

Executive summary

Once concerned mainly with devising efficient means and methods to catch more fish and share the seas' abundance, the science of fisheries management now involves better managing finite fish resources while addressing the sector's impacts on the environment, as well as on other users and interests. Also high on the agenda, consumers are increasingly concerned with the sustainability of the fish products they purchase.

The OECD Committee for Fisheries has developed a large body of research over the years investigating fisheries policy and fisheries management. This handbook combines this work into a comprehensive volume designed to help fisheries managers maximise the economic and social value of the fisheries while conserving the maritime environment for the long term.

Several existing reference texts target fisheries managers, of which the technical paper *Fishery Manager's Guidebook* (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2002) is a good example. Rather than replicate the information provided in these publications, this handbook aims to complement them by focusing on the nuts and bolts of good policy design, making it particularly useful to:

- Fisheries executives involved in policy design and development.
- Fisheries managers at a local, national or regional scale.
- Industry representatives, members of environmental organisations and other NGOs with a more general interest in fisheries policy design.

Based on work already carried out by the OECD Committee for Fisheries, this handbook intends to present an up-to-date view of fisheries management, in particular with respect to setting objectives and designing effective policy instruments.

Fisheries managers have a broad set of objectives

The value of the fishery resource lies in its ability to support public goals and objectives. The fishery is expected to support economic objectives, such as providing growth and opportunity, social goals such as preserving rural communities, and environmental objectives such as providing high quality marine habitats and coastal zones. It is important for the fisheries manager to recognise the primacy of these goals even if stock management remains their principle task. This handbook discusses the role of objectives and how to carry out an effective policy design and implementation process.

Good stock management is the key to success

Stock management is the fisheries manager's most important responsibility. If the stock is not maintained at a healthy and sustainable level, the fishery will be less able to contribute to public objectives. Moreover, a collapsed fishery can mean significant social costs resulting from dislocation, crisis and rebuilding costs. Responsible policy makers set sustainable, scientifically based, and prudent stock objectives and establish mechanisms to effectively enforce them. This handbook identifies pathways to stock management with a proven record of success.

Good policies require an understanding of fishers' incentives

Policies that ignore important economic forces and motivations will struggle to be effective and tend to impose costs on fishers. This is apparent in management approaches that lead to phenomenon such as the "race to fish", in decommissioning schemes that fail to resolve capacity problems and in approaches that fail to effectively control harvest. Understanding and leveraging the economic interests of stakeholders provides more fruitful solutions to the fishery management problem, by better aligning the interests of fishers with management objectives. This handbook identifies **ten tracks to follow** in putting in place market-based fisheries management programmes.

The management system determines the fleet composition

A traditional priority in fisheries management has been the size and disposition of the fishing fleet. This has led to the use of decommissioning schemes to reduce perceived overcapacity in some cases and regulations limiting consolidation and rationalisation of fleets in others. This handbook points out the role of economic factors in explaining the structure of the fishing fleet, describes in what cases capacity-management programmes can be effective and how to approach the problem of capacity management.

Rebuilding often means doing things differently

Rebuilding depleted fisheries should be about maximising the long-term value of the resource. Any rebuilding plan will trade-off short-term economic pain for long-term gains. Balancing these competing factors requires good public private/industry co-operation and identification of shared objectives, and agreement on management reforms. The management system that resulted in the need for rebuilding will most likely not be suited for the rebuilding effort. This handbook identifies key issues and presents best practices for successful fisheries rebuilding schemes and identifies the **five steps** to follow in developing a rebuilding plan.

Human factors and political economy shape policy

A key success factor in policy reform is an inclusive and transparent process that involves stakeholders and obtains consent and support for reform. Moreover, stakeholders do not passively wait for government action but lobby for specific actions through direct government contacts and via public actions. Managing the relationship between fisheries managers and stakeholders contributes fundamentally to successful fisheries management. There are many ways to ease the costs of adjustment, give stakeholders an active role in policy, and achieve policy objectives related to fishers' economic viability without sacrificing effective management or other public goals. This handbook describes how to work effectively with stakeholders and manage the impacts of reform and adjustment on fishers and others.

