

Modelling the next food revolution

Fisheries are an increasingly important part of the world's food system, but until recently were overlooked by policy makers. Rebecca Thyer reports

PARTNER COUNTRY: Malaysia **PROJECT:** ADP/2001/092: Fish in food: The critical role of fish in world food issues **COMMISSIONED**
ORGANISATION: International Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management, Malaysia **DESCRIPTION:** Integrating fish into the International Food Policy Research Institute's analytical models to raise the national/global profile of fish issues **CONTACT:** Dr Mahfuzuddin Ahmed, m.ahmed@cgiar.org

World fish consumption reached 14 kilograms per capita in the late 1990s, twice the level recorded in the 1950s. It shows no signs of abating. The rapid growth in the consumption of animal products in developing countries – dubbed the next ‘food revolution’ – has raised serious questions about sustainability.

Swift changes in supply and demand have also affected the livelihoods of the poor, with aquaculture shifting from an income-providing activity of the very poor to a profitable commercial enterprise.

Although fisheries and aquaculture are increasingly recognised as integral to the food system, until recently they were not integrated into analytical models of food systems used by the world's policy-makers.

Realising the benefits of analytical modelling, an ACIAR-funded team at WorldFish and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) integrated fish into IFPRI's analytical models on agriculture and food, analysed aquaculture's key role in terms of rapid demand changes and, in turn, raised the profile of fish issues in national and global debates.

WorldFish project leader Dr Mahfuz Ahmed says fisheries are poorly represented and understood in policy circles.

“They are often not included in discussions about food and the environment, yet fish represent an important and increasingly large global food sector,” Dr Ahmed says. “We thought it made sense to include fish in modelling, making fisheries more appealing to policy-makers.”

Projections from the model provided the context for exploring nutrition, food security and poverty alleviation; environmental sustainability and public health; and technology needs and prospects.

Dr Ahmed says the modelling work has given policy-makers and researchers a ‘fish outlook’ in a globalising food economy, allowing them to analyse how trends in the fish sector will affect the poor and impact on the environment.

“It is also appealing to policy-makers because

they are not just making statements, they have the background to support their arguments. For the first time, fisheries issues are being discussed in relation to food security and demand.”

Dr Ahmed says the modelling work has also helped to form the basis for new projects. “Creating a global model for fish has brought it into the light. Making people aware of fisheries, global demands and changing marketing needs helps in policy debates.

“Aquaculture will expand at a fast rate. We want to know what the implications are for the environment and for the world's poor. Without effective modelling we can't work out what will happen.”

During the project the team produced *Fish to 2020: Supply and Demand in Changing Global Markets*, Food Policy Report *Outlook for Fish to 2020: Meeting Global Demand* and *The Future of Fish: Issues and Trends to 2020*, which have helped to boost knowledge of fisheries' role in world food issues.

See www.ifpri.org or www.worldfishcenter.org



Fish to 2020 – boosting knowledge of fisheries' role in world food issues.

