

# PRESS RELEASE

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Could climate change push fish off the menu**

### **FAO/DFID Launch Policy Brief on Climate Change, Poverty & Fisheries**

Rome, [insert details when they become available] November 2005

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation today released a policy brief on the impact of climate change on fisheries important to the poor.

The main conclusion of the brief is that climate change is an additional burden to an over-stretched fisheries sector, and could further contribute to poverty in developing countries. Poverty will be increased in fishing communities where productivity of the fishery declines or the distribution of the stock moves out of reach. Extreme events, especially in coastal areas, threaten to destroy homes, fishing gear or spread disease. Poverty will also be increased within countries that depend on the fisheries sector as a source of export revenue and affordable animal protein. African countries, particularly those in West and Central Africa, are among the most vulnerable.

FAO is concerned for the additional impact of climate change on the fisheries sector where 17% of fisheries are already over-exploited and 52% of fisheries fully exploited. Fisheries currently support livelihoods for over 50 million people in developing countries, contribute to GDP and provide affordable animal protein to the poor. The additional threat of climate change on top of overexploitation and poverty may push fisheries systems and communities beyond their ability to cope. A global review of

vulnerability found a series of countries within West Africa, Central Africa and localised areas in Asia (i.e. Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Niger, Malawi, Uganda, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Cambodia) to be most at risk due to their high reliance on fisheries to support economic growth and food security coupled with their low capacity to cope. Coastal, lake, and river fisheries are all-important resources for poor communities but are likely to be highly sensitive to climate change.

*Quote from FAO* [insert details when they become available]

Development partners such as DFID and World Bank are also concerned that the poorest in Africa and Asia are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and that the threat to fishing communities is being ignored.

*Quote from DFID* [insert details when they become available]

Fishing communities are at risk from reduced productivity of their fishing grounds, fishing stocks moving out of their access zones due to climate shifts, and the double-exposure of floods, droughts and damage to homes, health centres and fishing boats & gears due to increased frequency of extreme events.

They are also at risk from the adaptation adaptive measures taken in the agricultural and other sectors. For example, as the need for irrigation in drought-prone zones increases, reduced water flows in rivers due to extraction will negatively affect river fisheries production. Fishers on Lake Tanganyika have witnessed a decrease in fish production with declining lake levels: potentially the combined result of climatic changes and intensified water use.

The aim of this policy brief is to raise awareness of the issue within the climate change, fishery and development sectors. Action is needed now through adaptation planning, risk reduction, and improved fisheries management, but the information upon which to base actions is often scanty.

FAO and DFID will be taking this issue forward through [insert details when they become available]

### **Notes to Editor**

- The policy brief was compiled by Eddie Allison, Overseas Development Group, University of East Anglia, U.K, FAO/DFID Sustainable Fisheries Livelihood Programme; Charlotte Howard, Marine Resources Assessment Group; Nick Dulvy and Graham Pilling CEFAS, and staff of FAO Fisheries Department.
- The policy brief is based on research commissioned by the UK Department for International Development that assessed the vulnerability of fisheries in developing countries to climate change. A scientific paper covering this research and entitled # insert # has been published/submitted to # insert #.
- The Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP) is a joint programme supported by DFID and FAO for sustainable fisheries and reduced poverty in West Africa.
- The policy brief can be obtained from FAO (see contacts below) or through the DFID Fisheries Management Science Programme (FMSP) website: <http://www.fmsp.org.uk/r8475.htm>

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