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**Research Article** 

# HOW FAR CAN TUNAS AND SARDINELLAS DERIVED FROM ARTISANAL FISHING BE EXPORTED FOR RETAIL TRADE FROM CÔTE D'IVOIRE, WEST AFRICA?

## Laurent BAHOU\*

Department of Research on the Biology, Ecology and Population Dynamics of Aquatic Living Resources, Centre for Oceanographic Research, Fishers Road, Treichville, Tel: (225) 21 35 58 80, BP V18 Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

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### ABSTRACT

In West Africa, marine artisanal fisheries' usefulness lies in their capability to support people's increasing demand for fish, as fish-consumption is generally viewed as the first and foremost way to provide a large amount of animal proteins to consumers. Here, information about the marine artisanal fishery located at Sassandra, southwestern Côte d'Ivoire, are provided, talking about the processing, marketing and distribution of two small pelagic species that are targeted by that fishery. The study was carried out as field work activities in February-March and August-September 2021, using a questionnaire to which people working for the benefit of the fishery willingly submitted themselves. The results shed light on marketing and the route to be followed by the fishery products when these are to leave Sassandra for retail trade. Women participation in post-harvesting tasks is also singled out as a way to acknowledge the significant role they play in artisanal fisheries. The study calls on decision Makers to equip attention to equip women with modern ovens as a way to tackle problems facing women in their efforts to process the fish.

**Keywords:** Artisanal fishers, Commercial species, Fishery resources, Small pelagic species.

### INTRODUCTION

In West Africa, many artisanal fisheries exist in the countries boarding the Atlantic Ocean where these fisheries, which are generally multispecies, target various species for commercial purposes. According to Camara (2008), fishery resources use can be viewed as one of the ancient practices that enable people to benefit by overall resources Nature graciously places at their disposal. In this regard, some marine artisanal fisheries such as the ones in Senegal became prominent, as they even export fishery products, generally in fresh form or frozen to European fish markets. Yet, no matter how efficacious an artisanal fishery may be, it cannot afford to thoroughly meet local populations' constant demand for fish. For instance, in Côte d'Ivoire, where fish-consumption is viewed as the first and foremost way that provides up to 50% of animal proteins to consumers, annual fish-consumption accounts for about 15-16 Kg of fish per capita (Document COMHAFAT, 2015). There is an increasing trend in fish import as a result, which cannot compensate for the scarceness of national fish production. Instead, there is permanent export for fishery products on sub-regional scale, especially for smoked sardinellas, by fishers to their home (i.e. Ghana), either as a way to meet peoples' needs for food there or to increase their own income on commercial purposes. As Gueye (2012) put it at the FAO/COFI "Side Event" Workshop in Rome, smoked fishery products exported by artisanal fishers throughout West Africa act as a fuel for regionwide fish trade. For fishing for small pelagic species in West Africa stands for a vital contribution to food security on regional scale, both in terms of living condition supported by substantial revenue and ability to meet the permanent needs for peoples' daily fish-consumption.

As fish-consumption increased significantly within these last decades, with the demand for fish remaining the main source for the Ivoirian people to meet their daily

needs for animal proteins supply, local stocks of small pelagic fish, of which sardinellas and small tunas, are being made use of in a prominent way. Citing the Gulf of Guinea in examples among other regions, Fréon *et al.* (2005) acknowledged that coastal pelagic fish contribute substantially to food security in the world, as they indicated the extent to which the contribution occurs, either directly (human consumption of fresh, smoked, or frozen fish) or indirectly (income for a component of society). In this connection, taking advantage of the free-trade policy established between West African countries, fishers residing at Sassandra, southwestern Côte d'Ivoire, make use of the coastal pelagic fish stocks, trading for sardinellas and small tunas locally and exporting a large quantity as smoked fish to neighboring countries.

As long as fishery resources use associated with ongoing scarceness to our day will make part of and raise global awareness or concerns, topics relating to production, processing, marketing and distribution of fish will deserve research interest. In addition, women at Sassandra are engaged in income-generating activities related to preservation, processing and marketing fish. The diverse array of women's roles in the artisanal fishing sector. performing many post-harvesting tasks, makes them important contributors to food security, as are the fishermen who actively participate in the production process. The main objective of the current study was to give details on small pelagic fish exploitation at Sassandra and show how the artisanal fishery there proved to be of vital importance to local populations and to other populations beyond Côte d'Ivoire. A specific goal was to shed light on marketing and the route to be followed by the fishery products when these are to leave Sassandra for retail trade.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### Carrying out surveys

