

Fisheries Economy

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The Primary Fishing Industry

- In both advanced and developing economies, the primary fishing industry often exhibits a dual structure, i.e. two more or less distinct segments, respectively designated small-scale or artisanal and large-scale or industrial. The terms refer to the size and/or sophistication of the technology (fishing craft, gear and other equipment) employed by the enterprises involved. A relatively wide difference in size of investment and number of persons engaged per enterprise is also implied: the range extends from one man with a canoe (or equivalent) to a factory ship crewed by several hundred.

- The small-scale segment tends to be distinguished from the large-scale one in other respects. In most cases, the former represents the traditional fishery or fisheries of a region or country. As such, it is often technically stagnant and dispersed in small and remote rural communities scattered along the coastline. Access to fishing grounds is restricted, by the types of technology commonly in use, to a comparatively narrow strip of coastal waters. Economies of scale, e.g. in the procurement of inputs and the marketing of catches, seldom are realizable. In contrast, large-scale enterprises are likely to be centred on a few large ports, to be footloose in operation and to command the industrial, business and financial services of an urban community.

- The stark dichotomy, suggested in the preceding paragraphs, between small-scale and large-scale segments of the fisheries in fact is an over-simplification. It appears to be real enough in some developing countries but elsewhere reality is better represented by a continuum: there being, between the smallest-scale and the largest-scale technologies in use, a number of intermediate-scale technologies and related sizes of enterprise.

- Moreover, this may indicate the direction of development. Events of the recent past, e.g. the rise in energy cost and the establishment of EEZs, have transformed the outlook for enterprises at both ends of the range. The use of smaller-scale technologies is offered much greater scope, potentially at least, while some of the largest scale technologies, the vessels required for distant-water operations and possibly factory-ships in general, have become or are becoming out-moded.

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