

The Tanzania National Fisheries Policy Of 2015

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Key Messages

- The 2015 Tanzanian National Fisheries Policy (NFP) aims to promote a sustainable and equitable fisheries sector and address key issues such as overfishing, gender inequality, and the development of fishing communities.
- The NFP recognizes the crucial role of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) all along the fish value chain.
- The NFP has experienced successes, including increased investment in fisheries and aquaculture infrastructure, improved quality and food safety of fish, and greater market access for small-scale fishers and fish farmers.
- The NFP has also experienced challenges in implementation: Inadequate resources hinders enforcement; overfishing and habitat degradation remain pressing concerns; and there have been delays in infrastructure development.

Introduction

The National Fisheries Policy of 1997 aimed to address challenges faced by the Tanzania fisheries sector, including overfishing, declining fish stocks, and a need to improve livelihoods. The policy laid the foundation for subsequent developments, including the Fisheries Act 2003, which was subsequently updated in 2015 to reflect the changing micro- and macroeconomic context and address emerging challenges and opportunities.

The 2015 Tanzanian National Fisheries Policy (NFP) aims to promote a sustainable and equitable fisheries sector and address key issues such as overfishing, gender inequality, and the development of fishing communities. The policy is implemented through various legal instruments such as the Fisheries Act, Marine Parks and Reserves Act, Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute Act No. 11 of 2016, and the Deep Sea Fisheries Management and Development Act of 2020. The NFP is not just a local initiative; rather, it also aligns with and upholds international principles of responsible fisheries management and a balance between economic development, ecological preservation, and societal equity (fair distribution of benefits from the sector).

Overview of National Fisheries Policy

The NFP covers a wide range of topics within the realm of fisheries. It aims for national self-sufficiency in fish and fish products and further aims to enhance the livelihoods of fisherfolk and aquaculture farmers by increasing incomes. The policy addresses issues of trade, promoting exports of fisheries products and ensuring access to international markets. It promotes the adoption of improved post-harvest fish handling and processing techniques and promotes diversification of the fisheries sector. It encourages investments to develop aquaculture technologies, improve the quality of aquaculture feed and seed, and control fish disease. It also emphasizes research and development, as well as capacity building and training, regional and international collaboration, gender/youth inclusion, environmental conservation, community participation, and co-management.

The NFP recognizes the crucial role of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) throughout the fish value chain. The policy lays out various measures to support MSMEs, such as facilitating access to credit, establishing saving and credit cooperative societies, utilizing the services of the Agricultural Development Bank, and setting up insurance schemes. It also

advocates for capacity-building programs for MSMEs and further advocates for embracing modern technology and innovation, developing relevant infrastructure, and improving market linkages. Moreover, the policy promotes gender equality and women's empowerment in fisheries by prioritizing equal access to resources, supporting women's leadership, addressing gender-based violence, and integrating gender mainstreaming throughout fisheries development and management. Environmental issues are well addressed in the NFP through an emphasis on preventing overfishing, protecting fish habitats, and ensuring the long-term viability of fisheries resources. Overall, the policy aligns with global best practices for environmental conservation. The NFP aims to reduce bycatch through improved fishing techniques, gear modifications, and selective fishing practices. The policy also recognizes a need for adaptation strategies in response to changing environmental conditions, such as ocean warming, acidification, and sea-level rise. In this regard, it emphasizes the importance of protecting critical fish habitats, such as coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds. The NFP calls for accurate data on fish stocks and fish health and combats illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing to reduce pressure on fisheries resources and protect the environment.

The policy also addresses food safety by developing and enforcing quality standards and regulations for fish and fish products, regular inspections and monitoring, sanitary infrastructure, traceability systems, and adoption of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles.



Successes and Challenges

The National Fisheries Policy of 2015 has had both successes and challenges in achieving its objectives. The policy has increased fisheries and aquaculture infrastructure investment, improved fish quality and food safety, and provided greater market access for small-scale fishers and aquaculture farmers. It has also supported the establishment of a state-of-the-art laboratory in Nyegezi, Mwanza and has ambitious plans for fishing ports, vessel acquisition, and youth empowerment projects. The policy has facilitated improved access to finance and credit facilities for fishers and aquaculture farmers while also promoting increased participation and leadership roles for women in the industry. The policy's success is evident in fishing communities' active participation in management decisions.

