

# **THE ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE CARIBBEAN FISHERIES FORUM**

April 24 – 26, 2013

NASSAU, THE BAHAMAS

## **NATIONAL REPORT**

### **ANGUILLA**

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## **Introduction**

Anguilla is a flat 91 square kilometer coralline island with its highest point being a mere 65 meters above sea level. Anguilla has an Exclusive Fishery Zone (EFZ) of some 85 500 square kilometers and it shares a common boundary on the south with the French islands of St. Martin and St. Barthelemy, on the west with The British and United States Virgin Islands, and on the east with Antigua and Barbuda. Although Anguilla's EFZ extends the full 200 nautical miles to the north, only a small portion of it (approximately 2000 square kilometers of submerged shelf) currently supports the island's fishing industry.

Fishing has always been an important activity in Anguilla, sustaining the island's residents during the difficult economic and severe drought periods over the years. Indeed, fishing provides residents with fresh fish, an important part of Anguillians protein diet. Currently there are approximately 235 to 300 fishers operating in the fishing industry, half of whom are part-time. It is estimated that the fishing industry contributes approximately 1.8 percent to the island's Gross Domestic Product annually.

The fishing industry in Anguilla remains undeveloped with no large or centralized commercial fish processing and storage facilities. There is only one small establishment owned and operated by a local fisher that sells scaled and gutted fish to the public. Presently, the fishing industry in Anguilla is one of open access where residents of the island can enter the industry at will. This has led to what is generally believed to be an over-fished near-shore fishery resource.

## **Description of the fishing industry**

The fishing industry in Anguilla is artisanal in nature with fishers primarily utilizing open un-decked vessels (pirogues). The boats typically operate as day boats going to sea for about 12 hrs at the most (5am – 5pm). A few fishing vessels operate at night where snappers and groupers are targeted using hand-lines. The boats in the industry range in size from 12 to 50 feet with the majority (87 percent) between the lengths of 15 to 35 feet. Except for approximately five boats, all of the vessels are powered by primarily twin outboard gasoline engines. The other vessels are powered by in-board diesel engines. Presently, there are approximately 105 commercial (fishing as a means of income) vessels operating in the industry. Only five of these vessels have a cabin and deck.

The traditional Antillean fish trap (S, Z, or arrowhead design) is the most widely used fishing gear. The hand-line is also a common fishing gear in Anguilla, with other gear types such as rigs, spear guns, and seine nets being used to a limited extent. Fishers also use SCUBA equipment or free dive in targeting the queen conch. Long-lines, though not common, are utilized from time to time.

The targeted fish species are lobsters (spiny lobster and spotted spiny lobster), conchs, shallow reef fish, deep slope fish, small coastal pelagics, and large pelagics. The key targeted species are lobsters, reef fish (including snappers and groupers), and conchs. Traditionally, the fishing boats

operated close to shore and around the nearby offshore cays. Due to the relatively low catches in these areas, however, fishing boats are now operating up to 40 miles or more from the mainland.

In 2010, total fish production was estimated at 461 tonnes with an estimated value of approximately 15 million Eastern Caribbean Dollars. The breakdown in the production was: finfish 309 tonnes; lobster 115 tonnes; and conch 37 tonnes (meat weight). There are no aquaculture operations in Anguilla and so all of the island's fish production is from capture fisheries. The full extent of the recreational or subsistence fishery in Anguilla is unknown. At the same time, however, many Anguillians are known to fish from the coastline, a boat, or to spear fish and dive for non-commercial purposes.

### **Statistics Research and Resource Assessment**

Currently, there is an ongoing fish catch data collection programme at the Department of Fisheries which began in 2008. Four of the major fish landing sites on Anguilla are visited twice per week where information is collected on the quantity and type of catch, the effort extended in catching the fish, and other cost inputs. Other ongoing projects at the Department of Fisheries are an assessment of the lobster fisheries, a coral reef and sea grass bed monitoring programme, an in-water sea turtle monitoring programme, and an initial assessment of the invasive lionfish.

### **Policy and Legislation**

The Fisheries Protection Act (1986) and the Fisheries Protection Regulations (1988 with subsequent amendments) are the sole pieces of legislation governing fishing and the fishing industry in Anguilla. Anyone interested in partaking in the fishing industry must first be in possession of the relevant valid licence. The general fisheries management objective in Anguilla is to ensure the sustainable utilization of the fishery resources for the maximum economic and recreational benefit of the people living in Anguilla. The Fisheries Protection Act and Regulations are currently being revised. In addition, there are also plans for the development of a national fisheries policy.

### **Development activities**

The Government of Anguilla is currently in discussions with private investors regarding the establishment of a proper fish processing facility on the island, where fish products can be processed to internationally-accepted hygienic standards. The Government is also desirous of issuing fishing licences to international fishing companies to utilize the fishing grounds to the north of the island as a means of increasing government revenues. To this end, the feasibility of such plans is currently being explored. The intention of the Government is to use a part of the money earned from the issuance of foreign fishing licences in the further development of the local fishing industry. That is, the Government would look to implement projects that seek to improve the skill sets of fishers in an effort to direct them away from finfish trap fisheries and towards a long-line

pelagic fishery. In addition, the Government of Anguilla, through the Department of Fisheries, is planning a pilot project for the farming of tilapia. This initiative is being led by the biologist at the Department of Fisheries.

### **Fisheries management and conservation activities**

During 2011, staff at the Department of Fisheries took part in two one-week training workshops funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development. The first workshop was in fisheries management and the second in fisheries prosecution and enforcement. Compliance with the laws governing fishing in Anguilla is believed to be low and law enforcement at the Department continues to be a challenge. In an effort to increase compliance with the established laws, the Department of Fisheries will be designing and implementing a communication strategy to include raising public awareness about the existing laws and reasons for these laws as well as the new management and enforcement measures being proposed. Funding will be sought to acquire a patrol vessel for the Fisheries Department and a request will be made for additional resources to improve monitoring, control, and surveillance.