Interviews were conducted in the manner described by Bahou et al. (2022). Briefly, questions were asked to respondents, as in an informal discussion, enabling them to talk about their fishery-related activities and daily life conditions. With people's disability to write in mind - for some respondents had no schooling - we took answers in note form on duly designed sheets of paper, which we used as enquiry sheets. Interviewees were to answer various questions, especially the ones having connection with preservation of the fish, places or areas where customers generally come from, the kind of species that were fished for, which form the fish was sold, and the final destination for the fishery products when these are to be conveyed for retail trade. The series of questions that were asked read this way: 1. Hello sister, what type of activity are you carrying out? 2. Are you resident of Sassandra? Where do you live? 3. What is the final destination for your fishery products? 4. Is there any period in the year when fish is plenty? 5. How do you handle transportation of the fish after buying? 6. Do you generally sell the fish frozen or smoked? 7. What is the type of species whose occurrence is

profitable to the furtherer of your activities? 8. How are the fish preserved? Can you tell us about the preservation process?

A total of 174 respondents, essentially women, were surveyed in this fashion, as they willingly submitted themselves to the questionnaire, telling us in the beginning of conversation the corporation to which they belong.

#### Data analysis

All respondents ranged considerably in age and experience, which enabled us to have a large array of opinions. All the data we collected were processed as Bahou *et al.* (2022) did, being registered in an Excel file to facilitate expressing the data as percentages. While simple counts were used to illustrate some data, in contrast, for other data, salient points were to be brought out using figures to enhance readers' comprehension.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Various species are landed by the artisanal fishers residing at Sassandra, southwestern Côte d'Ivoire. Table 1 shows the kinds of fish landed, with indication of English name, French name and Local name for each of them. Besides overall pelagic fish indicated by stars, including sardinellas and small tuna species, fishers' wives sell many other fishes to buyers. In general, all kinds of fish are meant to be sold in fresh form, immediately after landing. As a large portion would remain unsold, a category of women known as smoke-curing agents, made up of fishers' wives, retailers and some wholesalers, would process the fish by treating them with wood smoke. All small pelagic fish are handled this way, while fishes other than small pelagics would be sold preferably in fresh form as "noble fish" to wholesalers. All the respondents admitted that there is plenty of fish each year, from July to September, though the abundance of fish is not as consistent as it formerly used to be. Overall, there are two kinds of fish. Table 1 shows that in terms of diversity, fishes known as small pelagics are quite numerous in their kind.

Two kinds of ovens are used in women's efforts to preserve the fish in conditions that conform to customers' conveniences. Figure 1 shows those ovens. The smokecuring-type oven (Figure 1A) is used to smoke-cure the fish that are still in fresh form and not yet sold after landing. The preservation-type oven (Figure 1B) is used to warm up the fish in order to prevent them from going or smelling rotten or still from getting into decay. Both ovens differ in size and capacity to rapidly process the fish while these are displayed on wire nettings; the former being shorter and the later taller. Instead, they equally possess an aperture where sliced wood displayed in pile are inserted and set alight while being used as fuel for heating the fish. For that reason, the fish are displayed on wire nettings (Figures 1A and 1B). The fish are regularly treated with wood smoke until they reach the consistency of solidness barely subject to decay. The preservation-type oven permits smoke-curing agents to have in store for a long period of time (from several days up to several months) a quantity of smoked fish that is not yet sold out. This type of oven is regularly supplied with the heat maintained by a soft wood-fire. Small pelagic species such as sardinellas (e.g. round sardinella Sardinella aurita and flat sardinella S. maderensis) and small tuna (e.g. frigate tuna Auxis

thazard, bullet tuna A. rochei, little tunny Euthynnus alletteratus, and Atlantic bonito Sarda sarda) are generally sold as smoked fish, being displayed in containers, ready for sale (Figure 1C). Additionally, Figure 1D shows how the fish are wrapped up in cardboard packaging to facilitate transportation after buying.

**Table 1.** Some commercially important fish, of which small pelagics\*, landed in February-March and August-September 2021 by artisanal fishers at Sassandra, southwestern Côte d'Ivoire.

