

The FAO International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity

Dominique F. Gréboval
Senior Fishery Planning Officer
Fisheries Department
FAO, Rome, Italy

Abstract: In 1999, the FAO Committee on Fisheries adopted an International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity. The paper presents this new international fisheries instrument and discusses the main issues which would need to be addressed by Nations and regional fisheries organizations worldwide to ensure its implementation. Specific attention is given to measurement aspects, management methods, fleet reduction programmes, high seas fisheries and the need for a comprehensive approach to factors which contribute to overcapacity and unsustainability. The paper concludes that implementation raises important issues that need to be further addressed at national, international and global levels. It also suggests that comprehensive research work on the management of fishing capacity is much needed, especially in relation to the use of alternative policies instruments and management methods.

Keywords: FAO, fisheries management, fishing capacity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of managing fishing capacity has been raised formally in 1997 by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in reference to growing concern about the spreading phenomenon of excessive fishing inputs and overcapitalization in world fisheries. Work undertaken by FAO on this basis led to the preparation of the International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity (FAO, 1998a and 1998b). This International Plan of Action was adopted by COFI in February 1999 (FAO, 1999).

In simple terms, the issue is essentially one of having too many vessels or excessive capacity in a growing number of fisheries. The existence of excessive fishing capacity is largely responsible for the degradation of fishery resources, for the dissipation of food production potential and for significant economic waste. This manifests itself especially in the form of redundant fishing inputs and the overfishing of most valued fish stocks.

Excess fishing capacity affects many domestic fisheries throughout the world and, in an even more pervasive form, many high seas fisheries. The globalization of the phenomenon is illustrated by the relative stagnation of world marine catches of major species since the late 1980s. FAO data indicate that nominal fleet size seems to have peaked during the mid-1990s. However, actual fishing capacity may still be increasing if one takes into account the improvement in efficiency and refitting of older vessels.

Excess fishing capacity in world fisheries came about progressively as a result of various factors, such as:

- the resilient profitability of fishing activities whereby technical progress and relative price inelasticity have largely compensated for diminishing yields in overfished fisheries;
- the effect of the extension of maritime areas under national jurisdiction on private and public investment strategies and of related policies of national exploitation of newly created EEZs, generally accompanied by sizable subsidization programmes;
- the relative mobility of harvesting capacity, which allowed for a pervasive spill-over of excess capital among fisheries, both within areas under national jurisdiction and on the high seas;
- the changing nature of the industry, which is increasingly competitive and capital-intensive, with markets that are now largely based on internationally traded commodities, and above all;
- the failure of fisheries management in general, and of commonly used management methods in particular, such as total allowable catch (TAC) and other methods which aim essentially at regulating the catch rather than the harvesting capacity itself.

At the individual fishery level, the origin of excess fishing capacity stems essentially from the widespread tendency of overinvestment and overfishing under open-access

conditions. This textbook case of market failure implies a divergence between rational individual investment behavior and societal optimality. It can be noted that imposing various constraints on harvesting patterns (*regulated open-access*) does not significantly change the incentive for overinvestment. It is also necessary to clearly differentiate ‘localized overfishing’ from overcapitalization or excess capacity. The first is clearly the case of excessive effort being applied to an isolated stock; the second, after allowing for possible reallocation, is clearly one of having, throughout the fishing sector or for a large group of fisheries, excessive and redundant harvesting capacity which cannot easily be re-allocated. It is therefore a global problem which takes all its significance at national and international levels rather than at the level of individual fisheries. As such, the management of fishing capacity is a broader concern which needs to be addressed within and across various fisheries and jurisdictions.

2. INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION

The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries recognized that excessive fishing capacity threatens the world’s fishery resources and their ability to provide sustainable catches and benefits to fishers and consumers. In Article 6.3, it is recommended that “States should prevent overfishing and excess fishing capacity and should implement management measures to ensure that fishing effort is commensurate with the productive capacity of the fishery resources and their sustainable utilization”.

At its Twenty-second Session in 1997, the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) recommended that a technical consultation be organized by FAO to clarify issues related to excess fishing capacity and to prepare guidelines. The International plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity (IPOA) was prepared subsequently and adopted by COFI in 1999.

