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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP) CR-FWG POLICY TRACKING WORKSHOP ON THE NFMP



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Cover photo: Cross section of stakeholders of the Central Region Fisheries Working Group (Credit: Gregory Essieh, FoN). Other photos used in the report are credited to Gregory Essieh.

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ACRONYMS

CEDECOM	Central Region Development Commission
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FEU	Fisheries Enforcement Unit
FoN	Friends of the Nation
GIFA	Ghana Inshore Fisher's Association
FWG	Fisheries Working Group
MCS	Monitoring, Control and Surveillance
NAFPTA	National Fish Processors and Traders Association
NFMP	National Fisheries Management Plan
UCC	University of Cape Coast
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Friends of the Nation (FoN) facilitated a workshop for Central Regional Fisheries Working Group (FWG) at the Senior Club House, UCC on Tuesday, January 17, 2017, to track the implementation of the Closed Season Policy of the National Fisheries Management Plan drafted by the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MoFAD) which is bounded by law, Act 625 section 40 (1).

“The FWG is placed on a good platform to play an advisory role to the Fisheries Commission due to its multi-stakeholder dimension of the constitution,” Donkris Mevuta indicated in his opening remarks. He added that, the FWG is an approach adapted that helps participation and enhance dialogue among stakeholders and can be found in all the four coastal regions of Ghana (i.e. Western, Central, Greater Accra and Volta).



Fig 1: Donkris Mevuta, Executive Director of FoN delivering his opening remarks

He used the opportunity to introduce and elaborate on the purpose of gathering that this workshop seeks to address the necessary issues during the implementation and compliance of the Closed Season (November, 2016) in Central Region. He therefore advised all participants to ensure they identify how each stakeholder could contribute to the successful of the workshop towards the implementation of the February-March, 2017 Closed Season.

2.0 DETAILED SESSION

Key stakeholders who participated include Fisheries Commission, EPA, NAFPTA, Fishmongers, MCS, FEU, CEDECOM and FoN. The GIFA and Canoe Fishers could not make it to the meeting.

2.1 MEETING AGENDA

The agenda for the meeting included:

- Overview of SFMP
- Implementation of NFMP (Close Season) by Fisheries Commission
- Experience Sharing on Close Season Implementation
 - Inshore
 - MCS
 - NAFPTA
 - Canoe Fishers
- Recommendation and Conclusion

2.1.1 Overview of SFMP and NFMP

The SFMP is a USAID-funded project implemented over a 5-year period from 2014 to 2019 in Ghana by a consortium of partners with Coastal Resources Center of the University of Rhodes Island as the lead partner. Kyei Kwadwo Yamoah of FoN further explained that the project seeks to as part of its objectives rebuild targeted fish stocks through the adoption of sustainable fishing methods, and eventually bring profitability to the fishery industry in Ghana.

Fig. 2: Kyei Kwadwo Yamoah informing participants on the overview of SFMP

He also highlighted on few key issues which the NFMP 2015-2019 will address and that, stakeholders always need to be mindful about and support in the implementation process.

Some key objectives of the NFMP include;

- Reduce excessive pressure on the fish stocks
- Exploration of natural resource in a biological acceptance manner

Some key issues facing the fishing industry include;

- Inadequate information on fisheries biology stocks
- Excessive fishing effort in all fisheries
- Weak enforcement of fish regulation
- Level of protections of marine biodiversity

Some key actions

- Reducing fishing days for trawlers
- Cancellation of license regular violation of fishing laws
- Detection of inactive boats
- Control of new entrants to the fisheries
- Insurance & pension scheme

He concluded by saying, “all stakeholders are responsible for making the implementation of the NFMP effective to achieve the broad goal of the SFMP

2.1.2 Implementation of NFMP (Close Season) by Fisheries Commission

The Director of the Central Region Fisheries Commission, Mr Papa Yaw Attobrah, shared with stakeholders about the implementation of the Close Season in November 2016. He indicated that effective announcement and information were adequately relayed to the Industrial Fishing Vessels (Trawlers). Majority of the trawlers docked at the Tema and Sekondi Fishing Harbours when the Close Season was enforced. He also addressed that during the Close Season, “sycho” fish were brought into the market. He posed a question that if majority of the trawlers docked and complied with the Close Season, then how did “sycho” fish get into the market. He added that, there were no arrests of trawlers during the period. Also, the Inshore Fishing Vessels were supposed to comply with the Close Season.

He then, concluded that the closed season was half complied. Also, the law does not stop a fishing vessel from going to different countries to work during the closed season only if that vessel has a license to work in that country. “And there is no physical demarcation in the sea between countries, but how sure can we be that the fishing vessels were not in the Ghanaian waters?” he quizzed.



