

## Fisheries administration

## Dabbling in change

### The recent institutional changes in the Brazilian fisheries sector have several implications

The second half of 1998 saw important institutional changes within the Brazilian fisheries sector, with the creation of the new Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, under the Ministry of Agriculture. Under its jurisdiction lie issues such as a support policy for fisheries, and the regulation of fisheries. It appears that some functions, such as monitoring and enforcement will continue to be under the jurisdiction of IBAMA (Brazilian Institute of Environment).

At first glance, this is a positive change, because, since 1990, fisheries has been under IBAMA. IBAMA is part of the Ministry of Environment and is the agency responsible for environment conservation and management of natural resources, including forests and marine resources. In other words, the support for fisheries development is not the institutional focus. The focus is clearly on conservation rather than development. It has also been alleged that the priority within IBAMA has been forest management and conservation, and that fisheries has been given a back seat.

However, reactions to the creation of the new department have been varied. Different categories of actors within the fisheries sector in Brazil perceive the implications of this change differently.

Institutional changes in the Brazilian fisheries sector are not new. In the past, the subject of fisheries had been oscillating between the Naval Ministry and the Ministry of Agriculture. Despite these institutional shifts, there has been a surprising constancy in the policies towards this sector, especially towards the artisanal fisheries sector. For one, fisheries has never been a priority sector.

The lack of systematic data about production and trade, especially concerning artisanal fisheries, contributes to the low importance accorded to fisheries and to the vicious circle of little support, low productivity and marginal political influence and power. For another, it has not been considered worthwhile to consult the artisanal fishery sector, either in the formulation of support policies or in their implementation. And finally, even the actions that are periodically formulated and implemented in a top-down fashion to support the fishery sector, due to economic or political compulsions, do not last long enough to make a significant impact.

Before fisheries was shifted to IBAMA, there was a specific department of fisheries under the Ministry of Agriculture—the 'Superintendencia' for Fisheries Development (SUDEPE). While not a ministry by itself, it was certainly an institutional space for fisheries. SUDEPE was created in 1962, and, in fact, developed a set of programmes which may be seen as a fisheries development policy. Its responsibilities included planning and executing programmes for the development of the fisheries sector, as well as supervising, inspecting and controlling exploration and exploitation of resources.

Under SUDEPE, in the 1960s and 1970s, the prevalent approach was to modernize the fisheries sector by prioritizing the development of the industrial sector. It was believed that this would enable Brazil to achieve an average annual production of one million tonnes of fish per year, enough also to increase exports.

#### Entrepreneurial aid

During this period, entrepreneurial groups in all parts of Brazil received

generous federal funds and other incentives, such as tax concessions and cheap credit, as well as subsidies for import of fishing materials. For example, in the Amazon Region, by Federal Law No. 5174, 'dated 27 October 1966, companies which invested in the region were entitled to tax exemptions.

**I**n the case of the fisheries sector, this law facilitated the establishment of several fishing companies dealing with the capture, processing and export of fish and shrimp in the Amazonian estuary.

Thus, in addition to its other responsibilities, such as issuing licences and professional cards to fishermen, and defining and enforcing management measures, SUDEPE worked towards the development of the fisheries sector. However, as pointed out by members of MONAPE (National Movement of Fishers), it was a development of "the big ones"—exporters and fishing companies.

To be fair, SUDEPE also initiated programmes for the artisanal sector. The most important one was PESCART—Plan of Assistance for Artisanal Fisheries—taken up in collaboration with other federal institutions, which lasted from 1974 to 1980. This provided credit and technical assistance to fishermen's co-operative societies and also to individual fishers. This plan benefited nearly 25,000 fishers in

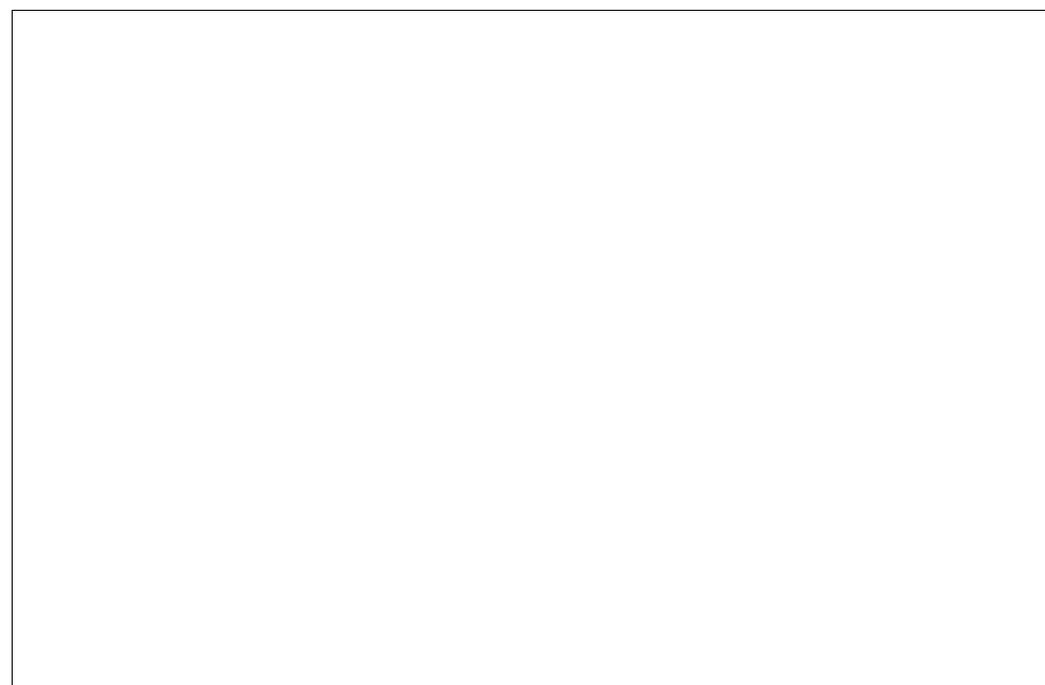
the whole country, according to data presented by W. Hartman, a past member in a SUDEPE programme of international co-operation.

