

ARTISANAL FISHING IN BRAZIL

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Brazil's catch during the 1980s was between 800,000 and 900,000 metric tons a year, according to official statistics. At least half of it was taken by small scale fishermen, for both subsistence and small commercial production (table 1).

In 1988 (IBGE, 1989), some 625,000 metric tons were recorded. Of the total catch, artisanal fishermen caught approximately 25% in the southeastern-southern region (around 118,000 metric tons), 85% in the northeastern region (94,000 metric tons), and a bit more than 85% in the northern region (37,000 metric tons). Artisanal fishermen took close to 92.8% of the recorded catch in inland waters (190,000 metric tons; see map 1). The criterion for distinguishing artisanal from industrial fishing in the official statistics is the tonnage of the vessels: up to 20 tons of gross tonnage is artisanal, above that, industrial.

The main resources exploited by maritime artisanal fishermen are estuarine species such as mullets, catfish, white mullets, some species of shrimp as well as crabs and mollusks. The coastal stocks most caught by these fishermen are species like sardines, sea bass, swordfish, hake and sharks, as well as species associated with rocky bottoms, such as lobsters, porgies, groupers and red groups, among others.

Fishing methods include long-lines, driftnets, circular nets, wicker traps, small nets pulled in from the beach and fixed traps such as corrals and circles. A variety of vessels are used: canoes, skiffs, whaleboats and catamarans, among others. Resources exploited, as well as the methods and type of vessel used, vary significantly from region to region, given the length of the Brazilian coast, the physiological differentiation of the shore, the unequal distribution of resources and distinct coastal and marine ecosystems.

The National Confederation of Fishermen estimated in 1986 that there were close to 553,000 artisanal fishermen (see table 2). In some areas of the country, artisanal fishing is the main activity of innumerable communities with an invaluable cultural heritage. The coastal populations of Amazonia, the Caipiras and Azorians of the southeastern and southern part of the country, and the catamaran sailors and collectors of the northeast are some examples of the tremendous

cultural diversity that exists among Brazilian artisanal fishermen. These cultures possess knowledge extremely important for the preservation of the environment, the adoption of technology and the sustainable management of natural resources.

However, a series of factors are having a negative impact on artisanal fishing. In general, the development model put into effect by the Brazilian government, based on the concentration of wealth, leads to greater exploitation of artisanal fishermen, both on land and at sea.

The advance of speculative building on the sea shore, serious conflicts over land throughout the whole country, the establishment of industrial complexes (petrochemicals, mining and metallurgical, et al.) alongside of highly productive eco-systems, the expansion of coastal cities and tourist centers, and the increasing deterioration of water resources through urban, mining, agricultural and industrial pollution are problems found along the whole coast and factors that ruin artisanal fishing.

For example, some areas like the estuary of *the Santos-Cubatao* (Sao Paulo), the bays of Guanabara (Rio de Janeiro) and Todos os Santos (BA) and lakes like Lagoa dos Patos (Rio Grande do Sul) and Mundaii-Manguaba (AL) are already extensively polluted, causing a loss of quality in the fish taken and in some cases a reduction of the standing stocks exploited, and forcing the artisanal fisherman to diversify his activities, establish new survival strategies, or, in certain cases abandon fishing altogether.

The Brazilian development model in general excludes large sections of Brazilian society, including artisanal fishermen. The government's fishery policies do the same thing.

The creation of SUDEPE (Office of Fishers Development) in 1962 and the policy in effect since 1967 to give tax incentives to industrial fishing companies (Statutory Decree 221167) led to an unprecedented increase of capital formation in the industrial fishing sector.

An increase in the number of vessels and processing units has put more pressure on the stocks harvested

by the fishing industry and created serious conflicts between artisanal and industrial fishermen. The invasion of areas traditionally fished by artisanal fishermen, the deterioration of the environment produced by the use of predatory fishing methods and the destruction of artisanal vessels and fishing apparatuses are some examples of the conflicts produced by the uncontrolled amplification and modernization of the industrial fishing sector.

At the same time, there is some integration between the two subsectors where artisanal fishermen reinforce the labour force (including with their fishing know-how) in the fishing industry, and when they sell part of their catch to processing plants, which is then included in the statistics for the industrial sector.

The artisanal fishermen of Brazil face still another kind of problem in connection with the organizations that represent them. Created by the government between 1919 and 1923, the organizations that represent artisanal fishermen consist of fishermen's colonies at the local level, federations at the state level and a confederation at the national level. Given the paternalism and authoritarianism that has been characteristic of these organizations from the very beginning, most of the movements of artisanal fishermen operated and still operate outside the sphere of the official system of representation.

The early 1980s saw the first struggles by authentic representatives to take over the colonies and turn them

into organizations for the defense of artisanal fishermen. The movement of fishermen in connection with the drawing up of the new Constitution also began in the 1980s, when artisanal fishermen organized themselves to have their rights guaranteed by the Constitution of 1988.

The agencies that support fishermen were important in this process, especially the Pastoral Council of Fishermen, which began its activities during the 1970s.

The continuation of these struggles of artisanal fishermen up to the end of the constituent process which finally guaranteed the right of free association, and the granting to fishermen's colonies the same rights as those enjoyed by urban trade unions, among other conquests, were carried out in different ways. On the one hand, there was the discussion of the question concerning which kind of organization provided better representation, colonies or trade unions. On the other hand, there was the struggle to extend the advances of the new Constitution to the whole system of representation, including the federations and the confederation. And finally, along with the other struggles of fishermen, the movement still continues to democratize the colonies and federations that are still in the hands of non-fishermen.

It was in this context that MONAPE was born in 1988 - the National Movement of Fishermen-whose first steps were to spread and strengthen the movement of artisanal fishermen at the national level.

Table 1
OUTPUT SHARE OF THE ARTISANAL AND INDUSTRIAL SYSTEMS
BRAZIL, 1980-1988
(thousands of metric tons)

Year	Total Output	Artisanal	%	Industrial	%
1980	822,677	404,287	49.1	418,395	50.9
1981	833,164	427,621	51.3	405,543	48.7
1982	833,933	445,533	53.4	388,401	46.6
1983	880,696	451,571	51.3	429,126	48.7
1984	958,908	467,754	48.8	491,153	51.2
1985	971,537	491,891	50.6	479,647	49.4
1986	941,712	460,729	48.9	480,984	51.1
1987	934,408	472,186	50.5	462,224	49.5
1988	829,491	439,764	53.0	389,727	47.0

Source: IBGE, Anuario Estatístico do Brasil, 1988 and 1989, Estatísticas da Pesca, 1988, vols I and II