

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 to 50 per cent of the country's foreign exchange earnings. An extensive coast that supports diverse fisheries makes Mozambique a sensitive place for illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing.

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

Keywords

Mozambique. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. IUU. Surveillance. SADC. Shrimp fishery.

1 Introduction

Mozambique lies between 10°20' north (from the mouth of the Rovuma River on the Tanzania border) and 26°50' south (at Ponta do Ouro on the South African border). The coastline is 2,770 km long, and the exclusive economic zone is 562,000 sq km. The fisheries sector plays an important role in the economy of the country, contributing about 40 to 50 per cent of Mozambique's foreign exchange earnings in recent 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 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 mn people live in rural areas. The central and northern provinces are characterized by fertile soils and plentiful rainfall, but suffer from poor accessibility. In the south-

ern provinces, the soils are poor, and rainfed production is marginal, but accessibility is relatively good, particularly in Maputo, the nation's capital and largest market, as well as in South Africa.

2 Historical Context

Mozambique won its independence in 1975. The exodus of Portuguese settlers and Asian traders, the subsequent adoption of central planning, nationalization of major enterprises, and the civil war from the late 1970s to the 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 pursuit of 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 multiparty democracy has been established and consolidated; political and economic decentralization has proceeded, albeit gradually;

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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.

3 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 underexploited resources. Peace, better policies, rising foreign investment and continued external assistance have contributed to encouraging economic performance and the creation of an environment in which these resources can be developed. Real gross domestic product (GDP) has been increasing at an annual average rate 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 relaxed 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 broadbased 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.

4 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 mn 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 markets are the European Union (EU), Japan and South Africa.

Marine fisheries account for more than 80 per cent of the country's total production. About 90,000 people are directly involved 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 is 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).

5 Resources and Trends

Around 1,500 species of fish are present in the Mozambican seas, of which 400 are of direct commercial importance. The catch of fish was estimated, in 1995, at over 350,000 tonnes, but only 25 per cent of this was utilized. Pelagic fish and demersal species, in particular, 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 'second' and 'third' (IIP, 1999). The yearly average catch rates, from 1977 to 2000, showed a decreasing trend, though effort had increased. For the same period, the total catch figures showed some fluctuation, with lower catches reported between 1990 and 1994.

6 Main Features

In the artisanal sector, traditional fishing methods dominate. The main artisanal fishing gear are beach-seines, gillnets, 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, gillnets, longlines, hooks-and-line and seine nets.

The industrial fishery consists of large trawl vessels, equipped with deep freezers, which make monthly trips to the main fishing area, Sofala Bank. This fishery, specially oriented towards shallow-water bottom trawling, is aimed at the export

markets supplied by joint venture companies in Mozambique.

7 Fisheries Management

The fishery sector is managed by the Ministry of Fisheries (MoF) of the Government of Mozambique, under 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 controlling fishing activity. The Maritime Administration (ADMR), under the Ministry of Transport and Communication, has the responsibility for controlling artisanal fisheries.

The shrimp fishery is managed by monitoring the total allowable catch (TAC). A three-month closed season, from December to March, is used to keep the catch below the TAC. There is also a minimum legal mesh size limit of 55 mm.

8 Illegal Fishing in Mozambique

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

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

The most common infringements relate to illegal imports of boats, 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 supervisory 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 (using mainly poison and dynamite).

9 Illegal Marine Fishing

The problem of illegal marine fishing in Mozambique by outsiders is well recognized, though not reflected in official figures. The lack of an institutional infrastructure to supervise the coast, investigate reported cases and, if necessary, sue offenders leaves the country vulnerable to such 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 Mocimboa da Praia), Inhambane (in the Bazaruto area) and Nampula (Angoche and Mussoril), and are presumably related to highly migratory species, mainly tuna.

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

10 Causes of Illegal Fishing

Some factors behind illegal fishing are: excessive fishing effort; decrease of catch of high-value resources; inefficient systems of monitoring, control and surveillance; and inadequate knowledge of fisheries legislation, combined with the fear of disapproval by the Ministry of Fisheries.

11 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; an undue increase of catch effort; and a decrease in fish stocks, leading to unsustainable fishing.

National and regional strategies are being thought of to combat 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:

- 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.
- Establishment of the main basis for the use, regulation and protection of resources.
- Creation of a committee of ministers responsible for fisheries in the inland and marine waters of each member State.

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