

Labelling & Certification

Can they improve market access
for products from small-scale
fisheries and ensure responsible
fisheries?

Background

- Range of options: labelling, certification, self-certification, 3rd party certification, branding
 - environmental labels and certification schemes
 - ecolabels
 - social certification (FairTrade, Social Responsibility)
 - branding – regional, other
- Labels can be:
 - international, regional, local
 - specific to traditional fishing methods, systems of management

Range of Options

- Some good examples of the range of labeling and certification include:
 - Maine lobster fishery - a regional label
 - Lake Victoria Nile Perch – a regional initiative
 - looking at ecolabelling and social certification
 - Ben Tre clam fishery (VietNam) – an ecolabel
 - Abalone fishery (Philippines)

Constraints to SSF Participation

- High costs of third party programs
- Heavy data needs
- Recipient markets demanding specific documentation / assurance on aspects of quality or methods of production
- The many massive hurdles faced by small-scale fisheries in entering bigger market chains
- Differences in power between small-scale fishers and recipients/consumers

Concerns

- Existence of complex standards that may not be relevant to the SSF context
- Lack of consultation over standard setting
- Pricing differentials and discrimination between labeled and unlabelled product
- Possibility of high quality products leaving the country and lower quality/low grade products being “dumped” locally
- Demand for labeled products
 - may drive fishing effort, and
 - negatively impact sustainability

Benefits

- Certification or branding initiatives have been successful for small-scale fishers with net benefits to their livelihoods in terms of:
 - income (typically)
 - assured market access
- There have been net environmental / fisher benefits as a result of
 - fishers organizing
 - developing / revising management plans

SSF Constraints to Entering Any Larger Markets

- Small-scale fisheries and the global market(s)
 - not very well linked
 - lacking information
- Not all small-scale fisheries would like to be “stronger” and linked to the global market
 - might be better off just fishing and selling locally
- Small-scale fisheries are not necessarily entirely profit motivated
 - profit motive as a justification to certify or label may not be valid

Some of the Conclusions

- Supermarket driven standards and labelling can cause exclusion
 - but will not engaging result in greater exclusion?
- More effort should be given to use certification and labelling to emphasize the comparative advantages that small-scale fisheries may have.
 - e.g. “organic” style and the fact of being small-scale
- It is critical to recognize the lack of information, links and power differences between small-scale fishers and consumers/buyers.
- There is need for clear recognition and resolution of the many massive hurdles faced by small-scale fisheries in entering market chains (if / when SSF want to do so).