

Soft Inspection



In order to enforce the Emiri decree no 11 for 2015 on regulating the fish profession in the emirate of Ras Al Khaimah and to achieve the government's vision in protecting the environment and sustainability of resources, EPDA launched an initiative that reflects the belief in the importance of fisheries and concerns for the protection of living resources under the name of "Soft Inspection" on fish markets, carried out by local female EPDA staff. This initiative is the first of its kind.

The initiative encourages local female staff to enter the inspection field on fish markets to check the health and quality of the fish sold according to the marine environment standards.

The initiative also serves to ensure that fish traders and sellers are applying the last regulation issued by EPDA which specified the mechanisms for fish and marine life trading in the landing, selling and displaying sites within fishing ports, coasts and fish markets in order to preserve the safety of fish and other marine life and ensure their quality before being sold to consumers.

Dr. Saif Al Ghais, Executive Director of EPDA confirmed that fishers are considered a vital part and a key element of our natural resources. He also stated that fishing is considered an essential part of the UAE heritage and a large proportion of locals depend on it for their livelihoods. He also highlighted that this initiative promotes national action and shared responsibility in preserving our environment and the sustainability of living resources, among local males and females.

EPDA Vision:

Protection of the environment and the sustainability of its resources .

EPDA Message:

Excellence in providing, monitoring and environmental awareness services and promote the concept of environmental citizenship, through the application of environmental laws and regulations and investment in relationship with our partners and conduct studies and research that contribute to the protection of our natural resources .

Fish stocks at risk?

Fisheries are one of the most important natural resources exploited by man since ancient times. Global fish production stands at about 75 million tons each year and fisheries are of interest to many countries of the world especially coastal regions and countries that are surrounded by lakes and rivers. Because of the economic importance of the fisheries sector and its role in the provision of food, it is considered to fit tightly within the pillar of economic development providing an important source of national income for those countries. In the United Arab Emirates, Fisheries are of great interest to the government and the people. In spite of the large diversity

of other sources of livelihoods that followed the discovery of oil and the rapid economic and social development, Fisheries are still considered as one of the most important natural resources available due to the economic and social importance and the fisheries contribution to food security. Based on these important factors, the fisheries sector has been given great attention with great efforts from the highest levels in the country to protect and develop the living aquatic resources and the marine environment. This has been made possible through the formulation of legislation; taking several actions and measures to regulate the exploitation, protection and develop-

ment of the living aquatic resources; developing scientific research in the field of fisheries; and using new technologies for the fisheries and aquaculture sector. The UAE has also ensured that research surrounding fisheries has been improved and has conducted studies and surveys to identify fish species, quantities, breeding sites and seasons to determine and prohibit hunting periods and locations. Before talking about the United Arab Emirates and the reality of fisheries, we will shed light on the causes of fish production decrease in general and how to manage production.

Fish production declination:

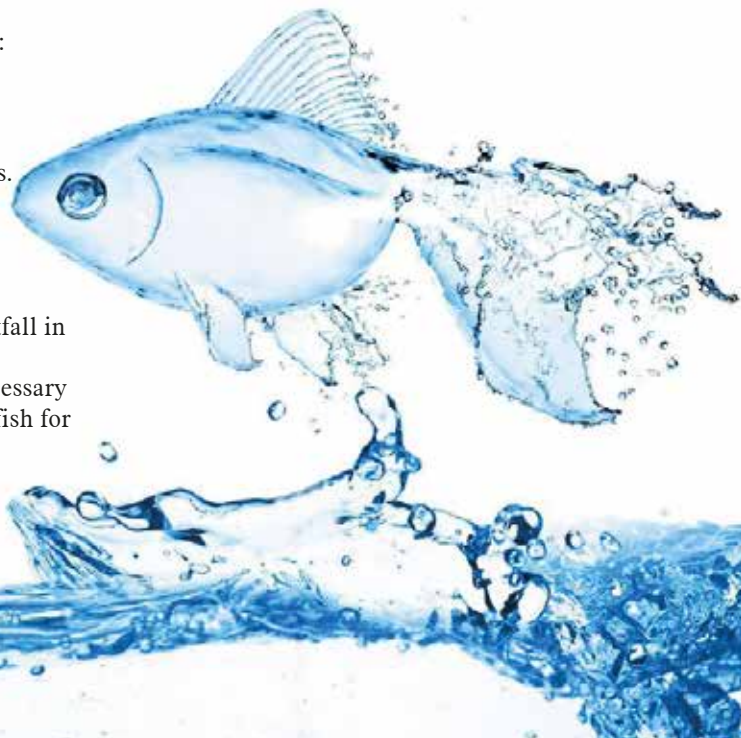
Traditional ways of fishing to a large extent does not cause a disappearance of fish because fishing as a craft is not rewarding when the amount of fish caught becomes less. Thus, the catch is abandoned by the fishermen and is set back into the sea which gives the opportunity for the remaining fish to breed and increase in numbers. On the other hand, the processes that are considered serious threats to fishing stock are:

- Using pesticides in fishing operations which lead to the destruction of the full-clans as well as negative effects on the environment and the fishermen themselves.
- Blocked water passage channels for fish migration to move to places where they can lay eggs and breed generates shortage of births that compensate the shortfall in stock.
- Focusing on specific types of fish during fishing, leading to the extinction of adults and predation of eggs by most number of species because of shortfall in the first type.
- Environmental pollution, turbidity of water and change in the physical and chemical characteristics of the fish environments generates critical and dangerous decrease in fish stocks.