The IPOA is a voluntary instrument elaborated within the framework of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, as an element of fisheries conservation and management. The objective of the IPOA is *for States and regional fisheries organizations, to achieve worldwide preferably by 2003, but not later than 2005, an efficient, equitable and transparent management of fishing capacity*. The IPOA further specifies that when confronted with an overcapacity problem (*where capacity is undermining achievement of long-term sustainability outcomes*), States and RFOs should endeavor to limit at present level and progressively reduce the fishing capacity applied to affected fisheries. Otherwise, the IPOA calls for States and RFOs to exercise caution to avoid growth in capacity undermining long-term sustainability.

It is interesting to note that the IPOA implicitly defines fishing capacity in terms of fishing inputs (fleets) and that it establishes a definite linkage between excess fleet size and wide-spread overfishing. As such, the IPOA clearly aims at achieving a balance between fleet size (inputs) and sustainable production (output). Management objectives are not stipulated in the IPOA, as the definition of such objectives are clearly a prerogative of States and RFOs. Management objectives can be set with explicit reference to sustainability, economic efficiency and precautionary principles. A minimum standard would be to achieve a long term balance between fishing inputs and MSY. Even in this context, the IPOA would allow for increased economic efficiency in the form of avoiding redundant fleet expansion beyond the level of fleet capacity required to harvest MSY. While the management measures required to manage fishing capacity are not really specified in the IPOA, balancing inputs and outputs clearly requires a direct or indirect control on fleet size and harvesting capacity.

Further consideration is given in the next section to selected aspects of the IPOA, including: measurement aspects, management methods, fleet reduction programmes, high seas fisheries, and factors of unsustainability.

3. ASSESSMENT OF FISHING CAPACITY

The IPOA calls for States and RFOs to monitor and assess fishing capacity. It also call for States to establish compatible national records of fishing vessels and to support the establishment by FAO of an international record of vessels operating on the high seas - awaiting the entry into force of the FAO Compliance Agreement (FAO Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas).

The measurement and monitoring of excess fishing capacity is a complex endeavor. Assessing fishing capacity requires assessing physical inputs and fish production in a combined manner, further taking into account the fact that physical inputs may be applied potentially to various stocks and areas. Assessing excess capacity also requires the definition of target exploitation levels. Present methods of capacity assessment have been relatively empirical (FAO, 2000). These are usually sufficient to estimate grossly the magnitude of excess fishing capacity, even if applied research is still required for the development of more appropriate monitoring and assessment tools.

The greatest challenge to the monitoring and assessment of fishing capacity is obviously the lack of fleet data. The monitoring of fleets remains largely deficient in most countries. As a result, global and regional data banks (such as those available from Lloyds and FAO, and those compiled by some regional fishery organizations) are also

rather incomplete and usually quite difficult to use. The establishment of more appropriate records of fishing vessels, as stipulated in the IPOA, is a basic requirement. However, for the purpose of assessing and managing fishing capacity, as well as illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, a significant departure from present monitoring procedures is required.

Typically, most countries still monitor inputs and outputs in a rather disjointed manner: i) a record of vessels is established at national level with vessel data bases that may include physical characteristics as well as key economic indicators, including catch and revenue; ii) complementary marketing data may be gathered at port level; iii) catch and effort is monitored at fishery level. This approach does not easily allow for the monitoring of fleet operation and would suffice if and only if one assumes that there is no mobility of fleets among fisheries. Otherwise, fleet dynamics would also have to be carefully monitored.

In addition to monitoring physical characteristics, fleet dynamics need to be assessed in terms of investment-disinvestment and in terms of deployment - allocation of fishing inputs in time and space, and especially among fisheries. As such, fleet assessment should be considered to be as important as stock assessment. We are very far from this situation, even if both types of assessment are essential for the joint management of fleet capacity and fisheries resources. Enhanced monitoring and assessment capabilities should be developed not only at national level, but at regional and global levels, with due emphasis being given to creating appropriate fleet records and to addressing the issue of fleet mobility - a key issue to controlling both fishing capacity and IUU fishing.

