

Innovative policies needed to promote growth and sustainability of Africa's fisheries and aquaculture, finds new report

Expert Panel outlines strategies for sustainably increasing production of aquatic foods to meet economic and food security goals amid forecasts of a deficit.

KIGALI, RWANDA, January 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Accelerated growth in Africa's fisheries and aquaculture sector constitutes a major driver to deliver economic growth, food security, and environmental sustainability, according to a new report.

The latest publication from the Malabo Montpellier Panel of agriculture and food security experts highlights the rapid growth of the continent's fisheries and aquaculture sector, which, since 2022, has experienced the highest aquaculture growth rate of all regions of the world, increasing by more than five-fold to reach 2.5 million metric tons (MT) in 2022.

The sector provides almost 20 percent of Africa's animal protein. To counter a projected deficit of 11 million MT annually by 2030, policies and investments are needed to meet future demand and avoid potential shortages, the authors argue. Africa's supplies of aquatic foods would need to increase by 74 percent by 2050 to maintain current per capita fish consumption levels.

"FISH-FRIENDLY: Policy Innovations for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa" reviews the current state of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in Africa, its continental and global policy frameworks, and its strategy priorities.

Launched at the 15th Malabo Montpellier Forum in the presence of senior African government representatives, industry experts, and development partners, the report demonstrates that while Africa's fisheries and aquaculture hold immense potential, unlocking the benefits of the sector requires comprehensive policy reforms, technological advancements, sustainable resource management, and regional and global cooperation.

"Fish and other aquatic foods play an increasingly important role in African diets and economic development. To benefit more from this growing sector, governments and the private sector need to facilitate innovation and address limiting factors like feed supplies in aquaculture and illegal coastal fishing," said Prof. Joachim von Braun, Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, and Co-Chair of the Malabo Montpellier Panel. "This report illustrates how forward-thinking policies can foster the innovations needed to transform the continent's

fisheries and aquaculture sector into a powerful engine for economic growth, jobs, and food security, while protecting the related ecologies."

The report reviews the policy and programmatic interventions of Ghana, Malawi, Morocco, and Mozambique – countries that have shown considerable success and progress in growing their fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

Ghana's Aquaculture for Food and Jobs (AFJ) program was launched to boost fish production and create employment for youth. Through AFJ, the government plans to train 10,000 youth in small-scale fish farming, creating around 50,000 additional jobs along fisheries and aquaculture value chains. The government invested in infrastructure, notably through the construction of the National Aquaculture Centre at Amrahi near Accra, where four cohorts have been trained and set up for business in various subsectors of fisheries and aquaculture. In 2023, 265 aquaculture production facilities were constructed, with 32 million fingerlings supplied.

In Malawi, the Aquaculture Value Chain Project (AVCP) established the Aquaculture Business School, providing training in organizational, processing, and technical skills to 4,500 small-scale producers and 144 fish farmer groups nationwide. Similarly, the Inclusive Business and Entrepreneurial Models (IBEMs) for small-scale fish farmers project provided innovative training on aquaculture practices, business management, finance, and entrepreneurship to 1,046 farmers, 60 percent of whom were women. The project set up local entrepreneurs, with a focus on seed/fingerling production and fish feed.

Morocco's Halieutis Strategy, a comprehensive fisheries and aquaculture plan launched in 2009, has positioned the country as a top fish exporter to the European Union (EU). The Small-Scale Fisheries Project constructed and equipped landing sites and port facilities and was involved in the establishment of three marine protected areas, each extending over 40 km of coastline. It established five wholesale fish markets, provided certificate training, and equipped nearly 1,000 mobile fish vendors and 20,000 artisan fishers. These efforts, along with promoting research, improving fish management plans, and fighting illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, have contributed to annual per capita consumption of fish and fishery products by more than 10 percent.

Mozambique's MaisPeixe Sustentável (More Sustainable Fish) program provides matching grants to artisanal fishers and small enterprises to improve their fishing techniques, reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, and boost food security. The program has significantly impacted livelihoods in seven provinces by providing financing to over 1,000 artisanal fishing households. These matching grants have supported sustainable practices, such as using better fishing gear and improved postharvest techniques, directly contributing to better economic opportunities for marginalized coastal communities. In addition, the Small-Scale Aquaculture Development and the Artisanal Fisheries and Climate Change projects are highlighted as prime examples of how prioritizing grassroots participation can drive sustainable and successful fisheries models.

The Panel identifies four key areas to guide the policy interventions of African governments and development partners to enhance the performance of the fisheries and aquaculture sector:

- Invest in infrastructure, technology, and regulations: Investment in hatcheries, preservation, and processing facilities utilizing renewable energy, alongside innovative technologies that support nutritional, economic, and environmental goals – such as integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (e.g., rice-fish farming) should be prioritized. Robust monitoring and enforcement frameworks are needed to tackle IUU fishing.
- Strengthen support for smallholder aquaculture: To cultivate market-wide resilience, develop financial products and mobile apps that cater to smallholder needs, provide technical training and skills development programs, and facilitate equal market access.
- Support innovation and increase research funding: Building a skilled workforce capable of driving innovation is crucial. This can be achieved through innovation hubs and mentorship programs, directing more resources toward research on sustainability, and tax incentives for research institutions.
- Enhance regional cooperation, integration, and trade facilitation: Creating more efficient and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture systems will necessitate harmonized national, continental, and global fishing regulations, common certification and labeling systems, and streamlined customs procedures.

With approximately 6.1 million Africans employed in the sector, the importance of ensuring long-term sustainability has never been more evident.

"The recently adopted African Union CAADP Strategy and Action Plan (2026-2035) and the Africa Blue Economy Strategy underscore the vital role of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in transforming Africa's agrifood systems, ensuring food security and improved nutrition," said Dr. Ousmane Badiane, Executive Chairperson, AKADEMIYA2063 and Co-Chair of the Malabo Montpellier Panel.

"The timing of this report is particularly opportune as Africa aligns its ambitions with these frameworks to redefine its role in global aquatic food systems. The successful interventions highlighted in this report provide workable avenues to accelerate progress toward a productive and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture sector in Africa."

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