revealed that Public Private Partnerships

(PPPs) are an essential tool for building fishery and aquaculture value chains, for example, where fishery departments have worked with the fishing industry to develop new products and markets for previously discarded bycatch; and joint public sector and non-state actor promotion of innovative blue finance and investment schemes such as the Seychelles government's Blue Bond.

- A critical need for designing effective interventions for sector growth, that was highlighted by some development practitioners, is a better understanding existing fishery and aquaculture value chains beyond the primary production level, particularly for the rapidly growing aquaculture sectors in parts of Africa, such as Lake Victoria.
- The consultations revealed that successful fishery and aquaculture sector governance and value chain development is increasingly dependent on effective regional economic community (REC) agreements, regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs), and certification schemes.
- A key development lesson, highlighted by stakeholders who were interviewed, was that public sector development programs usually have a relatively short lifespan (typically three to five years), but a longer-term commitment (10y+) is required for

effective building human and institutional capacity and to realize PFRS outcomes.

- Despite the inclusion of women in the fisheries and aquaculture sector being part of the PFRS and many national policies, women remain widely marginalized as fishery and aquaculture value chain actors. While there are examples of successful interventions and tools to empower women, a much larger scale of institutional and programme level implementation, dedicated to empowering women, is required to achieve equitable participation within the timeframe of the African Union Agenda63.

2. Recommendations

The present study analysed evidence from ‘emerging and contemporary issues’ in African fisheries and aquaculture for the purpose of providing new insights into strategies that are moving the PFRS development agenda forward .The overall conclusion is that African fishery and aquaculture development is gradually moving away from a public sector, primary-production focused approach to a more integrated and enabled value chain and blue economy approach. Based on the analysis of the ‘success factors’ and ‘lessons learned’ from the examples in this study, policy recommendations for effective development strategies and interventions are presented below.

2.1 More explicit policy, advocacy and projects promoting an integrated value chain approach, are required.

The present research indicates that countries which adopt an integrated value chain approach to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development achieve better PFRS outcomes. There is evidence from some member states of a gradual shift from the traditional national fishery department management focus on primary production to a more integrated value chain approach, but implementation is uneven and patchy. More explicit policy, advocacy and projects promoting an integrated value chain approach, are thus required to for member states to achieve the PFRS goals.

2.2 Empower the collaboration of all value chain players in development interventions.

The present examples show that development success requires empowering interventions and incentives that involve all value chain players. These include commercial mentors and partnerships for emerging aquaculture enterprises, building industry and community co-management associations, and public-private industry management bodies.

2.3 Build Public and Non-state actor Collaborative Governance and Management Institutions

Successful development interventions are characterized by collaborative partnerships of strong and responsive governance institutions including national government, regional fishery and economic institutions and non-state actors (private sector associations, NGOs, social enterprises and international development agencies). The present study examples show that Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) are an essential tool for building fishery and aquaculture value chains. Non-state actors such as social enterprises and NGOs with experience in commercial fisheries and aquaculture working in partnership with the mandated government departments generally enhance the commercial viability and sustainability of development projects.

2.4 An expanded public sector role in promoting an innovative blue economy approach

An expansion of the traditional government fisheries regulatory mandate to wider value chain/ blue economy approach is key to promoting sustainable aquaculture and fisheries development. Government support for critical infrastructure, blue finance, zoned and environmentally approved access to land and water for aquaculture, standards organizations, coherent trade tariffs, local permits and

taxes were identified key interventions that can unlock the potential of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

2.5 Informed and effective interventions at regional level

The study confirmed that successful fishery and aquaculture sector governance and value chain development is increasingly dependent on effective regional fishery management organization (RFMOs), regional economic community (REC) agreements and certification schemes.

2.6 Understand fishery and aquaculture value chains

In order to develop markets for the growing volume of cultured tilapia, aquaculture development practitioners emphasized the need for better understanding better understanding of the existing fishery and aquaculture value chains beyond the primary production level, particularly for the rapidly growing aquaculture sectors in parts of Africa, such as Lake Victoria.

2.7 Promote long-term 10y+ interventions and programmes

Public sector programs usually have a short lifespan (3-5y) but stakeholders who were interviewed, stated that a longer commitment (10y+) is required for effective and sustainable

human capacity and institutional building to realize the PFRS outcomes.

2.8 Promote Sustained Interventions for Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture

Despite the inclusion of women in fisheries and aquaculture sector being part of the PFRS and National policies, the project consultations revealed that women are still widely marginalized as value chain actors. A much broader scale of interventions dedicated to empowering women and transforming these norms is required.

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