At the same time, the NFP has encountered some challenges during implementation. Notably, policy implementation is an ongoing process that requires commitment, coordination, and resources. Overfishing, illegal fishing, and habitat degradation remain pressing concerns in Tanzania, and conservation efforts have been limited. Inadequate resources, corruption, and limited monitoring capacity hinder enforcement. Deep sea fishing and infrastructure development delays are also significant issues. Climate change disrupts traditional fishing practices, affecting fisheries sustainability. Marginalized groups face challenges due to traditional norms and cultural barriers. Finally, access to international markets continues to be limited by trade barriers and tariffs.

Recommendations

Given the challenges facing the implementation of the 2015 fisheries policy, several adjustments can improve fishing activities and sustainability. These recommendations are as follows:

The government should prioritize allocating adequate budgets for the development and maintenance of critical fishing infrastructure, including landing zones and cold storage facilities. This can be facilitated by establishing a dedicated fund to accelerate repairs and

improvements, overcoming budget constraints and avoiding inefficiencies. Furthermore, public-private partnerships (PPPs) can harness private sector expertise and investment, thereby augmenting the quality and accessibility of infrastructure.

A central, integrated data system is imperative for the collection, management, and dissemination of accurate data pertaining to fishing activities. Utilization of modern technologies such as mobile apps and satellite tracking stands to enhance data accuracy and expediency. To reinforce this, training in data collection and analysis should be imparted to local officials and fishery managers, thus ensuring the quality and reliability of fisheries data.

Targeted programs aimed at promoting gender equality will serve to encourage women's participation and leadership in the fisheries sector, thereby contributing to a more inclusive industry.

Adaptive management strategies are essential to address the impacts of climate change on fish stocks and fishing practices. These strategies should advocate for sustainable practices, such as selective fishing and environmentally friendly gear. The establishment of robust environmental monitoring systems will enable the tracking of climate change effects, thereby informing policy and management decisions.

To enhance market access, collaborative efforts with international partners are necessary to reduce trade barriers and promote Tanzanian seafood through branding and quality certification programs. In addition, financial and technical assistance to small-scale fishermen can help them be competitive in domestic and international markets, including facilitating access to foreign markets and providing market trend information.

Inclusive policy-making is indispensable for striking a balance between the interests of various stakeholders in the fisheries sector, including small-scale fishers, large-scale commercial entities, and marginalized groups. Regular consultations and establishment of

advisory committees ensure that all voices are heard. Moreover, developing transparent and accessible conflict resolution mechanisms can aid in resolving disputes within the sector, thereby fostering harmony and cooperation.



Tanzania's growing engagement in global markets calls for the establishment of a dedicated unit within the fisheries ministry to monitor and analyze global seafood markets and trade dynamics. This unit can furnish timely reports and recommendations to assist the sector in adapting to external changes. Strengthening international cooperation and collaboration with other countries and organizations is similarly essential in addressing global considerations that impact the fisheries sector, such as trade agreements and environmental regulations.

Crucially, investment in research and development (R&D) is integral to the development and dissemination of best practices and innovative techniques tailored to local conditions and species (URT 2019). Moreover, the NFP provides guidance on priorities for research on the fish value chain, including research on the effect of policies on the marketing of fish products, technologies to improve fish quality, interventions to improve food safety and nutrition, utilization of by-catch and rejected fishery products, and use of underutilized species. Such research activities can significantly contribute to Tanzania's achievement of its national development agenda as well as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Malabo Declaration, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Fisheries Protocol, and the Blue Economy policy, as well

as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 14 (Life Below Water).

Conclusion

In conclusion, fisheries management is a complex and evolving field, and successful policies require multi-disciplinary and adaptive approaches. Engaging all relevant stakeholders, from fishers to conservation organizations, is essential for the effective implementation of fisheries policies.

Improving Tanzania's Fisheries Policy in 2015 and aligning it with current global trends in fisheries management and sustainability requires several key considerations and updates. One way to enhance the fisheries sector is by promoting activities such as processing, packaging, and marketing to add value and boost the industry's economic benefits. To further this, it is important to

improve international market access for Tanzanian fish products by establishing international trade agreements and adhering to quality assurance standards. It is also important to promote sustainable and efficient fishing technologies, such as better post-harvest handling practices, and to encourage innovation in aquaculture and mariculture to reduce pressure on wild fisheries. Additionally, a system can be set up for periodic reviews and updates of the fisheries policy to ensure it stays in line with evolving global trends and scientific knowledge.

References

URT 2019 National Fisheries and Aquaculture research agenda (2020-2025)

Photos

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