



Tropentag, September 14-16, 2010, Zurich

“World Food System —
A Contribution from Europe”

Management of Fish Diversity in Lake Bam, Burkina Faso: Indigenous Knowledge and Implications for Conservation

RAYMOND OUEDRAOGO, ANDREAS MELCHER, STEFAN SCHMUTZ

University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Department of Water, Atmosphere and Environment, Austria

Abstract

About 30,000 people are involved in commercial inland fisheries in Burkina Faso, where approaches to natural resources are shifting from centralised to community-based and participatory ones. There is a need to understand the indigenous approach to fisheries management and to consider it in the framework of conservation efforts and food supply.

Lake Bam is the most important natural water-body in Burkina Faso. Mismanagement, however, has depleted its resources to the extent that the lake will soon require restoration. This study depicts how local communities formerly protected the lake and its catchment resources. In August 2009, we held a workshop with Lake Bam fishermen and farmers. We also interviewed fishermen and leaders of traditional authority in natural resource issues.

The traditional approach to natural resources management has its roots in religion, beliefs, anthropology and economy; local contexts were properly incorporated. Almost every village has two decision-making centres regarding the management of land, forest, wildlife, water, fish and other resources. The leading persons work in close partnership and are assisted by groups of counsellors. Having the right of use was strongly associated with observing the rules and participating in monitoring, surveillance and control. Closed seasons and closed areas were set for specific resources, which helped maintain (fish) biodiversity and ensure livelihoods.

Since the colonisation period, indigenous institutions have been much altered by the European styles of managing people and resources: religion, science and technology. Although certain aspects of the traditional (ecological) knowledge are inappropriate to guarantee sustainable management of fish and other resources, the indigenous authority still holds considerable power.

This constellation should be adequately considered by the republican institutions, which then should help build local community capacity in order to move towards sustainability in natural resources.

Keywords: Biodiversity, Burkina Faso, fisheries, natural resources, traditional knowledge