



# The Importance of Wild Fisheries For Local Food Security: GHANA

*Fish is the primary source of animal protein and livelihood for most Ghanaians, particularly those residing along the coast. Yet, poor management, overexploitation, environmental degradation, and illegal fishing threaten the productivity and sustainability of the country's fisheries. Improved management practices are urgently needed to preserve the socio-economic importance of Ghanaian fisheries.*

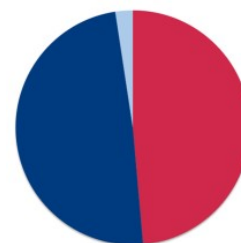
**Food Security:** Almost 23% of children in Ghana are stunted, 13% are underweight and about 6% are chronically wasted [1]. Although the prevalence of anemia among children 6-59 months has declined significantly, it remains at about 57% [1]. Ghana, specifically in the northern regions, still has significant food security and nutritional challenges [2]. A Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability analysis focused on Northern Ghana found that between 10 and 28% of the population surveyed, depending on the region, were food insecure [3]. Poverty was a primary driver of food insecurity, and female-headed households were more likely to be food insecure [3]. This analysis also found that households that sustained their livelihoods through fishing were more likely to have adequate food consumption [3]. Fish is the primary source of animal protein in the country. Average per capita annual fish and shellfish consumption is estimated to be 27.3 kg, accounting for 60% of animal protein consumption [4, 5]. Fish is utilized in a variety of ways to provide essential nutrients. For example, fish commonly thought of as 'trash fish' because they command little or no price as whole fish in local markets still provide animal protein to Ghanaians in the form of manufactured products such as fish fingers, fish powder, and fish burgers [6]. These native "trash fish" therefore become important tradable commodities that generate revenue for fishers and contribute to Ghana's food security [6].

**Economic Benefits:** Over half of Ghana's industries are located within the coastal zone where marine fisheries are the primary source of economic activity [7]. The small-scale fisheries sector employs 80% of fishers in the country [4]. The majority of fishers are men, but women play an important role in the sector through fish preservation and marketing. As a whole, the fisheries sector employs about 2.4 million individuals or 10% of the population [4, 8]. The small-scale fisheries sector is estimated to contribute about 3% to national GDP and generate revenue of \$341 million annually [9].

**Livelihoods:** More than 60% of Ghanaians live within 200 km of the coast and 42% within 100 km [10]. The coastal regions of the country are particularly dependent on fisheries for their livelihoods. Marine fisheries are the primary source of income for more than 200 coastal villages, including about 200,000 fishers with approximately 2 million dependents [11].

**National Development Priority:** The Government of Ghana ascribes high importance to the fisheries sector for its contributions to food security, nutrition, livelihoods, poverty reduction, and foreign revenue, and has identified fish as a key commodity in its Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy [12]. In 2013, the government

## COUNTRY PROFILE: GHANA



- Land Area
- Freshwater & Floodplains
- Marine Area/Exclusive Economic Zone

- **Average per capita annual fish/shellfish consumption: 27.3 kg (60.2 lbs)**
- **Provision of animal protein by fish: 60%**
- **Stunting: 22.7%**
- **Underweight children: 13%**

established the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development to “promote sustainable management of the Fisheries Sector through Scientific Innovations, Policy Guidelines for the enhancement of institutional capacity for efficient service delivery, and organic collaboration with stakeholders in the fisheries sector” [13]. Ghana’s strategic development plan emphasizes the importance of small-scale fishing as a critical component of the fishing industry [14]. Improved management and governance of marine fisheries are also key objectives of USAID’s work there [7].

**Challenges:** Throughout much of the developing world, and especially in Ghana and West Africa, local demand for fish has outstripped supply, and fish stocks are in serious decline due to a combination of factors led by poor management, environmental degradation, and overfishing [11]. Illegal fishing and poaching and poor management threaten the sustainability of fisheries, food security, and biodiversity in Ghana [4, 15], and overfishing can create incentives for harmful practices including child labor [16]. To assess and mitigate the negative consequences of illegal fishing, the Ghanaian government worked with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations to develop a National Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing in the country [4]. While models differ on their predictions about the impacts of climate change on West Africa’s coastal fisheries, one recent study found that climate change may increase their productivity but benefits for local fishing communities will only be realized if threats such as poor governance and overfishing by other nations are effectively addressed [17, 18]. Improved management of small-scale fisheries is urgently needed, built around effective adaptive co-management solutions where traditional authorities are respected and hold important leadership roles in fishing communities [14]. The global community of fisheries practitioners considers an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management as the only viable way to move forward on the needed governance measures for sustainable use and conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems [19].

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