

Sustainable Development in the Fishery

What is sustainable development? For an answer, many leaders in the world community have turned to the landmark report of the Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future*. It defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Sustainable development is a strategy ideally suited to a renewable resource such as the fishery. It calls for a meaningful degree of restraint in today's exploitation, so that tomorrow's fishermen and consumers will also benefit from the resource.

In short, sustainable development means living off the interest of the resource, and not running down its capital.

The concept of sustainable development has been the basis of Canada's long-term policy for the management of the fish stocks within its own waters. However, fish obviously are unconstrained by boundaries. They cross the Canadian 200-mile limit during their seasonal migrations and move into the international fishing zones.

Canadian surveillance teams plot the fishing effort on the Grand Banks.



Photo Section EAITC



Photo Section EAITC

The management of a fishery is highly challenging. It begins with estimates of fish populations and growth rates. However, these estimates are affected by a wide range of complex, changing variables, such as oceanographic conditions, unreported catches, and varying levels of fishing intensity of the trawler fleets.

In short, fisheries managers must rely on information they know to be imprecise. Still, they must use this information as their guide in walking a narrow line: setting quotas that allow fishermen to take a maximum permissible catch, but that do not expose future harvests to risk.

This balancing act can only be achieved by erring on the side of caution. Fish populations rise and fall through natural causes, either regular cyclical swings or in reaction to

Marine scientists play a vital role in assessing the condition and size of fish stocks on the Grand Banks.