

## Marine fisheries research in Kenya

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Kenya has approximately 600km of coastline, an area of 142,000km<sup>2</sup> within the 200nm EEZ, and 103,000km<sup>2</sup> within the 150nm extension of continental shelf. The current National Economic Development Plan for Kenya (Vision 2030) identifies the contribution of marine fisheries to food security and economy development. Broadly, the Kenya marine fisheries may be divided into small scale fisheries, semi-industrial prawn fisheries, industrial tuna fishery, and recreational and ornamental fisheries. The small scale fishery supports the largest number of livelihoods and contributes most to the food security. Recent research has generally concentrated on the small scale inshore fisheries, semi-industrial prawn fishery while considerable data and information exist on recreational and ornamental fisheries. Research and assessments on small scale fisheries has a long history with results on the stock status ranging from over-exploited, optimally exploited to under-exploited, depending on the species as well as the exploited stock. The semi-industrial prawn fishery is one of the most studied, resulting in the first fisheries management plan in Kenya. The offshore industrial tuna fishery is part of the Indian Ocean tuna fishery, exploited by Distant Fishing Nations purse seine and long line vessels from Europe and the Far East. Catch statistics from the fishery indicate tuna stocks in the region to be an optimal exploitation for most species, while a few key species have shown indications of decline during the last few years. Opportunities to achieve the goals set for the sector towards economic development exist in the exploration of new stocks including deep water and continental slope demersal stocks and crustaceans to increase catches as well as benefits from the territorial waters. Research on the migration patterns of medium and small pelagic species as well as the by-catch associated with the industrial tuna fishery are the priorities for tuna and key pelagic stocks within territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone. The direct benefits to the local economy may be increased and the sustainability of the marine ecosystem ensured through value addition of the fisheries products, the improvement of local fishing fleet, land based infrastructure for storage as well as fisheries processing capacity. A regional approach to the management of trans-boundary stocks will ensure their sustainability and continued benefits to the West Indian Ocean states.

Key words:

Marine fisheries, small scale fishery, semi-industrial prawn fishery, tuna fishery, research priorities, Kenya