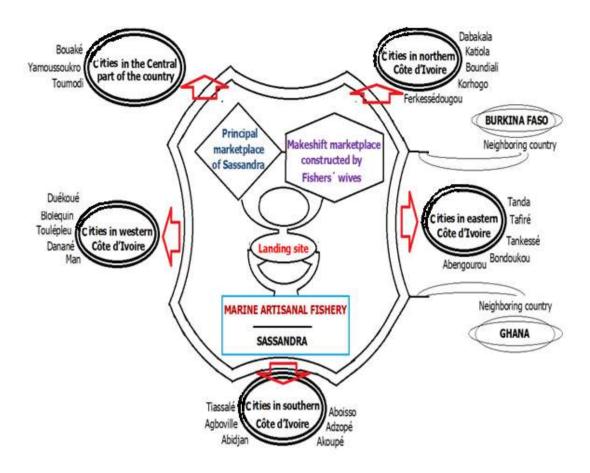
Abbula valpes (Linnaeus, 1758)   Bonefish   Copace	Kind of fish landed	English name	Local name
Arius parkii Günther, 1864         Guinean sea catfish         Mâchoiron           Auxis rochef* (Risso, 1810)         Bullet tuna         Pokou           Auxis thazard* (Lacépède, 1800)         Frigate tuna         Pokou           Brachydeuterus auritus* (Valenciennes, 1831)         Bigeye grunt         Lôcô-Lôcô           Broula barbata (Bloch & Schneider, 1801)         Bearded broltula         Loche           Campagramma glaycos (Lacépède, 1801)         Vadigo         Peti-Japon           Caranx crysos (Mitchill, 1815)         Blue runner         Japon           Caranx latus Agassiz, 1831         Horse-eye jack         Japon           Chloroscombrus chrysurus* (Linnaeus, 1776)         Adantic bumper         Plat-plat           Coryphaena hippurus Linnaeus, 1758         Dolphinfish         Machette           Decapterus rhonchus* (Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1817)         False scad         Apolo/Chacha           Drepane africana Osorio, 1892         African sicklefish         Saint-Pierre           Elops lacerta Valenciennes, 1846         West African ladyfish         Guinée           Ethmalosa fimbriata* (Bowdich, 1825)         Bonga shad         Ahoubé           Euthynnus alletteratus* (Rafinesque, 1810)         Litte tunny         Pokou           Misha africana* (Bloch, 1795)         Lesser African threadfin         Capita	Albula vulpes (Linnaeus, 1758)	Bonefish	Copace
Auxis rochei* (Risso, 1810)   Bullet tuna   Pokou	Alectis alexandrinus (Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1817)	Alexandria pompano	Japon
Auxis thazard* (Lacépède, 1800)         Frigate tuna         Pokou           Brachydeuterus auritus* (Valenciennes, 1831)         Bigeye grunt         Lôcô-Lôcô           Bronale barbata (Bloch & Schneider, 1801)         Bearded brotula         Loche           Campogramma glaycos (Lacépède, 1801)         Vadigo         Petit-Japon           Caranx crysos (Mitchill, 1815)         Blue runner         Japon           Chloroscombrus chrysurus* (Linnaeus, 1776)         Alantic bumper         Plat-plat           Chloroscombrus chrysurus* (Linnaeus, 1776)         Alantic bumper         Plat-plat           Coryphaena hippurus Linnaeus, 1758         Dolphinfish         Machette           Decapterus rhonchus* (Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1817)         False scad         Apolo/Chacha           Drepane africana Osorio, 1892         African sicklefish         Saint-Pierre           Elops lacerta Valenciennes, 1846         West African ladyfish         Guinée           Ethmalosa fimbriata* (Bowdich, 1825)         Bonga shad         Ahoubé           Euthynnus alletteratus* (Rafinesque, 1810)         Little tunny         Pokou           Galeoides decadactylus (Bloch, 1795)         Lesser African threadfin         Capitaine           Hilsha africana* (Bloch, 1795)         West African ilisha         Lame/Rasoir           Katsuwonus pelamis (Linnaeus, 1758)	Arius parkii Günther, 1864	Guinean sea catfish	Mâchoiron
Brachydeuterus auritus* (Valenciennes, 1831)         Bigeye grunt         Lôcô-Lôcô           Brotula barbata (Bloch & Schneider, 1801)         Bearded brotula         Loche           Campogramma glavoco (Lacépède, 1801)         Vadigo         Petit-Japon           Caranx crysos (Mitchill, 1815)         Blue runner         Japon           Caranx latus Agassiz, 1831         Horse-eye jack         Japon           Chloroscombrus chrysurus* (Linnaeus, 1776)         Atlantic bumper         Plat-plat           Coryphaena hippurus Linnaeus, 1758         Dolphinfish         Machette           Decapterus rhonchus* (Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1817)         False sead         Apolo/Chacha           Drepane africana Osorio, 1892         African sicklefish         Saint-Pierre           Elops lacerta Valenciennes, 1846         West African ladyfish         Guinée           Ethmalosa fimbriata* (Bowdich, 1825)         Bonga shad         Ahoubé           Ethnynus alletteratus* (Rafinesque, 1810)         Litte tunny         Pokou           Galeoides decadactylus (Bloch, 1795)         Lesser African threadfin         Capitaine           Ilisha africana* (Bloch, 1795)         West African ilisha         Lame/Rasoir           Katsuwonus pelamis (Linnaeus, 1758)         Skipjack tuna         Listao           Lethrinus allanticus Valenciennes, 1830 <td< td=""><td>Auxis rochei* (Risso, 1810)</td><td>Bullet tuna</td><td>Pokou</td></td<>	Auxis rochei* (Risso, 1810)	Bullet tuna	Pokou
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Decapterus rhonchus* (Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1817)         False scad         Apolo/Chacha           Drepane africana Osorio, 1892         African sicklefish         Saint-Pierre           Elops lacerta Valenciennes, 1846         West African ladyfish         Guinée           Ethmalosa fimbritata* (Bowdich, 1825)         Bonga shad         Ahoubé           Euthynnus alletteratus* (Rafinesque, 1810)         Little tunny         Pokou           Galeoides decadactylus (Bloch, 1795)         Lesser African threadfin         Capitaine           Ilisha africana* (Bloch, 1795)         West African ilisha         Lame/Rasoir           Katsuwonus pelamis (Linnaeus, 1758)         Skipjack tuna         Listao           Lethrinus atlanticus Valenciennes, 1830         Atlantic emperor         Carpe grise           Mugil cephalus Linnaeus, 1758         Flathead grey mullet         Mulet           Pennadasys peroteti (Cuvier, 1830)         Parrot grunt         Capitaine           Pomadasys peroteti (Cuvier, 1829         Atlantic bigeye         Motar           Pseudotolithus elongatus (Bowdich, 1825)         Bobo croaker         Sosso           Pseudotolithus senegalensis (Valenciennes, 1833)         Cassava croaker         Sosso           Sardinella murita* Valenciennes, 1847         Round sardinella         Magni           Sardinella marita* Valenciennes,		Dolphinfish	
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Trachurus trecae* Cadenat, 1949Cunene horse mackerelApolo/ChachaTrichiurus lepturus* Linnaeus, 1758Largehead hairtailCeinture	Trachinotus teraia Cuvier, 1833	Terai pompano	Arrê
Trichiurus lepturus* Linnaeus, 1758 Largehead hairtail Ceinture	Trachurus trachurus* (Linnaeus, 1758)	Atlantic horse mackerel	Apolo/Chacha
	Trachurus trecae* Cadenat, 1949	Cunene horse mackerel	Apolo/Chacha
Umbrina canariensis Valenciennes, 1843 Canary drum Ombrine	Trichiurus lepturus* Linnaeus, 1758	Largehead hairtail	Ceinture
	Umbrina canariensis Valenciennes, 1843	Canary drum	Ombrine