4. MANAGEMENT METHODS

Fisheries management methods may be classified in two groups: those which attempt to block the incentive of open-access which leads fishers to race for fish and to overextend their investment -*incentive blocking method*- and those aiming at changing the incentive system itself -*incentive adjusting methods* (Gréboval and Munro, 1999). The management of fishing capacity further requires that one accounts fully for the mobility and non-malleability of capital stock on the one hand, and for its interaction with complex fishery stocks on the other.

Incentive blocking methods include: license limitation schemes, vessel catch limits, individual effort quotas, and gear and vessel restrictions. Some of these methods may be combined, and complemented by TACs. All methods mitigate to some extent the two main outcomes of open-access: the race for fish and capital stuffing. However they have seldom proved effective in controlling fishing capacity, especially in the long term. The predominantly used method concerns license limitation schemes, often used in connection with TACs. The efficiency of this

method has often been limited in the past by the conditions under which it has been implemented, such as: introduction of such schemes in already mature or overexploited fisheries with rather unrestrictive conditions for initial license allocation; insufficient attention paid to input substitution possibilities; insufficient account taken of gains in productivity resulting from technological improvements; and, too often, implementation against a sectoral policy background of laissez-faire, subsidization and of prompt compromise on socially or politically sensitive aspects.

It is felt that when these issues are carefully addressed, license limitation schemes can prove quite effective in managing fishing capacity. Interestingly enough, license limitation may take many of the attributes of incentive adjusting schemes. This is the case, for example, whenever the implementation of license schemes purposely leads fishermen to coalesce, rather than compete, or when license schemes are implemented together with individual harvest quotas. In this context, one may stress the need to carefully address input substitution and the impact of technological development on fishing capacity.

Incentive adjusting methods include: individual quotas, taxes and co-management schemes, including community-based management. Taxes may indeed be seen as a means of correcting erroneous market signals through price adjustment mechanisms aiming at extracting rents so as to avoid resource depletion and economic waste. Implementation is difficult, however, and taxes, in the form of royalties, would generally be considered at best as a complementary measure. The other incentive adjusting methods aim at creating full or partial property rights for fishermen, therefore largely eliminating the 'race for fish' and, in the case of individual transferable quotas (ITQs) in particular, enhancing capacity limitation incentives. For co-management and community-based management to be effective in this context, schemes must of course imply a certain degree of empowerment, exclusivity and collective cohesion.

The management of capacity does require the adoption of policies which clearly specify access conditions. Incentive adjusting methods, in the form of individual or collective quotas, might therefore prove more efficient than other management methods for the control of fishing capacity. While there is growing evidence that this may indeed be the case, one notes however that: i) individual quota systems are not readily applicable to many fisheries situations, e.g. most small-scale and tropical fisheries; ii) co-management and community-management schemes are still in development and insufficiently researched; and iii) rent extraction through the imposition of royalties is proving difficult to apply, especially as a means of controlling capacity. While new avenues are being developed, there are many instances for which incentive

blocking methods and license limitation schemes in particular will constitute the best available option (e.g. for developing countries). Overall, the elaboration and implementation of more appropriate management schemes require that extensive consultation with stakeholders be promoted so as to ensure maximum consensus on capacity management among various user groups.

The most appropriate methods for controlling fishing capacity imply strictly controlled and rather exclusive access and a direct or indirect control of both inputs and output. Obviously, the stricter the controls, the greater the incentive to adopt IUU practices. Getting around such controls might involve, *inter alia*, under-reporting of catch and/or fishing inputs, illegal fishing practices, and the partial reallocation of fleet capacity to other fisheries. There are a number of steps that can be taken to avoid undesirable reactions to management, such as:

- opting for management methods that do provide a real incentive for long term sustainability, as in the case of ITQs for example. This would involve providing the industry with individual or collective rights;
- promoting enhanced industry participation in management schemes, eventually aiming at the co-management of specific fisheries;
- establishing clearer responsibilities and answerability in the management of any fishery;
- adopting improved MCS methods, such as VMS; and
- accounting for the many relationships that exist or may exist between fisheries as a result of bio-economic linkages and fleet mobility.

On this last point, most fisheries are still managed mostly as isolated entities and it is not rare to see management efforts in specific fisheries being undermined by conflicting sectoral policies. One can actually distinguish three main levels of fisheries management: the industry as a whole, its main segments (generally differentiated on a product and/or technological basis), and specific fisheries (defined for management purposes on the basis of specific fish stocks). The control of excess fishing capacity requires a much greater harmonization of management strategies and policies between these three levels of management, further noting that this is the case both at national and international levels.

