

Africa/ Senegal

Fish Fair

Several possibilities for networking and trade were explored at the West African Fair for Artisanally Processed Fish, held in Senegal on 2 and 3 June 2001.

At the two-day fair that followed the workshop, delegations from the 13 participant countries had the opportunity to display the processed fish products they had brought with them. This was the first time that any of them had participated in a fair of this kind. While some of the stalls displayed only a few of the fish products from the country, the others were decorated with great creativity. The Mauritanian delegation, for example, had worked hard to create a 'Mauritanian' look to their stall, with rugs and tents from their country. A wide range of hygienically-prepared processed fish products were beautifully displayed and there was, as well, a photo exhibition on Mauritanian artisanal fisheries.

Another interesting stall was that of the Beninese, displaying not only fish products, but many other edible and non-edible items from their country, for sale. The enterprising delegation made delicious Beninese food on both days of the fair, attracting a fair number of 'customers'. Stalls were put up also by the FAO Regional Office for Africa, SFLP, West African Association for the Development of Regional Fisheries (WADAF) and Institut de Technologie Alimentaire (ITA), Senegal.

Many of the delegations had discussions among themselves to explore possibilities of trade linkages. Could associations of women processors in Mauritania, Senegal and Gambia process fish in ways liked by consumers in Ghana, Benin, Togo and Ivory Coast? How could transport be organized? Which was the best season visits could be made to discuss possibilities? Could processed fish be bartered for palm oil? It was possible to stumble upon several such discussions taking place at the fair.

A woman processor from Guinea Conakry, for example, was heard assuring a processor from Ivory Coast of full support—a place to stay, an oven to smoke fish etc.—if she came to her village in Guinea Conakry to take back processed fish. There were also trade inquiries from outsiders at the fair. The delegation from Guinea Bissau, for example, reported a possible order for one tonne of salted/ smoked barracuda. Much of what took place in terms of such deals may, however, remain shrouded in secrecy.