Small pelagic fish are indicated by stars\*. French name for each species (from top to bottom) is indicated as follows: Banane de mer; Cordonnier bossu; Mâchoiron de Guinée; Bonitou; Auxide; Lippu pelon; Brotule barbé; Liche lirio; Carangue coubali; Carangue mayole; Sapater; Coryphène; Comète coussut; Forgeron ailé; Guinée copace; Ethmalose d'Afrique; Thonine commune; Petit capitaine; Alose rasoir; Bonite à ventre rayé; Empereur atlantique; Mulet cabot;

Capitaine royal; Grondeur perroquet; Beauclaire soleil; Otolithe bobo; Otolithe sénégalais; Bonite à dos rayé; Allache; Grande allache; Maquereau espagnol; Maquereau commun; Thazard blanc; Musso africain; Sériole couronnée; Albacore; Pompaneau né-bé; Chinchard d'Europe; Chinchard cunène; Poisson sabre commun; Ombrine bronze.



**Figure 1**. Photographs showing two types of ovens (A and B), how ready smoked fish are displayed for retailing and for wholesaling (C), and the manner of packaging fishery products (D) at Sassandra, southwestern Côte d'Ivoire.



**Figure 2**. Simplified representation of the route to be followed by fishery products when these are to leave Sassandra (southwestern Côte d'Ivoire) for retail trade. Note: Cities listed in this Figure are not the only ones where the fishery products landed by the marine artisanal fishers are exported to.