Another issue to be considered carefully in the management of fishing capacity is the relative role of alternative production methods. Although the management of capacity should be designed to encourage efficient and evolving technologies, it also requires governments to balance the interest of alternative modes of exploitation and user groups. A case in point is the respective role of industrial and small scale fisheries in

developing countries and of commercial and recreational fisheries in general.

5. FLEET REDUCTION PROGRAMMES

The reduction of excess capacity implies disposal of vessels and the layoff of fishers. Within areas under national jurisdiction, capacity which cannot be re-allocated to underused resources would have to be left to depreciate, to be scrapped or exported. Obviously, in countries where re-allocation possibilities have been exhausted, capacity adjustments is a rather difficult and sensitive task. Capital depreciation would generally involve too slow a joint process of capital reduction and fish stock rebuilding. Thus some induced capital reduction would generally be called for, with specific accompanying measures for labor when required. Incentive adjusting schemes involving property rights, such as ITQs, do provide strong incentive for capacity adjustment but not for permanent disposal. Incentive blocking methods do not provide such incentive, and attempts to reduce fleet size through buyback programmes may often lead to a net increase in capacity if implemented within such management frameworks (the buyback of older boats being often more than compensated for by subsequent 'creeping' investment). For these reasons as well as for other considerations as noted by Holland et al. (1999), caution should be exercised when designing and implementing any buyback programmes.

Under rights-based management schemes, the internalization of the potential rent should make it possible for the industry and the management authority to find arrangements to finance buyback schemes. Cost sharing mechanisms to undertake vessel reallocation or scrapping should preferably be negotiated when introducing schemes to effectively control capacity. In any case both sides would need to be convinced that capacity will be controlled effectively, meaning that potential rent will actually be transformed into actual rent. If the industry may be expected to participate in the cost of downward capacity adjustments, it is likely that capacity reduction schemes would involve significant subsidies. A trend in this direction is already observed. These subsidies could be considered as subsidies to the 'resource' and its sustainability. But if these subsidies failed to have a lasting impact on fishing capacity, these would amount to subsidies to the harvesting industry.

A related problem is that of vessel disposal. Short of scrapping vessels that are considered redundant from a national perspective, capacity reduction schemes may induce transfer to the high seas or to the EEZs of other nations. The transfer of excess capacity to the EEZs of other nations may be undertaken through private sales of used vessels or in the context of international access agreements. Regarding such transfers, the IPOA only calls for States to ensure that no transfer of capacity to the

jurisdiction of another State should be carried out without the express consent and authorization of that State.

This may seem insufficient in view of the impact that capacity reallocation could have on the management of capacity in developing countries. Developing countries have benefited from the possibility of acquiring cheap second-hand vessels originating from efforts aimed at reducing harvesting capacity or from fleet modernization schemes undertaken in developed countries. But the massive disposal of generally subsidized used vessels also had negative impacts in these countries: distorting input prices; exacerbating conflicts with the small-scale sector; and precipitating the rapid build-up of excessive capacity in many fisheries. The transfer of excess capacity may also take place in the context of international access agreements. While access agreements are negotiated among sovereign States, one notes, however, that such transfers are often subsidized and may involve developing countries that could be induced to easily compromise between immediate returns and long-term resource sustainability. A code of good practice may be required to ensure more cautious transfers and to facilitate the negotiation of more appropriate access agreements (WWF, 1999).

The transfer of excess capacity to the high seas will be easier as it does not involve negotiating international agreements. The IPOA recalled the duties of flag States to avoid approving such a transfer to areas where it would be inconsistent with responsible fishing under the Code of Conduct. Furthermore, in recognition of any eventual change of flag, the IPOA also stressed in Article 20 the need to deal with the problem of States which do not fulfil their responsibilities as flag States.

Appropriate capacity reduction is central to the successful implementation of the IPOA. Poor implementation in terms of non-lasting reduction and undesirable transfer, may actually aggravate the overcapacity problem and contribute to IUU fishing. A major challenge is for States to ensure that reduction schemes be promoted only when effective control of capacity has been duly achieved. Another is for States to control the export or transfer of capacity outside their jurisdiction and to adopt mechanisms that would selectively prevent any transfers to fisheries and areas recognized as significantly overfished.

