

### **Quality and Traceability: Issues for the ACP artisanal fishing sector**

Quality and traceability of fish products represent particular challenges for the ACP artisanal fishing sector. Given the key role this sector plays for ACP populations' food security as well as, increasingly, for supplying international fish markets like the EU, addressing these issues in an efficient and appropriate way is vital for the artisanal fishing sector, coastal communities and fish consuming populations.

The growth of the supermarkets sector and its increasing dominance in fish products distribution in the EU has many implications for the ACP artisanal fishing sector supplying the European market. Only the most efficient and those able to conform to new standards such as hygien and traceability standards will be able to compete as suppliers for these supermarkets. This involves considerable investment costs, management skills and new forms of organizations amongst fishing communities, but also considerable support from ACP authorities at local, national and regional levels.

There are also increasing discussions about the usefulness of using traceability and labeling for eco certification of artisanal fishing products, like in Senegal or Tanzania (Fair fish, Naturland, etc). Although these could certainly help artisanal fisheries sector to maintain their access to the EU market, particularly to supermarkets, it's important to ensure that there is an appropriate compensation of the fishermen whose products are certified as they have to bear important responsibility (and associated costs) for traceability and eco certification.

Finally; another topic where traceability for artisanal fisheries products is discussed is traceability as a way to fight illegal fishing. ACP fishing communities suffer greatly from IUU fishing operations and fish coming from IUU sources also competes directly on the EU markets with fish caught legally by artisanal fishermen.

If ACP small scale fishing communities agree that the trade in IUU caught fish must be halted, and that traceability could help to stop fish coming from IUU sources it is important that fishery products from the ACP fisheries sector are not prevented from accessing markets like the EU because they are not able to comply with the administrative requirements of traceability, as used to combat IUU fishing.

At the last meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries, in march 2007, ACP artisanal fishing organizations have therefore proposed that efforts are made to find ways in which traceability can be applied to fish products originating from small scale fisheries, where small quantities of fish are collected from many vessels, often from several, widespread locations. This could be achieved through the development of a model, based on pilot projects that directly involve the artisanal fishing sector stakeholders, towards establishing traceability of fishery products appropriate for the sector.

Artisanal fishing sector also want to consolidate their capacities, through information and training, so that they develop a good knowledge of the existing traceability regulation, and are able to implement them.

As conclusion, if EU traçability norms are imposed to ACP countries, they can, in the long term, be beneficial for the artisanal fishing sector, provided the conditions for their implementation allow the sector to adjust.