

Africa/ Guinea Conakry

Fair dreams

Women from Guinea Conakry benefited in many ways from the West African Fair for Artisanally Processed Fish organized in June 2001 in Dakar, Senegal

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The women fish smokers of COFUB (The Co-operative of Women Fish Smokers of Boufi) represented the Guinean women fish processors at the fair in Dakar. This was for them an opportunity for exchanging technologies and business experiences.

The women learnt about different kinds of wood that can be used during smoking to give different shades to processed fish. There were exchanges of fermented fish and other fish processing techniques between women from Guinea and Senegal. Guineans also came to know that the Mauritians produced packed dried fish to supply their supermarkets. Encouraged by this experience, Guinean women are currently experimenting with sliced, smoked fillets, which may be of interest to some markets in Conakry. So far 400 kg have been prepared in this manner, on an experimental basis. The first buyer showed great interest.

It was not only a fish fair—it was also a fair for several other agrarian products. As well as fish, the Guinean women were engaged in selling red (palm) oil, ginger, small chilli peppers and root crops (cassava etc). There were several transactions going on. For example, the women from Guinea Bissau and Guinea Conakry traded products like palm oil and ginger. Many transactions went unnoticed because they took place outside the fair grounds, in the rooms where the women were staying.

It is significant that the contacts made at the fair between women from different countries, are proving very helpful. Women from Senegal and Guinea Conakry, for example, now stay in each others houses when they come to trade, not in hotels.

After the fair there was an exchange of letters between the women of COFUB and the regional support unit of the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihood Programme (SFLP) in Cotonou, through Mamauding Kouyoté, the expert responsible for fisheries development. The proposal is to support exchange programmes between

the women of COFUB and those of the CNPS of Senegal (Mbour) by sending two women from Boufi to work on smoking methods. This is a demand from women's groups of both countries.

The women appreciated the approach of ICSF with regard to regional integration. They are keen to take forward this initiative and to organize another fair, which would allow them to discuss common and specific problems, enabling them to be better prepared. They are keen on a sub-regional network of processors and traders. Now, what possible strategy is there to make this dream of the women come true?

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