6. HIGH SEAS FISHERIES

The management of fishing capacity in the high seas does remain a challenge under existing international law. The IPOA urges States to participate in international agreements which relate to the management of fishing capacity and in particular the FAO Compliance Agreement and the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement. It also calls for various measures which would strengthen international collaboration and the role of regional

fisheries organizations vis à vis the management of shared stocks and high seas fisheries.

High seas fisheries may be confronted with an even greater overcapitalization problem than EEZ fisheries. This stems from the prevalence of rather open-access conditions, with coastal countries fishing increasingly in adjacent high seas areas, and from the fact that there are at present no internationally agreed measures to obligate States to control fishing capacity. Within the present legal framework of the high seas, contained in the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the management of capacity is very much subsumed within a catch quota system, with the regional fishery organizations administering quotas being largely unable to limit access by vessels of participating States and to deny access to vessels from non-participating States.

The 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement does not specifically include provisions for reducing fleet capacity. However, it tightens the obligations of flag States to adhere to conservation and management measures imposed by regional fishery organizations and allows these organizations to better monitor fleet capacity and deployment, and to adjust limit reference points in order to account for fishing capacity considerations. The FAO Compliance Agreement further provides a mechanism for collating fleet information at the global level and a basic tool for compliance and enforcement of authorizations. The IPOA recalled that improved management of the high seas requires first and foremost the urgent ratification of these agreements.

The IPOA also recommends, *inter alia*, that States:

- take steps to manage the fishing capacity of their vessels involved in high seas fisheries and cooperate as appropriate with other States in reducing the fishing capacity applied to overfished fisheries;
- recognize the need to deal with the problem of those States which do not fulfil their responsibilities under international law as flag States with respect to their fishing vessels, and in particular those which do not exercise effectively their jurisdiction and control over vessels which operate in a manner that contravenes or undermines international law and international conservation and management measures;
- support multilateral cooperation to ensure that these flag States contribute to regional efforts to manage fishing capacity;
- ensure that no transfer of capacity to the jurisdiction of another State be carried out without the express consent and formal authorization of that State; and
- avoid approving the transfer of vessels carrying their flag to high seas areas where such transfers are inconsistent with responsible fishing under the Code of Conduct.

More specific measures need to be adopted at the national, international and global levels to ensure active implementation of these rather general principles. In relation to the management of fleet capacity, this may involve, *inter alia*, defining more specific conditions for: entry and participation in the fishery sector and specific fisheries; the implementation of fleet reduction programmes; access to high seas fisheries by flag vessels. Further steps may be required in the strengthening and empowerment of regional fishery organizations, the creation of new organizations to ensure full coverage of the resources concerned, and in encouraging non-members to become members of such organizations.

7. FACTORS OF UNSUSTAINABILITY

The IPOA recognizes that several factors do contribute to overcapacity and unsustainable exploitation of fisheries resources. In the elaboration of national plans, the IPOA urges States to assess, reduce and progressively eliminate all factors, including subsidies and economic incentives, contributing directly or indirectly to the build-up of excessive capacity. A complementary recommendation called for FAO to assist with: *a further analysis aimed at identifying factors contributing to overcapacity such as, inter alia, lack of input and output control, unsustainable fishery management methods and subsidies which contribute to overcapacity.*

Some of these factors are listed in section 1, which relate largely to the resilient prevalence of open access conditions, in spite of management efforts deployed to limit harvesting behavior. The lack of appropriate conditions for entry and participation, linked to the direct or indirect control of both inputs and output would thus appear to be the principal factor of unsustainability and overcapacity. Other factors appear to be secondary.

Among these factors are the difficulty of implementing fishery-specific management schemes, even if theoretically appropriate. This would especially be the case if the incentive to circumvent regulations remains strong and if industry involvement remains ineffective. The present inefficiency of many MCS systems is another factor which may be addressed, but which may also be addressed by adopting fishery management schemes that are more efficient in terms of incentive and industry participation. The growing imbalance between demand and necessarily limited supply, as well as other factors affecting inputs and outputs prices may also play an important role in promoting undesired capacity expansion and unsustainability.

