

RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES TRAINING IN CANADA

by

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Abstract

The concept of responsible fisheries matters all parties involved in fishing and other related activities that utilize or deal with marine and freshwater resources. The Code of Responsible Fisheries as developed by FAO makes all involved in fisheries aware of what they do, how they do it and consequences of their activities. One of the most important aspects of responsible fisheries initiatives of any countries or regions is responsible fisheries training so that stakeholders are well aware of their activities and possible consequences. Canada is one of the countries making significant progresses in training as well in research and development as related to responsible fisheries. The effort of Canada are broadly based covering the Atlantic and Pacific coasts as well as inland waters. This presentation overviews harvesting-related responsible fisheries guidelines and training initiatives in Canada with emphasis on a new responsible fisheries training program being developed by the Fisheries and Marine Ins

1. INTRODUCTION

The world fisheries resource is in severe decline. In 1992, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) reported that 13 out of 17 major fisheries was in serious trouble. Five years later, very few good news, if any, have been heard on the recovery of fisheries resource. On the other hand, recognition of the seriousness of the problem has driven various international, national and regional organizations making efforts in reversing the trends of resource decline. Major efforts by various organizations, particular FAO, include convening the International Conference on Responsible Fishing in Cancun, Mexico in 1992, and UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in New York in 1993/1994, and the development of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries in 1995.

Canada is a very active partner of FAO in the process of developing the code for responsible fisheries. While recognizing the importance of the responsible fisheries in sustainable resource utilization and uniqueness of the Canadian fisheries, Canada has started drafting the Canadian Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing Operations. The Canadian Code can be considered as a part of a customized version of the FAO Code, because it only addresses the aspect of the fishing operations.

The use of term “responsible fisheries” and “responsible fishing” may be interchangeable in many circumstances, especially when the harvesting sector is concerned. However, in general senses, responsible fisheries encompass broader scope to include concepts and practices in harvesting operation, aquaculture, processing, aquatic environment, coastal zone management, and fisheries research and management. Responsible fishing, on the other hand, only concerns matters related to fishing operations, such as gear, vessel, product handling and utilization, and related management issues. In this report, however, we use the terms, as well as the term “responsible fishing operations” interchangeably, generally referring to the narrower meaning - responsible fishing.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE FAO CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES

The FAO Code covers almost all aspects of fisheries including aquaculture. The Code establishes principles upon which fisheries are carried out in sustainable and responsible manner. The Code states that “the right to fish carries with it the obligation to do so in a responsible manner so as to ensure effective conservation and management of the living aquatic resources”.

The FAO Code is voluntary (non-binding), but many items are based on relevant international law and conventions. The code provide guidelines to help states and organization formulating their rules and regulations regarding conservation and utilization of fisheries resource. The code is global in scope, aimed to serve both FAO members and non-members, government and non-government organizations, fisheries entities and fishers. The code provides principles and standards aimed at conservation, management and development of fisheries resources.

The FAO Code deals with six subject areas: fisheries management, fishing operations, aquaculture development, integration of fisheries into coastal area management, post-harvest practices and trade, and fisheries research.

The FAO Code requests that states and international organizations “promote the understanding of the Code among those involved in fisheries” to encourage “voluntary acceptance of the Code and its effective application”. The training programs on responsible fisheries is to fulfil this requirement of the Code.

3. CANADIAN PROGRAM FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHING

Canada has taken a important role over the past several years in the area of responsible fishing and conservation of fisheries resources. The Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Fishing Industry Services, Responsible Fisheries Operations, in partnership with fishing industry and other research and development organizations, made great efforts in four areas of responsible fisheries: conservation harvesting technologies, industrial training, international co-operation, and the development of the Canadian Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing Operations (the

Canadian Code).

The development of the Canadian Code was resulted from a recommendation of an industry workshop on the Review of Groundfish Gear and Harvesting Technology in December 1994. Since then, the code has gone through a number of drafts and industry consultations. Canadian fishing industry recognized the importance of the FAO Code, but realized that the broad guidelines contained in FAO Code might not go far enough in resolving the serious problems facing Canadian fisheries. It was thus suggested that a more specific code dealing with problems specific to Canadian fisheries be developed and adopted. The Canadian Code is still developing, but it will bear the following characteristics:

- a) The development and implementation of the code will be industry led and industry driven, and will undertake comprehensive consultation process.
- b) The code will be applicable to all commercial fishing operations from coast to coast and in inland waters;
- c) Operation standards will be developed for each species-gear-and site-specific Canadian fishery;
- c) The Code will be binding on all fisheries participants once rectified;
- d) The rectified code will be appended to relevant harvesting plans and adherence to the Code will be a condition of fish.

4. OVERVIEW OF RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES TRAINING IN CANADA

While industry training programs and workshops on selectivity and conservation have been ongoing for several years in Atlantic Canada, such as those delivered by the Fisheries and Marine Institute (MI) of Memorial University of Newfoundland, formal training program bearing the words “responsible fishing” or “responsible fisheries” was only initiated in November 1994. The Industrial Training Program in Responsible Fishing was first developed and delivered in early 1995 by the New Brunswick (NB) School of Fisheries in Caraquet, in co-operation with DFO. The purpose of the programs was defined as “the creation of an understanding of the issue facing the industry and, through knowledge of, and practice in, responsible fishing, to ensure that participants obtain optimum competency in those subject areas required for the long term viability of the fishery”.

Since 1995, the NB School of Fisheries was able to deliver a number of similar courses in Canada and abroad in some fourteen French-speaking countries. Shorter courses were delivered in Northwest College in Price Rupert, and Malaspina College, Nanaimo, British Columbia (BC). The Fisheries and Marine Institute started

developing a responsible fisheries course in later 1996. Through industry consultation and reviews by the program committee, the syllabus has been approved in April, 1997. The instructor manual and the participant's notebook are being developed. The course is scheduled to be offered in trial basis in the fall of 1997. Furthermore, DFO is developing curriculum of responsible fisheries for high school students in BC.

5. THE MI RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES TRAINING PROGRAM

The MI responsible fisheries course is a major overhaul of the New Brunswick course. The course is primarily designed for Newfoundland fishermen, but it can be adapted to fishers in other areas or countries with minor revisions taking into the account of fishery/fishermen characteristics of that area/country. The course is named as "Responsible Fisheries Training Program for Atlantic Fishing Industry " and is divided into seven modules:

- a) Responsible fisheries: historical perspective and new initiatives
- b) Fishing gear design and harvesting operation as related to responsible fisheries
- c) Fish biology and behaviour as related to responsible fisheries
- d) Fishing gear selectivity
- e) Estimating and reducing fishing mortalities
- f) Impact of fishing on the resource and the environment
- g) Fisheries management

At present, the course is to be delivered in ten days, but additions of the details of each module can make the course much longer if desired.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Global decline of fisheries resources forces us re-think the way we fish and the way we manage our fisheries. The concept, and more specifically the Code, of responsible fisheries comes at the right time for fisher, fisheries managers and other interested parties in dealing with fisheries problems. training programs for responsible fisheries can promote understanding of the Code of Conduct and may help voluntary acceptance of the Code and its effective application. Training programs should be designed not only for fishers, but also fisheries managers, so as to create a good working relationship as well as a common understanding of the issue.