

Re-training of women formerly involved in shark meat processing in West Africa towards the West African salted, dried and smoked small pelagic markets

1. Overview

The current project is largely designed to respond to some burning issues. Already the following key points form the basis for the project being implemented.

- The depletion of shark stocks due to an increasing demand for shark fins and meat;
- The dependency of certain communities – mainly women - specialised in shark fin processing;
- The prospects offered by coastal small pelagic fish (*sardinella*) in the West African region where the consumption of these species is high;
- And finally, the urgent need to help these women to convert from the shark production chain to the pelagic species chain for their livelihoods.

2. Objectives

The overall goal of the project is to “**Reduce pressure on shark stocks in West Africa through re-conversion to other species whose stocks are in good health, while ensuring livelihoods for women formerly involved in shark meat processing**”

In order to achieve this overall goal, the project had focused on two main objectives as follows:

- Facilitating and supporting the withdrawal of women from shark meat processing activities;
- The provision of technical, financial and institutional support to enable women to withdraw from the shark chain by engaging in the processing of small pelagic fish (*sardinella*) using improved practices.

The strategies and activities scheduled to achieve the above specific objectives are summarized thus:

- Holding a training workshop that will focus on the issues of quality, handling, savings, packaging and management;
- Supplying equipment for fish quality improvement and product labelling;
- Organising study trips prospecting for markets in the West African Sub-region;
- Monitoring results and level of satisfaction;
- Documenting and disseminating lessons learned during project implementation



There are strong links between the project and shark conservation:

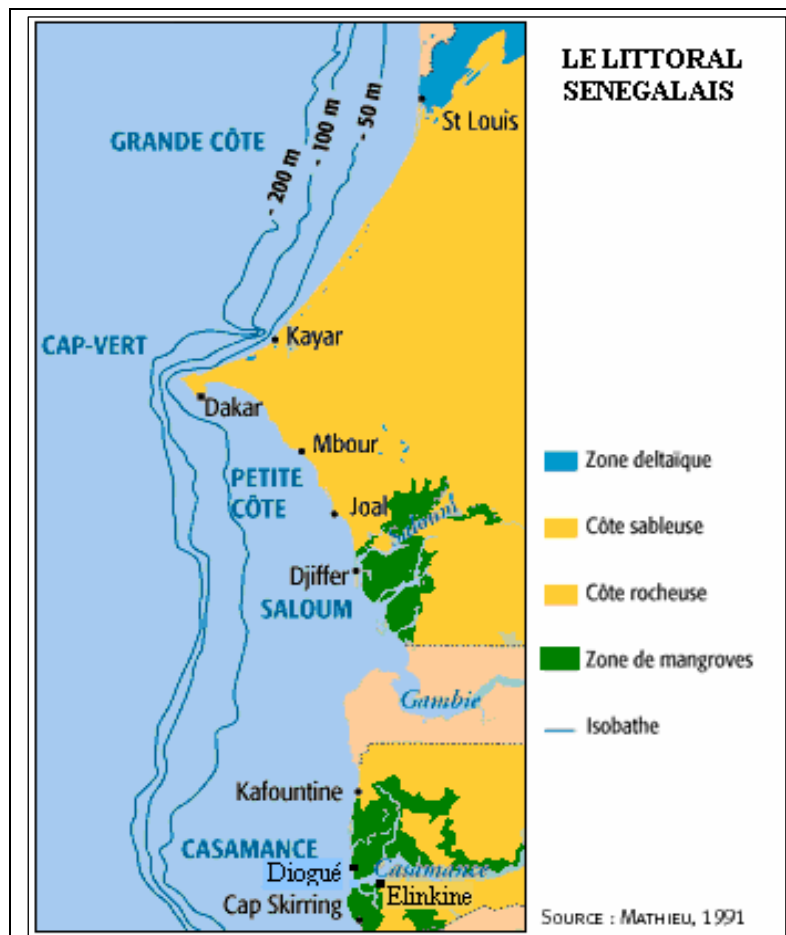
- a) There is an institutional and administrative framework both at international sub-regional and national (in Senegal) levels that are very favorable to such a project aiming to contribute to the conservation of sharks, with three main aspects:
 - i. In 1999, FAO issued the International Action Plan for the conservation of sharks.
 - ii. Then in 2001, the seven state members of the sub-regional fisheries committee launched the sub regional Action Plan for the conservation of sharks.
 - iii. Finally in 2005, the Senegalese government launched its national action plan for the conservation of sharks. This project is therefore conducted in the broader context of shark conservation and the widely recognized urgent need for action.
- b) Secondly, the project will contribute directly to better conservation of shark stocks. In fact, women who have profited from this project have already withdrawn from the shark meat chain and others who learned about the project are willing to participate in future schemes. For this reason, in the short and mid-term, the project will significantly contribute to the gradual reduction of the fishing effort, directly deployed on shark stocks, as far as the processing and the marketing of shark meat are the components of the chain that maintain shark fishers in the process.
- c) Finally such a project conducted in Senegal will have heavy and significant impact in terms of contribution to the conservation of sharks. In fact as Senegalese are the biggest sharks' exploiters (with a long tradition to migrate just to catch sharks) at the level of the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission space, the gradual withdrawal of women will have direct impact and will consist in a great contribution to sharks' conservation.

