

The SFA and FAO has taken the lead in research and better management of the octopus fisheries

The Seychelles has far greater potential to expand the octopus fisheries and better manage its stock. This was the vision of the stakeholders in the fisheries sector who attended the half-day workshop organized by FAO in collaboration with the Seychelles Fishing Authority. The main aim of the workshop was to present the results of the FAO 3805 project on the value-chain of the Octopus fishery, provide an update on the ongoing Octopus research project led by SFA and discuss the way forward for the management of this fishery.

The first record of octopus landings dates to 1985. In 1996, a first review of the fishery was undertaken by SFA and it recognized the need to put in place a management plan for this fishery. This led to the development of a Draft Management Plan in 1998. However, the plan was never implemented. Over the years, partners such as the FAO and the UNDP-GEF has assisted in raising awareness on this potential thriving sector. Following a second review of the fishery in 2013, the Seychelles Fishing Authority has since 2022 engaged in an extensive Octopus baseline study that expected be complete in 2024.

“Through its parent ministry, the SFA submitted a request for technical assistance of the FAO for business development and investment opportunities in the fisheries sector. This aligns with the FAO priorities and the government of Seychelles priorities to advance the agricultural and fisheries value chains,” says PS Keven Nancy, the FAO correspondent in Seychelles.

The FAO 3805 project focused on understanding the value-chain process of the fishery. The development of fisheries value-chains has been prioritised by government as a means of enhancing the net economic benefit of their fisheries resources.

The findings of the value chain study highlighted the magnitude of the Octopus fishery. It was estimated that total catch of Octopus is between 180 to 200 tons annually which is 4 to 5 times greater than reported catch figures approximately 194 tons of Octopus was supplied onto the market. It was recognized the current fisheries data collection program in place underestimates the total landings of Octopus. It was also highlighted by the stakeholders that imports of Octopus poses a major threat to the survival of shore-based fishers.

In order to improve our understanding of this fishery, the Seychelles Fishing Authority is conducting a project to collect baseline information on the Octopus fishery for setting the bases of a future management plan for this fishery. The project will assess the biology of octopus found in the Seychelles waters and determine the species present. Another aspect to this study is a survey to investigate certain socio-economic aspects of the fishery. This project is being made possible through funding from the Seychelles Climate Change Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT).

As explained by the Minister for Fisheries and blue Economy, Jean- Francois Ferrari in his opening statement, whereby he gave the example of Mauritius and Rodrigues Island that are producing tons of octopus that contribute immensely to their economy due to an efficient management plan.

This workshop is a sign that the government wants to work with all parties and make collective decisions.

“We expect that through the support of FAO to organise this workshop, we can gather information that will allow us to better manage this resource. The department of fisheries and SFA wishes to work alongside its stakeholders and not just tell them what to do,” stated Minister Ferrari.

SFA will continually engage with the stakeholders as it plans to introduce a licensing framework for the fishery in 2024 and present the findings of the SFA Octopus study.