According to one of the scientists who worked in PESCART in the state of Para, this plan was dropped by SUDEPE in 1980, without any serious attempt at evaluating its performance. No other support programme for artisanal fishers was subsequently created.

Analysts such as L. Furtado and V. Loureiro, who have evaluated such plans, have concluded that they did not significantly alter the general thrust of giving preferential support to large-scale fisheries. For example, it has been shown that, between 1960 and 1978, the artisanal sector received only about 12 per cent of the total financial support that had been extended to the industrial sector as a consequence of government policies, including loans and fiscal exemptions. In the state of Para, between 1968 and 1980, only three per cent of the total support had been for investment in artisanal fisheries, through bank credit plans.

#### **Credit for fishers**

Another programme for supporting artisanal fisheries, PROPESCA, was initiated by SUDEPE between 1982 and 1983. This was mainly to provide credit to individual fishers. No technical assistance was, however, provided. Regarding its role of



monitoring and enforcement of management measures, it was only in the second half of 1980 that SUDEPE took more energetic action to control trawling in inshore waters, in the north of Brazil. A law to control trawling (No. 011 in 1987) was enacted by SUDEPE.

This was also a result of pressure from fishing communities and the Fishermen's Federation of Para. However, SUDEPE lacked the means to carry out effective supervision over the 562-km coastline and 98,000 sq km of continental waters in Para State.

Towards the end, even scientists in SUDEPE were more critical about the kind of development that had been pursued within the fisheries sector.

For instance, in the last report produced by the SUDEPE office in Para, in 1988, the important role of artisanal fishers in the regional and state economy was emphasized. The need for studies about the resources and ecosystems exploited by these fishers was highlighted.

In 1990, as part of a national programme to decrease federal expenditure, the government closed down several departments. SUDEPE was wound up, and the subject of fisheries was transferred to the newly created IBAMA under the Ministry of Environment. IBAMA also took over the functions of the erstwhile IBDE

(Brazilian Institute of Forest Development).

Such a change attracted much criticism from all quarters—entrepreneurs, the Fishermen's Federation of Para and also from the scientists within SUDEPE itself. It was felt that there was little possibility of supporting the fisheries sector within the new structure.

According to a former scientist of IBAMA in Para, at first the role of IBAMA in the fisheries sector in the state was primarily oriented towards controlling resource overexploitation. It tried to control predatory fishing practices by both the industrial and the artisanal sector.

This fetched a lot of criticism from the entrepreneurs' lobby. They complained that IBAMA's only emphasis was on control and repression, and not on the development of fisheries. According to MONAPE, though, if IBAMA did nothing to support the artisanal sector, neither did it do anything to help the industrial sector. In that sense, the policies pursued by IBAMA were more balanced than those pursued by its predecessor, which were clearly biased towards the industrial sector.

#### **Interesting initiatives**

Moreover, in the past few years, some interesting initiatives have been pursued by IBAMA, such as those linked to the

co-management of resources. The vital role of coastal and riverine communities in the surveillance and management of fisheries resources has been progressively recognized.

In some areas, responsibilities for monitoring and enforcement have been undertaken in partnership with fishworkers' organizations. In some other fishing communities, environmental educational programmes have been initiated. In the State of Alagoas, for example, efforts have been made to raise awareness among fishworkers about the appropriate mesh-size of fishing nets.

Fisheries is once more under a special department, in which the emphasis is yet again on development rather than the conservation of resources. It is not yet clear what the future holds for artisanal fishworkers in Brazil.

Will there be a return to the policies of the erstwhile SUDEPE and a greater impetus to the indiscriminate growth of the industrial sector? Or will some sense of balance be restored through the adoption of policies that also protect and promote the artisanal sector and the better management of the resource base?

The only thing that is clear is that, at present, meagre federal funds will not really permit substantial allocation of resources for the fisheries sector. 3

This piece is by Maria Cristina Maneschy, a professor of sociology at the Federal University of Para in Belem, and Lourdes Furtado, a sociologist at the Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi, Belem, Brazil