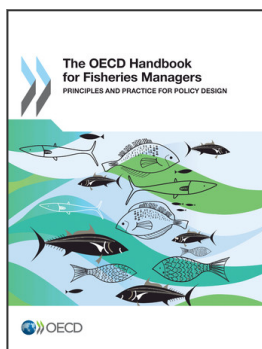
Coherent policies work better

The fisheries sector is more interconnected than ever with other parts of the economy, and policies in the sector can impact on policy objectives in other areas. In the same manner, policies such as those related to trade, development and the environment have implications for fisheries. Ensuring that policies across government agencies and domains are coherent with one another is a challenging task with no easy solution. It requires a high level of communication and constant attention to achieve. This handbook points to the need for clear objectives and precisely targeted policies to minimise the potential for policy conflict, and how a “whole of government” approach can bring benefits.

A policy checklist

Every situation merits its own solution, but there are still a large number of lessons with general applicability that can be found in this handbook.

- Consult with stakeholders early and throughout the policy development or reform process. Without fishers' trust and buy-in, the consensus needed for effective reform will not arise.
- Co-ordinate with other government agencies to reduce policy conflicts. Efforts to improve policy coherence can greatly increase the likelihood of meeting government objectives. It is not possible to reconcile all objectives, but co-ordination can avoid situations where conflicting policies lead to waste and frustrate progress.
- Put concrete mechanisms in place to handle the consultation and co-ordination described above. The lines of communication need to be established as well as the processes to handle them. An ad hoc approach is less credible and more difficult to sustain. Moreover, without explicit processes for consultation, stakeholders will try to find the most politically effective route to having their views heard, often circumventing the fisheries manager and undermining their efforts.
- Set broad, clear, measurable and time-limited objectives. Without these, the effectiveness of policies cannot be determined, and the purpose of fisheries management is unclear. The fisheries manager must look to overall societal needs and benefits. Setting clear objectives and consulting broadly minimise the influence of lobbying by specific groups.
- Target policies to intended beneficiaries and minimise spillovers. This increases efficiency and the ratio of benefits to costs, especially when combined with tailoring.
- Tailor policies to achieve their purpose at least cost. Avoid overcompensation, unnecessary expenditure, and waste. This maximises the net benefits of policies and saves resources.
- Use the principles of the policy design cycle and adaptive management to continually evaluate and adjust policies for maximum benefit at least cost. Measuring the impacts of policies and evaluating their effectiveness not only helps ensure efficiency but also helps avoid "path dependence", where longstanding policy approaches continue even as times change.
- Get stock management right first, and then evaluate the need for additional policies to meet objectives. Maintaining stocks at MSY often solves problems that would otherwise require additional fixes
- Use market-based instruments where possible. Maximise their impact by avoiding restrictions on ownership, use or trading of rights. For certain types of fisheries (especially industrial fisheries), well-designed ITQ systems can improve the profitability, energy efficiency, quality and marketability of fish and fleet structure (among other things), whereas traditional input control approaches can have negative impacts on all of these.
- Share the benefits of reform. The fisheries resource is a public good, and this does not change when rights are allocated to fishers in a market-based system. While policy makers may decide to let the majority of benefits of reform accrue to rights-holders, the government maintains the right to use resource rents for the benefit of all citizens.
- Use rural development and other general social policies, rather than sector-based policies to solve rural economy issues. These are more targeted and effective and avoid distorting incentives and harming profitability in fisheries.
- Prefer output based control measures when possible. Fishers' attempts to circumvent the effects of input controls increase their costs and make their operations more difficult. That said, input controls are an important part of the fishery manager's toolbox and have an important role to play in shaping the operation of a fishery, by prohibiting harmful gear types or closing the fishery during spawning seasons, for example.
- Embrace change. The path to development in any sector entails using more capital, taking advantage of new technologies and adjusting to the realities of the global marketplace. Traditional communities do not depend on fishing vessels of a certain size or type; they depend on a sustainable and profitable fishery that contributes to the economic and social fabric of the community.
- Avoid permanent support. A truly competitive economic sector requires market competition. Support such as fuel tax concessions and subsidies for vessel construction or modernisation can delay beneficial adjustment, and their side-effects make them unsustainable. Temporary support to aid adjustment or respond to disaster is a better use of government funds.



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