Fig. 3: Mr Attobrah sharing the implementation of the Close Season with participants

2.1.3 Questions, Comments and Suggestions

- Mr Boakye Yaidom, CEDECOM suggested that the Fisheries Commission should institute a stiffer punishment instead of a fine as the law says.
 - Mr Attobrah addressed that laws are designed to give hefty punishments and the fisheries law abides by them. First time offense amount to a \$1m punishment; second time offense \$1-2m; third time \$3m and seizure of license. The laws also allow acceptance letter of offense and hearing from lawbreakers to the Fisheries Commission for negotiation. But some key major problems facing the enforcement of the laws has to do with Political interference and Chief fishermen and fishing groups interfering with the laws
- Madam Gifty Mensah, from Elmina, suggested that licensed vessel operators from different countries should not bring their fish (sycho) to the Ghanaian market. They

should sell it in that country that they caught it. The Fisheries Commission must find a way to deal with them to ensure no “bad fish” from different fishing countries enter the Ghanaian markets.

2.1.4 Experience Sharing on Close Season Implementation

Monitoring Control and Surveillance and Fisheries Enforcement Unit

Mr Theodore shared that during the close season, there were no arrests of industrial vessels. He initially indicated that, about 80% fishing culprits intercepted last year (201) were from the Central Region so their patrols and enforcement was very intensive during the close season. Most of the arrests were basically offenses resulting light fishing, sycho and few issues with undersized nets. He concluded that the close season was complied.



Fig. 3: Mr Theodore, MCS/FEU sharing his experiences

Fishprocessors from NAFPTA

- Madam Peace Goblor explained that the close season helped the fish processors because when there is “sycho” fish in the market, the market is very bad. Hence during the close season, market was really good because “sycho” fishes were very few in the market



during the close season. She added that, fish catch has not increased after the close season.

Fig. 4: Madam Peace sharing her experiences.

- Gifty Mensah (fishmonger), shared that the close season really helped a lot because she could make more profits for the fish that she could sell during the season. She also observed that in Elmina, the cold stores were bringing cold fishes to the sycho market which was very bad. “I will be glad when the closed season is done more than twice in a year,” she added.



Fig. 5: Gifty Mensah sharing her experiences.

- Madam Doreen, Moree, also shared experiences on the livelihoods of some of the women especially those into the “sycho” fish business. “The “sycho” fishers are



adamant to change their livelihood since they were suffering. The close closed season benefited the few ones hat are not solely into “sycho fish”. The larger portion suffered a lot because they did not have any alternate livelihoods”, she shared.

Fig. 6: Doreen sharing her experiences.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS/STRATEGIES/

After several experiences has been shared, stakeholders made recommendation/strategies that need to be adopted or looked at as a way forward towards the implementation of Close Season and other policies in the NFMP. These include;

- Fisheries obtained from other countries during closed seasons should not be brought to the ghanaina market. The law must enforce that
- All fishers who are supposed to observe the closed season must fully comply.
- Say no to bad fish. Fish monfer should abstain from buying illegally caught fishes.
- During closed seasons, there should be an alternative livelihood to invest our resources into.
- There should be more education and sensitization on the close season
- Manipulation of the market (fish prices) becomes intense hence third party suufer unduly. So there should be a price control mechanism for fishes during the closed season

4.0 CONCLUSION

The meeting concluded that there was the urgent need to reduce fishing efforts and the close season was one of the effective ways to address efforts. The meeting strongly recommended that MOFAD should not allow any trawlers to land fish within the close season. It was explained that some trawlers that have licence to fish in other countries (e.g. Togo, Ivory Coast, etc) landed fish purportedly caught from those countries to Ghana during the close season period; therefore, it was difficult for stakeholders to properly monitor the effectiveness of the close season.

The meeting also recommended that there was the need for MOFAD to improve communication to all stakeholders for them to appreciative their various roles for the implementation of the close season.

Regional fisheries stakeholders' meetings on the NFMP were held in the Western Region, Volta Region, Central Region, Greater Accra Region. These meetings brought together key fisheries stakeholders in the various regions to share and discuss the progress of implementation of the National Fisheries Management Plan. The meetings also provided the platform for the Regional Fisheries commission officers to explain the content of the NFMP and also address fishers' concerns about the implementation of the plan. These meetings created the platform for the participants to discuss and outline key responsibilities of stakeholders to support the successful implementation of the NFMP within the respective regions. All relevant stakeholders (including FC, District Assemblies, religious leaders and

the local police) in the respective regions were involved in the meetings. Key concerns and suggestions from the regional meetings included:

- The need to have two uniform fishing holidays across the entire coast of Ghana to avoid potential conflict, confusion and promote compliance among fishermen
- The need to involve traditional leaders to help change traditional fishing holidays in the respective regions to the agreed days of Tuesday and Sunday
- The need for extensive communication on moratorium on entry of canoe for the marine fisheries in all regions to promote compliance.
- The need for FC must conduct mop-up exercise to register all remaining canoes before the date was set for moratorium on new entry of canoes for marine fisheries as part of the NFMP implementation.
- The need for FC to train local sign writers to support the embossment of the canoes
- Fishermen propose to conduct census of all unregistered canoes in their respective communities and communicate to Fisheries Commission to support canoe registration process.