

Current fishery management tools and the ecosystem approach



Understanding the ecosystem approach (1)

- The overarching principles of ecosystem- based management of fisheries are an extension of the conventional principles for sustainable fisheries development to cover the ecosystem as a whole. They aim to ensure that, despite variability, uncertainty, and likely natural changes in the ecosystem, the capacity of the aquatic ecosystems to produce fish food, revenues and employment and, more generally, other essential services and livelihood, is maintained indefinitely for the benefit of present and future generations.
- The main implication is the need to cater both for human as well as ecosystem well-being. This implies
- conservation of ecosystem structures, processes and interactions through sustainable use

(FAO Fisheries Atlas)

Understanding the ecosystem approach (2)

- EAFM aims at complementing the traditional approach to fisheries management by providing it with environmental policy principles, objectives and operational procedures as a basis for management action.
- EAFM directly concerns fisheries management, i.e. the administration of fisheries resources, fisheries interests and fishing activities. EAFM is not “ecosystem management”, although it is expected to contribute substantially to it.
- EAFM should have the objective, in the long term, of establishing a system whereby fishing activity is conducted in a way that is compatible with the sustainable conservation of the overall balance of the marine ecosystem

Current fishery management tools (Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002) (1)

- Binding legislation directly applicable to fishing operators
 - Catch and effort limitations
 - Access conditions
 - Technical conservation measures
 - Monitoring and Reporting obligations
- Binding legislation applicable to administrations. It may revert into obligations for fishing operators
 - Catch and effort limitations
 - Monitoring and control obligations
 - Scientific monitoring
 - Control of fishing capacity

Current fishery management tools (Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002) (2)

- Measures non binding on operators or national authorities:
 - Coordination and funding of research
 - Guidelines and voluntary codes of conduct
 - Economic Incentives to diversification of activities
 - Market-oriented measures: ecolabels
 - Economy-based management of fishing rights (ITQs)
 - Consultation on horizontal measures: Increased range of stakeholders
 - Consultation on measures of regional scope: RACs
 - Training of fishermen, scientists and administrators
 - (...)

Are these tools appropriate to
implement an ecosystem
approach?



• YES!



• BUT...



We require a change in attitude

- Of fisheries managers and the fishing sector, recognizing that the effects of fisheries go beyond the modulation of the population dynamics of the target species and extend to other species, food webs habitats, etc...
- Of scientists, that should provide advice based on these considerations
- Of politicians, recognizing the universal reach of this new approach and the need to extend it to a global dimension

And this change in attitude is actually taking place

- At a slow rate: evolution rather than revolution (Reykjavik, 2001); economic and social constraints.
- But energetically when threats are severe and risks are certain (prevention) or uncertain (precaution).