The route of retail trade for the fish is shown in Figure 2. A close observation of Figure 2 clearly shows that a large quantity of smoked fish is exported to neighboring countries such as Ghana, Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Mali, to name a few. Transportation of the fish is handled with the help of appropriate and long vehicles from Ghana. However, at local level, transportation of smoked small pelagic species is carried out with the aid of small Van drivers or with drivers of vehicles covered with tarpaulin, carrying heavy loads, which they transport far off from Sassandra to many cities of Côte d'Ivoire. In addition, at Sassandra, three principal places are known to buyers for showing fish-trade conveniences. These are the principal marketplace of Sassandra, the makeshift marketplace constructed by fishers' wives and the landing site. From those places, purchased smoked fish are conveyed to many other cities of Côte d'Ivoire (Figure 2).

Species of various kinds are sold by retailers, wholesalers and fishers' wives, mainly because the artisanal fishery at Sassandra is a multispecies one. In other words, the number of the fish listed in this study testifies to

the fact that fishers do not concentrate on at least one category or type of fish. However, small pelagic fish would contribute up to 80% of the total landing of marine species by Ivorian fisheries (FAO, 2008). This is of no mere occurrence. In fact, small pelagic fish are abundant in all oceans and seas except the Antarctic (Fréon et al., 2005). Those fish of prolific nature, generally represented by coastal species, are of vital importance to artisanal fisheries worldwide. According to Pézennec et al. (1993), coastal pelagic species account for the principal fishery resources of Côte d'Ivoire. Yet in terms of species richness, two fish species known as the sardinellas (i.e. Sardinella aurita and S. maderensis) prominently occur in the catches (Bahou et al, 2021). This situation is mainly due to feeding facilities encountered by those fish in the area, as zooplankton and phytoplankton consumers (Ghéno and Fontana, 1981; Médina, 1985; Fréon, 1988; Binet, 1993; Fréon et al., 2005), following suitable environmental conditions favoured by cooling, because of the occurrence of the main upwelling season from July to September (Binet et al., 1991; Pézennec et al., 1993; Binet, 1995).

Through various fishery-related activities, of which postharvesting tasks, retailers, wholesalers and fishers' wives became collaborators to fishers, regularly supplying local fish market with fishery products. Therefore, the marine artisanal fishery of Sassandra can afford to continue satisfying peoples' increasing demand for animal proteins of fishery sources. As crucial value-chain agents, women engaged in post-harvesting tasks play key roles marketing the fish and well-preserving the fish through the smokecuring process. In Senegal, for instance, 40% of the total catch derived from marine artisanal fishing would be treated by means of smoke-curing process using traditional ovens (Mbaye, 2005). In fact, the smoke-curing process is the commonest and widespread method for treating the fish with wood smoke and ensuring a quality desirable to purchasers and consumers. The type of ovens that women use at Sassandra to process the fish depicts the partiallydeveloped stage of their business. Those ovens require cheaper and affordable material for their construction. Treating the fish with wood smoke results in the fish being increased in solidness, so that they can be conveyed to remote localities and even to sub-regional fish markets. According to Mbaye (2005), processing the fish by mean of ovens is a must, being relatively modest as a way to keep a portion of the total catch that was not sold in fresh form from the risk of decay, thereby reducing the occurrence of post-capture losses.

Women participation in fisheries activities is quite remarkable in West Africa and can serve as additional detail to what people observed elsewhere in the world. Several authors noted that worldwide, women in fishing communities have been observed to participate actively in fisheries, even expanding their role playing a part in the maintenance of their families (Nwabeze et al., 2013; Cliffe and Akinrotimi, 2015). Actually, fishers would barely succeed in their efforts to supply entire communities with fish, were women not there to serve as a powerful aid. Fall et al. (2019) rightly acknowledge the problem of preservation and storage of landed fish as a major societal challenge in three West African countries (e.g. Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal), due to the lack of industrial infrastructures. Finally, smoked Sardinellas trade and trade of smoked tuna in southwestern Côte d'Ivoire can be portrayed this way: they both spread out from Sassandra as a central point. Sardinellas trade would however radiate to some cities of Côte d'Ivoire and expand to neighboring countries.

#### CONCLUSION

The current study showed the contribution of fishers' wives and that of other women such as retailers, wholesalers and smoke-curing agents to the spread of the benefits related to fish trade and fish-consumption. This role, which is quite visible locally at Sassandra, expanded to sub-regional countries through fish retail-trade, as a way to meet peoples' demand for fish there. The study also recalls to decision Makers' attention the persistent problem facing women in their efforts to preserve the fish using traditionally made ovens. Truly, much has been done

elsewhere by Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to solve this problem, but much more remains undone for such brave women whose contribution to fisheries still is undeniable.

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