One such factor is the use of subsidies and other economic and fiscal incentives which have a direct bearing on fishing capacity. There is no doubt that heavy subsidization contributed substantially to the rapid and often excessive growth of the fishing fleets in the 1970s and 1980s. Although this remains insufficiently

documented, subsidization programmes appear to have been significantly reduced in many countries since the late 1980s. The IPOA recommended that States endeavor to reduce and progressively eliminate subsidies that directly or indirectly promote overcapacity. Work is presently underway in FAO, in concertation with WTO, to further address this issue by identifying the types of subsidies that either contribute to overcapacity and unsustainability or to trade distortion. This suggests that subsidies, when required in a fishery or sectoral development context, could be shifted from conventional capital to the promotion of resource conservation, human skills and institutional development. As pointed out before, it is likely that subsidies will be used increasingly to reallocate or reduce fishing capacity. Experiences in this area tend to indicate that insufficient caution is usually exercised regarding the conditions under which such schemes are implemented.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The adoption of the IPOA on the Management of Fishing Capacity is symptomatic of a radical evolution by which key elements of fisheries governance are being addressed at the international and global levels, in reference to the guiding principles of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. The strengthening of fisheries governance is indeed increasingly recognized by Nations as a basic requirement for the sustainable and responsible use of fisheries resources. The adoption of the IPOA is also a strong sign that the economics of fisheries is paid increasing attention and that related policies issues are being consequently reassessed.

The management of fishing capacity raises a key issue: that of the joint control of fishing inputs and outputs - independently of which component is selected will be the prominent control variable. Excess capacity is indeed the symptom of an underlying failure of 'conventional' fisheries management. The management of fishing capacity can only point to new avenues which directly address the conditions of entry and participation in fisheries. These are likely to be based on two emerging and related notions, that of right-based management schemes and that of active industry participation. Meanwhile related issues pertaining in particular to the reduction of fishing capacity (transition strategies) and fleet mobility will remain areas of specific concern. Applied research is much needed in these areas.

The management of fishing capacity may also benefit from: the adoption of more specific conditions for access to high seas fisheries by flag vessels; the strengthening and empowerment of regional fishery organizations; the creation of new organizations to ensure full coverage of the resources concerned; strengthened mechanisms to encourage non-members to become members of such organizations; and more effective donor support to the

implementation of the IPOA and similar international agreements by developing countries.

Policy issues somewhat related to the implementation of the IPOA on the management of fishing capacity are presently being addressed by FAO at the request of its members. These include, *inter alia*:

- *Illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing.* This is an increasingly serious and universal phenomenon that tends to undermine national and regional efforts to conserve and manage fisheries and to which the build-up of excess fishing capacity has significantly contributed. Fleet reduction and reallocation schemes may further contribute to the problem if caution is not exercised. An international instrument on IUU is presently being developed.
- *Subsidies.* Subsidies have been contributing significantly to overinvestment in fisheries and to distortion in international fish trade. Subsidies to the fishing industry have globally decreased and are nowadays used increasingly to support activities others than outright capacity building. There is strong interest among member countries to better understand whether and how subsidies affect fisheries sustainability and fish trade. FAO is collaborating closely with WTO in addressing this matter
- *Eco-labelling.* There is also increasing international interest in the potential role that eco-labelling may play in creating closer linkages between trade and sustainability objectives through consumer behavior. The issue is particularly complex and controversial. Technical aspects are presently being elaborated upon.
- *Objective and reliable fishery status and trends reporting.* There is growing recognition that reporting on status and trend should be enhanced, if only because a large amount of misinformation is being propagated by special interest groups, as noted by Alverson and Dunlop (1998). The development of an International Plan of Action on Status and Trends Reporting on Fisheries would provide a global framework to enhancing advice of the most up-to-date and accurate view on fisheries prospects.
- *Support to developing countries.* Support to developing and implementing improved national policies and specific management measures would require training, technical assistance and financing. Such a support is much in demand by many developing countries and considered essential. However donor support needs to be promoted and properly guided by appropriate research programmes on the adaptation of management policies and methods to the conditions and needs of developing countries.

These are some of the key global issues that will be considered at the Twenty-fourth Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries in February 2001.

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