



Tropentag, September 9-11, 2020, virtual conference

“Food and nutrition security and its resilience
to global crises”

Fisheries in Burkina Faso: Implications for Livelihoods and Food Security

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Abstract

Burkina Faso (BF) has attempted to establish an economically efficient fisheries sector to cope with poverty and food insecurity. However, the fishing sector is still unable to meet the country's fish demand. The interest in research about fisheries in population's livelihoods and the actors' strategies for developing the sector along the value chain is big and still increasing. However, data and evidence about this topic are scarce and often outdated. This paper analyses fisheries sector contribution to sustainable livelihoods and, consequently, food security in BF. Quantitative data were gathered through a representative survey performed from August to September 2018 with 204 fishermen's households in three study areas in BF, and complementary, qualitative data collected by interviews with different stakeholders (e.g. fishermen, traditional authorities, decision makers, politicians and officers) across the country.

The results show that fishermen's households rely on diversified livelihoods as a way to cope with uncertainties, risk and vulnerability. Indeed, fishing, agriculture and animal breeding are the main activities in fishing communities. Surprisingly, most fishermen allocate more time to agriculture, fish selling than animal breeding. Likewise, most of the household income of the interviewees is obtained from agriculture followed by fish selling and animal breeding; the share of trade, fish processing and craft in income seems marginal. The importance of fisheries to fishermen's livelihoods and food security lies in the fact that income generated from fishing is primarily allocated to investment in other income-generating activities (e.g. crop production, animal breeding) and for covering food, education and health expenditures. It is surprising that although the majority of fishermen have fairly low income, they dedicate a large share of income from fishing to investments, rather than consumption, which shows fishing importance as a source of capital in the economic development of entire communities in BF. Considering the central role of fisheries in the livelihoods of an important share of Burkinabe combined with the decreasing fisheries capture, one of the most important recommendation is to make the case for developing fish

farming to address fish resources overexploitation, meet the increasing fish demand, and to provide more opportunities to the stakeholders.

Keywords: Burkina Faso, fish farming, fisheries, food security, innovation, livelihoods, sustainable development strategies, sustainable livelihoods approach