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**Illegal Fishing: The Case of Mozambique**

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## **Abstract**

The fisheries sector plays an important role in the economy of Mozambique, contributing to 40-50 per cent of the country's foreign exchange earnings. The extensive coast supporting diverse fisheries makes Mozambique a sensitive place for illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

This paper discuss the relation between IUU fishing and the surveillance capacity, the length of the coastal zone, the commercial value of the resources and the national fishing capacity of Mozambique.

## **Introduction**

Mozambique lies from 10°20' (mouth of the Rovuma River on the Tanzania border) to 26°50' south (Ponta do Ouro on the South African border). The coastline is 2,700 km long, and the Exclusive Economic Zone is 562,000 km. The fisheries sector plays an important role in the economy of the country, contributing about 40 to 50 per cent of the Mozambique's foreign exchange earnings in later years. About 85 per cent of the exports by value come from industrial shallow-water shrimp fisheries, which is the most important fishery. The extensive coast, which supports diverse fisheries, makes Mozambique a target for, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Mozambique occupies 800,000 sq km on the southeast coast of Africa, sharing boundaries with South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania. The country has a coastal line of 2,750 km on the Indian Ocean, and is well served by 25 major rivers and several ports. The coastal plain is broad and characterized in many places by large deltas and low-lying riverine areas, many of which are susceptible to flooding. About 80 per cent of the 16 million people live in rural areas. The central and northern provinces are characterized by fertile soils and plentiful rainfall, but poor accessibility. In the southern provinces, soils are poor and rainfed production marginal, but accessibility is relatively good, particularly in Maputo, the nation's capital and largest market, as well as in South Africa.

## **Historical context**

Mozambique won its independence in 1975. The exodus of most Portuguese settlers and Asian traders, the subsequent adoption of central planning and nationalization of major enterprises, and the civil war from the late 1970s to early 1990s, resulted in a collapse in production, and heavy dependence on foreign aid. Only after the 1992 peace settlement was Mozambique able to effectively pursue economic policies based on privatization of public expenditure and fiscal balance. Since 1992, the government has won a well-earned reputation for prudent macroeconomic management and commitment to rural poverty alleviation, a positive picture that has only recently been disrupted by serious floods that affected much of the country in 2000 and 2001.

A stable multi-party democracy has been established and consolidated; political and economic decentralization has proceeded, albeit very gradually; the constitution has been substantially revised, through an open process of public hearing, so as to achieve a better balance of power in the State apparatus; and legislation has been passed in areas such as governance ethics.

## **The economy**

Mozambique is one of the world's poorest countries, with 70 per cent of the population living below the poverty line. Yet the country is rich in under exploited resources. Peace, better policies, rising foreign investment and continued external assistance have contributed to encouraging economic performance and creation of an environment in which these resources can be developed. Real gross domestic product (GDP) has been increasing at an annual average of 10 per cent since 1996.

The value of exports, of all the sectors, has increased rapidly and is rising faster than the value of imports. Annual inflation declined from 70 per cent in 1994 to less than 1 per cent in 1998, and it was expected to hover at 4 per cent in 1999-2000, as the government relaxes its monetary policy. Nevertheless, flooding and other factors have resulted in inflation rising to 9 per cent. However, confidence in the economy is strong and private investments have grown over the past few years and are expected to cross 25 per cent of GDP by 2002.

The government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, approved by the cabinet, aims to reduce absolute poverty by 30 per cent by 2009. The strategy emphasizes the promotion of economic stability and broad-based high growth (based on the development of manufacturing and construction and increased agricultural productivity); improved access to education, water, health and sanitation, the development of rural infrastructure; promotion of self-employment; and protection of vulnerable groups.

### **Strategic importance of fisheries**

The fisheries sector contributes to only 3 per cent of the country's GDP. Mozambique's fish exports, valued at approximately US\$75 million in 1999, make up about 28 per cent of total exports and 12 per cent of foreign exchange earnings. Over 85 per cent of the exports by value come from shrimps, which is the most important fishery in the country. The main market is the European Union (EU), Japan and South Africa.

Marine fisheries represent more than 80 per cent of the country's total production. About 90,000 people are involved directly in fishing, processing and marketing. Marine fisheries provide for more than 90 per cent of the jobs in the sector. With over two-thirds of the population within 150 km of the coast, about 50 per cent of the people's protein intake are estimated to come from fish. Overall, it is estimated that the country uses only about 25 per cent of its exploitable fish resources (FAO, 2000).

### **Resources and trends**

Some 1500 species are present in the Mozambique seas, of which 400 are of direct commercial importance. The catch of fish was estimated, in 1995, at over 350 000 MT, but only 25 per cent of this was utilized. Pelagic fish and demersal species, particularly, seem to offer possibilities for increased expansion. Large demersal and pelagic fish have high value and can command good prices domestically and abroad. According to the production nomenclature used in Mozambique, this type of fish is known as "first category fish". The other categories are known as "second" and "third". (IIP, 1999). The yearly average catch rates, from 1977 to 2000, showed a decreasing trend, while effort increases. For the same period, the total catch showed some fluctuations, with lower catches between 1990 and 1994.