Managing fish production:

There are several ways to organize fish production such as:

1. Prevent fishing in the breeding seasons.
2. Prevent hunting small aged fish through:
 - a. Prevent fishing in areas where small fish exists.
 - b. Determine the sizes of fish caught within the laws.
 - c. Restrictions on slots, types and sizes of nets used.
3. Prevent the use of non-traditional ways to catch fish such as pesticides, electrocution, sound bombs.
4. Provide hatching stations in sufficient numbers to supplement the water with fingerlings to fill the shortfall in fish stocks.
5. Encouraging fish aqua farming and providing the necessary quantities of fodder to supply the local markets with fish for daily consumption.
6. Conducting awareness campaigns for citizens about the economic and health impact of fishing methods currently used.



The reality of fish stocks in the UAE

A study prepared by the UAE Ministry of Economy on Fisheries reported that the annual growth rates of fish production in the UAE is about 4%, and the estimated amount of the expected production in 2015 will be about 47 thousand and 645 tons meaning that fish production levels in the UAE will drop by about 50%. Furthermore, the study pointed to a combination of factors that have influenced the recent increase in demand for fish and fish products. The amount demand for fish in 2015 was estimated at around 162 thousand and 947 tons, and will reach the average per capita consumption of fish to about 29 kg and 16 grams per year, compared to 33 kilos currently consumed, and thus the rising gap between supply and demand is expected to reach 115 thousand and 303 tons. In spite of the efforts to preserve fish stocks, the obvious decline in fishing size is due to many factors including:

- 50% of fishermen have left the profession because of the high costs of fishing and low return coupled with a significant rise in all prices and the requirements of life.
- Restricting the movement of fishermen, fishing sites and many other factors by laws and regulations.
- Weather and temperature changes and seasons of proliferation of certain types of fish.
- Decline in the average productivity of fishermen due to overfishing which lead to failure in keeping up the actual growth rate with the biological growth rate in fishing.
- Impacts on fish stocks.
- The number of fishing boats and technological development which is one of the most important factors that determines fish production.
- The lack of available information regarding commercially valuable fish types that contributes in organizing fishing operations.
- Non-availability of the necessary facilities such as storage warehouses and cooling for fisheries.
- Delayed interest in fisheries development.
- Non-availability of the necessary factories for processing and Canning excess fish.

Realizing the importance of this sector in relation to food security for the population and considering it as a viable renewable resource that can be developed and economically utilized through optimal management of the marine environment, UAE is making great efforts to protect fish stocks. It is doing this by developing and setting plans and strategies for the protection and development of aquatic resources, developing and issuing legislation and many other actions and measures in order to regulate the over exploitation of the living aquatic resources. The most prominent leadership initiatives for the Government of UAE in the field of Fisheries Development is His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan initiative (may God protect him). The establishment of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Center for Marine Research, which will raise the capacity of the Centre when completed on the production of economically viable local young fish fingerlings (Grouper, yellowfin, seabream, Sobaity and Alkab) from 200 thousand fingerlings at present to 10 million fingerlings. Also adding industrial diffraction "Alamshad" which is considered an important technique in the field of protection and development of marine biology especially fisheries and plays an important and effective role in the provision of benthic environments, attracting marine life and creating colonies of integrated environmental systems environments. In turn this will reflect positively on the region's prosperity with many diverse marine organisms. The initiative also targets to manufacture and land corals in around 500 caves in the sea in Dibba, Fujairah. The hope is that cultivating coral reefs in the caves will lead to the development of fisheries and other aquatic resources in the area which in turn will preserve biodiversity and the marine environment and ensure a safe environment especially for rare fish and marine organism species to breed, which is what the East Coast of the UAE is famous for.



EPDA issues a circular on fish and marine life trading

Based on Emiri Decree (11) for the year 2015 on regulating the fishing profession in the Emirate of Ras al Khaimah, certain measures apply in order to ensure that fish and marine life does not spoil immediately after capture. This can occur due to the change in the surroundings of the catch, the equipment used, fishing methods, the type of fish and the different circumstances of the fishing season. It is therefore required to reduce the temperature by using crushed ice to ensure that the fish meat and marine life remains fresh from catch to consumer and reduces bacterial growth and the interaction of enzymes. EPDA has issued a circular regarding fish and marine landing and sales areas to ensure the protection and maintenance of fish resources. The circular states the following articles:

Article (1):

Using crushed ice with a thickness of 5 inches on sales display tables for fish and marine life in all selling areas.

Article (2):

Using crushed ice to save fish and marine life when handled or transported.

Article (3):

Using crushed ice on board fishing boats to save the fish and marine life.

Article (4):

Trading and selling fish and marine life with small and non-allowable catch lengths is prohibited.

Article (5):

Displaying fish and marine life in open places that are not equipped with ice is prohibited.

Article (6):

Implementing federal and local regulatory decisions upon those who violate the terms of the circular articles.

Article (7):

This circular is effective from August 1, 2015

OVERFISHING IS A LOCAL PROBLEM

In the UAE, 60% of the total catch is made up of species that are fished beyond sustainable levels. With the increase in the UAE's population, the demand for fish has never been as high as it is now. Scientific assessments show that 8 of our most valuable commercial fish are being overexploited. This list includes iconic and hugely popular species such as Hamour, Shaari, Farsh, Kanaad and others shown in the red section of the UAE fish consumer guide. The main factors that have led to the depletion of fish stocks in the UAE are:

- High demand leading to higher fishing effort.
- Catching fish before they are allowed to reproduce.
- Loss of habitat due to coastal development.



Status of fish resources in 2009
(based on data from the 2009 Annual Fisheries
Statistical Report for Abu Dhabi, EAD)