

Status of the World's Capture Fisheries



The global marine fisheries catch fell for the third successive year in 1992 from a maximum of 86.4 million tonnes in 1989.

S.M. Garcia and C. Newton of the FAO Fisheries Department have produced a critical review of the situation and its causes and effects, which was presented to the Conference on Fisheries Management: Global Aspects, in Seattle in June 1994.

Here are some of the highlights, quoted from their paper.

- The upper limit of fisheries on conventional (marine) species may (have been) reached.
- The world fish supply is increasingly relying on low value species, characterized by large fluctuations in year to year productivity, hiding the slow but steady degradation of the demersal high value resources.
- The overall availability of fishery products per caput started to decrease in 1970 and the gap is increasing rapidly.
- ...69% of the stocks and stock aggregates for which assessments were available in FAO, are considered either fully exploited, overfished, depleted or slowly recovering from depletion.
- A substantial lowering of the cost of production could be obtained by making more efficient use of artisanal fisheries.
- ...if developed countries continue to export their excess fleet capacity to the developing world, the (fisheries) system can only continue to degrade while fisheries will increase further the debt of the developing world.

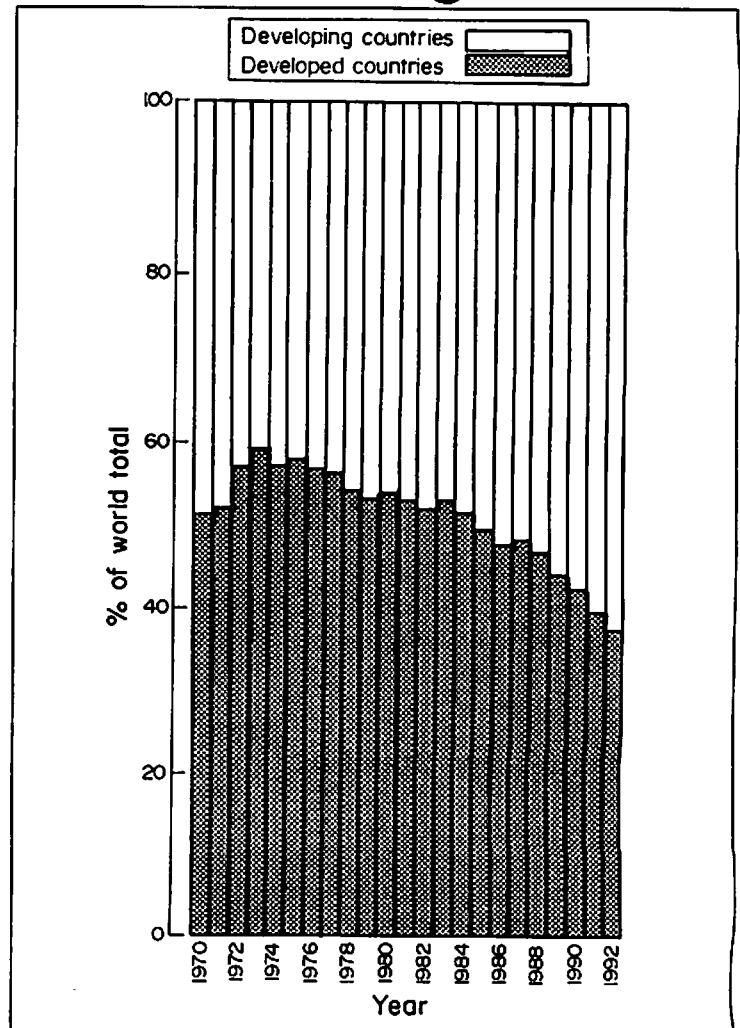
The paper reviews the state of the world's fisheries resources globally and regionally up to 1992, and includes a brief account of environmental impacts on fisheries. It presents a bioeconomic model for world fisheries underlining the overcapacity and subsidy issues that

characterize modern fisheries. While stressing that the conclusions of such a global assessment should be taken with caution, it appears that the current world fleet cost per GRT (vessel tonnage) cannot be matched by revenues at any level of effort, and that simple reduction of effort will not be sufficient unless unit costs are significantly decreased and/or fish prices are increased, respectively by 40% and 70%, at present fishing regimes.

Finally, the paper discusses management issues, noting that the numerous national and regional stock assessments done in past years have, for the most part,

been disregarded by managers and policymakers.

The full paper, *Current Situation, Trends and Prospects in World Capture Fisheries* by S.M. Garcia and C. Newton, will be published in a forthcoming FAO Technical Paper. **6**



Total landings by developed and developing countries (1970-92) in percentage of the world total.