

FORMULATION OF A NATIONAL FISHERY POLICY

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Summary

A 'policy' is a statement of attitude, an indication in principle of the kind of action a government is prepared to take within some field of its responsibility, having in view some general community objective or objectives. A government's objectives for a particular industry are most often not congruous with the objectives which the operatives of the industry would pursue. Moreover, a policy is not a commitment to particular lines of action.

This paper proposes a formulation of fisheries policy, consistently with this definition, so as to facilitate the identification of particular lines of action which would effectively implement that policy. Some characteristics of a programme of action are presented.

INTRODUCTION

For purposes of discussion, we take as our definition of policy that it is "a course of action adopted and pursued by a government", the action being taken in order to secure some objective or objectives. A choice of one objective implies the rejection of others, and may be assumed to have been made in the light of some assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of each of the recognized objectives. The choice of a particular course of action carries the same implication and permits the same assumption. Both choices are influenced by the prevailing political climate and current economic situation.

A policy is implemented by particular lines of action followed by governmental agencies and by those engaged in the industry to which the policy is addressed. In the case of a fisheries policy, these lines of action are followed by the various sectors of the fisheries, and, in government, by (in the main) the fishery administration supplemented by actions of other departments. For a policy to be effective, all these activities must be consistent; at the same time, it is one of the purposes of policy-making to establish this consistency of action.

The lines of action followed in implementation of a policy may be grouped into a coherent programme, or plan, with priorities assigned to particular actions, and to particular localities and fisheries. Such a programme may be regarded as a strategy, in contrast with the separate lines of action which may be regarded as the tactics.

A policy, being neither the lines nor the programme of action, is a statement, in principle, of the kinds of action which the government considers appropriate to the objectives it has set, taking into account various political and economic considerations.

In a discussion of a national policy for a particular industry it is

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advisable:

- (1) to distinguish between
 - (a) the objectives of policy;
 - (b) the policy itself;
 - (c) the lines of action in government and industry by which the policy is implemented and the objectives sought;
 - (d) a plan or programme of action;
 - (e) the institutional arrangements (such as setting up a department) that might be necessary to accommodate and service the lines of action;
- (2) to have due regard for political climate and economic situation and in particular to consider the role of the industry in the economy generally.

The above discussion has made use of the word "policy" with the limited connotation described in the fourth paragraph. The word could also validly be used to signify combinations of the elements listed under (1) above. Thus, policy statements often combine a declaration of kinds of action (policy, as used here) with a reference to the objectives sought and some indication of overall plan, lines of action, and institutional arrangements. However, as the preceding sentence shows, such combinations are probably better described as "policy statements". The point we wish to make is that there are important differences between the objectives (or things one wants in and from an industry) and what one is prepared to do to obtain those objectives; and again there are differences between the statement of courses of action in principle (policy) and the particular lines and general plan. These differences lie chiefly in the kinds of decisions to be made and in the placement of responsibility for those decisions.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of policy may relate to use of resources, efficiency of industry, social and economic standing of operatives, quality of products, and to contribution to GNP (Gross National Product). These objectives relate essentially to characteristics of the industry itself, chiefly in economic sense. Other objectives may be set with a view to prestige or defence requirements.

POLICY

The policy itself may specify action that, among other things, will:

- (1) secure such use of living aquatic resources of the waters within and adjacent to national boundaries as is desired or required for nutritional and economic purposes;
- (2) secure appropriate national participation, in accordance with

prevailing international law and practice, in the exploitation of the living aquatic resources of the high seas and in the benefits thereof;

- (3) secure that the operations of the industry, in all its sectors, are conducted with such equipment and in such manner as will be consistent with the nation's general norms as to human productivity and costs of production;
- (4) secure that the handling, processing, storage, marketing, and distribution of fish and fish products shall be in such manner as to give the highest possible utilization of these products (in nutritional and other sense) and make them available, in good quality, to all sections of the nation;
- (5) raise, and subsequently maintain, the social and economic standing of all operatives in these industries, but especially of the fishermen.