### **Main features**

In the artisanal sector, traditional fishing methods dominate. The main artisanal fishing gear are beach-seine, gillnet, hooks-and-line and traps. For local fishermen and their families, the artisanal fishery is important in terms of food supply and

income generation. Nevertheless, the per capita fish consumption is about 6 kg per annum. It is estimated that the fisheries sector employs around 100,000 people, of whom 90 per cent are full-time fishers.

The sector has a total of 87 semi-industrial boats, most of them based mainly in the Beira and Maputo areas. Different fishing gear are used, such as bottom trawl nets, gill nets, longliners, hooks-and-line and seine nets.

The industrial fishery consists of large trawl vessels equipped with deep freezers and making monthly trips to the main fishing area, Sofala Bank, specially oriented to shallow-water bottom trawling, aimed at the export markets managed by Mozambique joint venture companies.

### **Fisheries management**

The fishery sector is managed by the Ministry of Fisheries (MoF) of the Government of Mozambique, comprising by three National Directorates, three Departments and four financially autonomous institutions, namely, the “Fisheries Development Fund” (FFP), the National Fisheries Research Institute (IIP), the National Small-scale Fisheries Development Institute (IDPPE) and the Fishing School (EP).

At the provincial level, the MoF is represented by the Provincial Services for the Fisheries Administration (SPAP), which has the main task of monitoring and control fishing activity. The Maritime Administration (ADMAR), under the Ministry of Transport and Communication (MTC) has the responsibility for controlling artisanal fisheries.

The shrimp fishery is managed by monitoring the TAC (total allowable catch). A three-month closed season (December - March) is also used in order to keep the catch bellow the TAC and also to maintain the mesh size regulation (the minimum legal mesh size is 55 mm).

### **Illegal fishing in Mozambique**

Illegal fishing is defined as “*any fishing or related activity carried out in contravention of the laws of a State Part or the measures of an international fisheries management organization accepted by a State part and subject to the jurisdiction of that State*”. (SADC Protocol on Fisheries, Article 1).

Illegal fishing in these waters appeared as a consequence of the crisis and shortage of *kapenta in the* Kariba Reservoir, located at Zambezi River, which, in turn, caused the exodus of Zimbabwean Kapenta (*Limnothryssa miodon*) fishers to the Cahora Bassa Reservoir in Mozambique, considered a better venue.

The most common infringements are illegal boat imports, fraudulent licensing, jettisoning of investment projects, unauthorized fishing, and violation of licence validity.

It should be noted that illegal boatowners are mostly foreigners and nationals who partner with the former. *Kapenta* fishing at night, coupled with insufficient supervising bodies and lack of proper technical knowledge, make supervision impractical and cause misreporting of some infringements to the Provincial Services of Fisheries Administration (Castiano, MoF, 2001)

There are other cases of illegal fishing reported from Lake Niassa, involving fishermen from the Tanzanian and Malawian areas, who are reported to use destructive fishing methods (mainly poison and dynamite).

### **Marine illegal fishing**

The problem of marine illegal fishing in Mozambique by outsiders is well recognized, though not reflected in official figures. The lack of institutional infrastructure to supervise the coast, investigate reported cases and, if necessary, sue offenders leaves the country vulnerable to illegal activities.

Local boatowners are aware of the occurrences of night fishing in Mozambican territorial waters, mainly by foreign vessels. These activities take place particularly in the region of Cabo Delgado (Palma and Mocímboa da Praia), Inhambane (in the Bazaruto area), Nampula (Angoche and Mussoril), and are presumably related to highly migratory species, mainly tuna.

On the other hand, some dubious tourist fishing practices, mainly undertaken by South African and Zimbabwean tourists, under the pretext of sport fishing, create conflicts with local boatowners.

### **Causes of illegal fishing**

Among the factors behind illegal fishing are:

1. Excess of fishing effort; and decrease of catch of high-value resources, and inefficient systems of monitoring, control and surveillance.
2. Weak knowledge of fisheries legislation, combined with the fear of disapproval by the Ministry of Fisheries.

### **Consequences of illegal fishing**

Illegal fishing leads to several damages, like the gradual loss of national income (mainly from taxes); conflicts between foreign fleets and local owners/fishers; undue increase of catch effort; and decrease in stock, leading to unsustainable fishing.

National and regional strategies are being thought of to combat the illegal fishing from abroad. The MoF is being restructured to deal with fisheries administration and management. At the regional level, the SADC Head of States have just agreed, last August, on regional mechanisms to control fisheries activities amongst the member States. In fact, a regional Protocol on Fisheries was adopted last August in Malawi. The document lists, among other things, some regional strategies, namely:

- a) Harmonization of the principal concepts to be observed by the member States for the control and monitoring of fishing activities in the region and the administration of the sector.
- b) Establishment of the main basis for the use, regulation and protection of the resources.
- c) Creation of a committee of ministers responsible for the fisheries in the interior and marine waters in each member State.

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