Incompatibilities and Conflicts in Fisheries Planning in Southeast Asia

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Introduction

The development of an effective machinery for determining and planning the utilisation of fish resources in the waters exploited by the countries of South-East Asia is becoming increasingly urgent, owing to the threatened over-exploitation of certain of the species and to the inevitable overcapitalisation and waste which results from unrestricted free entry to the fishing industry of the region. The waters exploited lie mainly in the South China Sea which includes the Sunda Shelf and the Gulf of Thailand and lie between Kalimantan and Sumatra in the South and the north of Taiwan and the coast of Fuken in the North and embraces the coasts of both East and West Malaysia and part of the coast of the Philippines (Luzon). Other waters in the region which are exploited by South-East Asian countries are other territorial waters claimed by Indonesia and the Philippines, e.g. the Celebes Sea and Java and Banda Seas.

The South China Sea is extremely productive and, provided suitable fishing methods and vessels were used, the existing fish potential double the present catch. It is not enough, however, simply to improve fishing techniques. The most pressing problem at the moment is the question of fishing rights which have been discussed at the recent (1976) Law of the Sea Conference. Various areas of conflict between nations in the region regarding the extent of their territorial waters and fishery jurisdiction are inevitable. Alternative measures for managing the fisheries of the region, bearing in mind the fishery jurisdiction which each country may claim, have been discussed in a recent paper by Marr (1976). However, whatever the outcome of the negotiations between South-East Asian countries on the limits of their respective fishery jurisdiction, no effective implementation of fishing limits can be made without a considerable improvement in the planning of fisheries, both at a national and regional level. This paper is concerned with some of the problems of planning fisheries development in South-East Asia which, for the administrative purposes of the United Nations, falls within the Indo Pacific region.

It attempts to identify various conflicts and incompatibilities which may arise in planning the development of marine fisheries and is based on an analysis of the answers to questionnaires sent out by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the
United Nations (F.A.O.) to 25 countries in the Indo Pacific region in 1974, from which 20 replies were received. It must be stressed that these questionnaires were answered by the respective Fisheries Departments and since, in some countries, there may have been little communication with the central economic planning department, the views given here must be taken as representing those of the Fisheries Departments.

Questions were asked first about the Government's main objectives in developing fisheries and respondents were asked to list these in order of priority, secondly about impediments to the attainment of the stated objectives and thirdly the influence of the fishing industry on the employment situation, and about the planning of fisheries development at the national level. The questions were asked in very broad, general, open-ended terms, allowing respondents scope for enlargement.

Replies were very varied, some expansive, others perfunctory, and this is partly explained by the substantial disparities in the fish resource endowment of countries as well as by differences in the degree of involvement of the state in fisheries programmes. Some countries have a developed, centralized planning organisation, notably India, Pakistan, Tanzania and Ceylon, but about half the remaining countries are less involved in economic planning and work toward a national fisheries development objective based on limited statistical data, whilst the rest, particularly some of the smaller and less developed states, have minimum state participation and planning in economic development.

In the third part of this paper a description will be given of the response of governments to this investigation and in the fourth part, an analytic assessment will be made of the reality of governments' intentions.

Economic Characteristics of Countries in the Region

A simple analysis of replies would be of little use in evaluating objectives and constraints to fishery development without taking into account the very varied size and relative importance of the fishing industry in each country. Between countries fisheries are extremely diverse, not only in respect of size of fleet, quantity landed, methods of fishing, numbers employed, economic status of the fishing communities, etc., but also because individual countries are at different levels of economic development and demonstrate considerable variations in per caput income and wealth. To examine answers to questionnaires without taking such differences into account so as to give appropriate weight to replies might result in meaningless generalizations. It is thus important to look further into the replies and consider them in relation to the factors mentioned in the previous paragraphs.

In an attempt to find common ground on which to assess the importance of fisheries planning in individual countries in the region, and on which to identify some association with fisheries growth, a study was made of the published statistics relating to production, consumption, utilization of fish and the organization of fisheries in each country. Data were taken from F.A.O. Fishery Country Profiles, most of which refer to 1970, and from the Yearbook of Fishery Statistics, 1972. This material is given in Table 1. The data does not cover all countries in the region but is based on information available at the time of writing. Countries have been grouped