In the actuality an individual country's policy, framed according to its situation, its needs and aspirations, will comprise a selection from among items such as the above, framing each of them appropriately. Thus, number (5), which is of especial importance to underdeveloped countries and is framed expressly for their situation, could be viewed differently for Australia, where the problem is more one of technical training.

IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

As a practical approach, a policy along lines such as the above is best translated into quantitative terms, of production targets, operational norms (e.g. annual catch per fishing unit, recovery rates in processing, percentage utilization of operational capacity), costs and earnings patterns, quality standards, and consumption rates. These, of course, must be tailored to suit each country and each unit fishery, with due regard for historical aspects.

These targets, norms, etc. may be calculated in various ways. For example, a production target may be calculated as an amount of fish needed as food by the population, or the amount which will give a certain level of export earnings; alternatively, it may be calculated as the amount expected as a result of some planned increase in equipment; again, it may be calculated (in the case of fishing) from data on the yield capacity of the resource. Thus a target may be, in effect, a prediction (although its reliability may vary) or essentially expressive of a wish. In any case, the value of such a target will depend upon the facts upon which it is based and the skill employed in the calculations.

The setting of targets, norms, etc. can be accomplished only on the basis of reliable information relating to the resources and to all the economic elements (including manpower and equipment) of all sectors of the industry in static and dynamic sense. Much of this information is drawn from the normal procedures of government in licensing and registering operating units and in

collecting statistics as to their operations, production, etc. Other parts of the necessary array of information require the conduct of research; the analysis and interpretation of data is itself a research function. Research, obviously, must relate to all elements of the industry, although varying in kind and intensity according to the nature and intensity of the informational need.

In general, most of the work-load in achieving targets, norms, etc. weighs upon the industry and the role of government is to assist, guide, and control industry in carrying this load. Basically, the government's role is played through its informational services (statistics, research, etc.), on which policy measures are based and from which technical information is provided to industry. Beyond this, the governmental programme consists of activities either (1) to promote and induce changes in the industry which will enable it to achieve the targets, norms, etc., or (2) to restrain the industry from making such changes as would be a departure from a condition in which such targets and norms can be met. Activities of the former type are usually designated "developmental", those of the latter type as management or regulatory. These courses of action by government must be designed appropriately to the condition and circumstances of each unit fishery and of the fisheries together.

In addition to the foregoing three elements of government action, (informational, developmental, and management or regulation) there are certain activities, such as licensing and registration, which have some effect in the sense of development or management but which represent chiefly the general governmental responsibility in respect of fiscal matters, law and order, and so forth; they are implementation of policy with respect to national policy issues more general than those relating strictly to the fisheries. These are the government's administrative activity.

LINES OF ACTION

The particular lines of action by which a policy is implemented are such as the following.

Informational

Collection of statistics, of catch and effort, costs and earnings, plant throughput and recover, etc.

Research into various systems (resources, fishing operations, etc.) and the compilation, analysis, and interpretation of data.

Extension services, to make information of all kinds available to fishermen and others, and through training and other methods to assist them to make use of such information.

Developmental

Conduct of pilot operations, in fishing, processing, and other sectors to test and demonstrate new techniques.

Financial schemes (loans, subsidies, grants, tax rebates, etc.) to transfer part of developmental cost to the community at large.

Promotion of the formation of co-operatives and other forms of industrial organization for the improvement of industrial organization.

Establishment and conduct of services for dissemination to fishermen of weather information, predictions of fish appearances and of changes in abundance, and maintenance of sea-rescue services.

Organization of orderly marketing arrangements, including provision of physical facilities, enforcement of rules for fair marketing practices, and quality standards.

Management and regulation

Promulgation and enforcement of regulations specifying the fishing regime (gear dimensions such as mesh size, minimum size of fish at first capture, closed areas, closed seasons, limitation of catch, limitation of effort).

Restriction of entry to each fishery.

Administration

Licensing and registration of boats, gear, men, processing storage and handling plants.

Revenue collection.