

ACCESSIBILITY TO CERTIFICATION STANDARDS

For small-scale and developing
world fisheries

KEY CHALLENGES



COSTS

The evaluation leading to a possible (pre) certification, for which some external funds could be mobilised, is only one aspect of the cost.

Conditions imposed by the labelling body may include changes in fishing methods and gear used, for example. The costs associated with these changes, in many cases, tend to be much higher than the costs associated with assessing the fishery. Few small-scale fishing operators can afford these expenses.





BENEFITS

The benefits, in terms of premium for certified fishery products, are not automatic and have often not materialised. In many cases, as artisanal fishers have little bargaining power in the value chain, the main beneficiaries of a potential premium would be the owners of exporting companies that sell in foreign markets. If the certification can lead to higher prices, the resulting profit growth may not be redistributed to the artisanal fishermen.

RISK OF DE-LABELLING

There are many external factors on which the artisanal fishermen have no influence that can negatively affect the fishery, with the result of a de-labellization. Some of these may include changes in fisheries management by governments, the impact of climate change or illegal fishing. Loss of label is damaging in terms of marketing because it sends a confusing message to consumers and distributors.





GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

States play a critical role in the success of labelling systems: they provide data for the assessment, and should implement potential changes in fisheries management. One of the three main considerations in the labelling process is the robustness of the management system. Fisheries authorities may not have the capacity and political will to respond to these requests. They can also lack transparency and accountability. The artisanal fishermen who will have invested their energy to have a product labelled, can be victims of governmental 'mismanagement' policies.

IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY

Some labelling schemes are starting to ecolabel fishmeal and fish oil derived from the exploitation of small pelagics in Mauritania. This is problematic as these stocks are overexploited and there is a lack of regional management for these resources. On top of this, fishmeal and fish oil industry in West Africa directly competes with the supply of local and regional markets for human consumption. Certification organisations should make sure that their certification schemes do not threaten food security in Africa.





SOCIAL ASPECTS

The priority for African artisanal fishing organizations is to ask their States to ratify and implement international tools aimed at improving the working and living conditions of artisanal fishing operators, like the ILO Convention C188 and the FAO Guidelines on Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries. There is a concern that the 'social' aspect of certification would be less demanding than these international conventions, and would provide an easy way out for those companies who do not want these conventions implemented to still benefit from the label image added value.

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