3. Outcomes

The following were the outcomes emanating from the implementation of activities within the framework of the project.

- Participants mastered and appreciated the smoking process they learned during the training. They also became aware of the importance of hygiene in their environment. The innovative dimension of this training is twofold:
 - a) The participants realise that by adopting this new technology they gain in quality of product, which in turn leads to an increase in fish price.

- b) Participants learnt improved hygiene standards in this method of production, that had been neglected in their former way of processing fish. In fact, women realise through this training session that the improving of hygienic conditions in fish processing ensures higher quality product and higher fish prices.
- Women from Potou, Lompoul (region of Louga), Diogue, Helinkine (region of Casamance), Joal (Petite Côte) and Guet Ndar (Region of Saint - Louis; see map enclosed), experimented for the first time using the smoking oven and have expressed a strong demand for this technology to be extended to these areas. These women were delegated by their communities. The total number of women depending directly and daily on this processing is 2094.



- The women who participated in the workshop represent the following locations (see table below) :

Locations	Number
Kafountine	294
Helinkine	42
Diogue	50
Cap Skirring	68
Lompoul	77
Mbour	457
Saint-Louis	612
Joal	494
Total	2094

- The women very clearly preferred the smoking technology because it ensures more hygienic and good quality products resulting in increased incomes.
- Women found the use of the smoking oven to be more convenient than the traditional processing techniques.
- Women learnt and mastered the whole processing technique: smoking, peeling, salting and sun drying.

4. Unexpected outcomes

Interactions and consultations between women, the fisheries administration and NGOs (FIBA, CREDETIP) during the workshop had led to the following unexpected outcomes:

- The willingness of the participants to establish partnerships and explore better markets opportunities (smoked pelagic markets) between regions in Senegal. This is the case of women from Casamance who expressed great interest in starting and developing a smoked sardinella chain between Diogu  (Casamance) and the site of MBalling. Some took with them samples of smoked sardinella from MBalling to their villages.
- The workshop was an interesting opportunity for participants to appreciate how important it is to be informed about market regulations to better defend their rights. For issues related to the West African fish trade, the women had long discussions and shared experiences concerning certain constraints they are facing at borders and with neighbouring countries (for example the

markets in Mali and Burkina Fasso). They discussed initiatives to meet the ambassador of Mali in Senegal.

- Another interesting outcome was that the participants realised that markets constraints are not exclusively economic (for example lack of funds), but they are also political, such as the need for policies makers to take charge of certain problems, like the implementation of Ecowas policies for the free circulation of goods.
- Information provided within the workshop enabled women to identify financial intuitions (mutual credit institutions and bilateral institutions for example), existing in Senegal, that are willing to support women.
- The participants were informed about the various support the government is offering to soften the credit access procedures.
- Women will promote the new skills they discovered in MBalling, leaning on local manpower in their respective locations and villages

5. Next steps

The first is related to the study trip. For this activity – as indicated earlier – the women will go on trips to prospect for markets at the sub-regional level as soon as the next transfer is done. The second activity relate to the fourth component of the project: ***Documenting and disseminating the lessons***. For this last activity – as scheduled in the project submission – it will be accorded the required attention and time at the end of the project, when all the necessary information and materials are available for the compilation of all lessons learnt for this important initiative.