

THE PEOPLE'S FISH – A CRISIS FOR GHANA'S CANOE SECTOR

- Small pelagic fish include anchovies, mackerel, and sardines and are popularly known as 'the people's fish' because of their importance to local economies, nutrition and food security across the nation.
- The 'people's fish' make up to 80% of total marine fish caught and landed in Ghana and directly employs 150,000 canoe fishers, 30,000 fish processors, and an estimated 2.7 million people involved in trading, transporting and selling these fish across the nation.
- Total landings of the people's fish in Ghana have decreased by 86% from 138,955 metric tons (MT) in 1996 to 19,608 MT in 2016.
- Currently, when fish come together to spawn [breed] in August, fishermen often encircle to catch whole groups of breeding mother fish. One pregnant mother fish has the potential to drop over 25,000 eggs.
- The fisheries Science and Technical Working Group (STWG) that include fishers, predicts that the fishery could completely collapse by 2020 with immediate actions.
- Already, it is common for fishermen to go to sea and return with no catch at all, or come with rubbish.
- Loss of the small pelagics fishery threatens the economic growth and presents an internal security problem within the livelihoods of up to 500,000 people directly involved.
- Even if all illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing was stopped, the people's fish stock still is likely to collapse unless they are allowed to breed during the August high breeding season to replenish low stocks.
- To be successful, protecting spawning mother fish to rebuild stocks must be supported by other management measures such as controlling overcapacity, limiting the number of boats to sustainable levels, and stopping illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

AVERTING THE CRISIS

- The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and the Fisheries Commission are working with fishers and other stakeholders to implement immediate and sustained actions to avert disaster.
- The most important immediate sustainable fisheries management action is implementation of a closed season for all fleets (except tuna that is regulated separately) to protect breeding mother fish.
- This will be combined with a new emphasis on stamping out illegal fishing, particularly fishing that is most damaging to small pelagic stocks.
- With the closed season and eradication of illegal fishing methods, it is predicted that stock of 'the people's fish' will recover, and landings will increase from the yearly landing of 19,608 metric tons recorded in 2016 to 90,000 metric tons per year by 2030 with an estimated value of GH¢270 million.

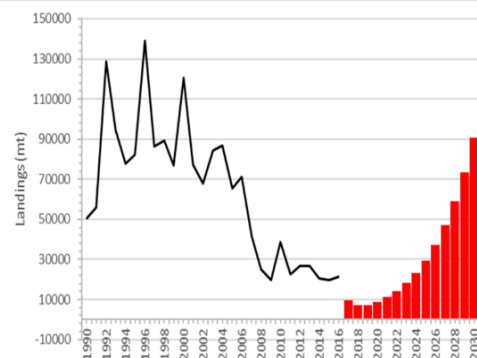


Fig.1 shows that small pelagics, the people's fish, are expected to completely collapse by 2020 but can recover if immediate actions are taken including a closed season during spawning and elimination of illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (IUU).

SUPPORT CLOSED SEASON AUGUST NOW!

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(closed season)