

DOMESTIC FISHERY

Philippine marine supply is large and is spread out over a 17,460 kilometre coastline that encompasses a total territorial water area of approximately 220 million hectares. Available marine life found along the continental shelf is estimated at a potential yield of between 1.6 to 1.7 million metric tonnes. Inland resources are estimated at 825,831 hectares composed of swamplands (41 percent), lakes, rivers and reservoirs (30 percent), and fish ponds (29 percent).

The most dominant marine species found in Philippine waters consist of tuna, small pelagics such as sardines and mackerel, and large pelagics which include marlins, swordfish and barracudas. Philippine aquaculture production is concentrated to seaweeds, milkfish, cichlids, shrimps and prawns. Between 1987 and 1991, fish production increased at an average rate of 4.9 percent annually, with the bulk provided by municipal fishing. However, commercial operations and aquaculture have increased steadily over the past five years and at present account for approximately 60 percent of total volume in the Philippine fisheries industry.

Philippine marine production is basically divided into 3 sub-groups: {a} commercial fishing within the country's economic zone; {b} municipal fishing within coastal boundaries; and, {c} aquaculture. The sector provides employment for over a million fishermen and fish farmers; 68 percent are engaged in municipal fishing; 26 percent in aquaculture; and 6 percent in commercial operations.

Aquaculture is the largest revenue contributor at 37.8 percent of the Philippine industry total; with municipal and commercial fishing operations accounting for 36.9 percent and 25.3 percent respectively. Municipal fishing is labour intensive, the technology is relatively crude, and the industry has remained unchanged for the past decade. On the other hand, commercial fishing technology has gradually improved with the use of modern fleets equipped with various sophisticated fish-tracking equipment. Aquaculture in the Philippines is still largely in an infant stage, but is generally considered technologically at a par with other Asian countries.

Exports

Annual marine exports in the Philippines accounted for barely 6 percent of total supply. Despite this disparity, export revenues in the fisheries sector averaged 21.6 percent of total industry earnings over the same period. Primary export markets are Japan and the United States, accounting for approximately 25 percent and 15 percent respectively of total export volume, and 45 percent and 18 percent of total value. Philippine fishery exports consist mainly of high-end products which justify the comparatively higher revenue earnings. Products exported include frozen shrimps, prawns, and prepared tuna. These three products account for over 75 percent of total Philippine marine exports.

Industry experts consider the Philippine's vast marine resources as the most significant advantage enjoyed by the fishery sector. Aside from the large variety of marine life, the Philippines is located along a major tuna migration path where half of the world's skipjacks and one-third of the world's yellowfin are caught. Likewise, the industry boasts of abundance in skilled labour that has long engaged in fishing for livelihood.