



Session 04

Significant ecological events in marine ecosystems in West Africa: an inventory duty

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Abstract

An inventory of significant ecological events in West African coastal marine ecosystems over the last decades has been conducted by combining three approaches: a document review, a survey of fishermen and an analysis of fishery statistics. This method allowed to identify an initial series of events that took place over the period 1970 to 2014, mainly in Senegal. This series refers to groups or species of fishery interest, of which fluctuations in abundance, either sporadically or in the longer term, have had an impact on the fisheries that exploit them. These species include Baltic carolinensis, Tassergal (*Pomatomus saltator*), octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*), Thai murex (*Stramonita haemastoma*), West African strombe (*Strombus latus*) and belt (*Trichiurus lepturus*). This paper describes and analyzes the events identified during this inventory, in terms of what is known and/or what is perceived. It highlights differences in perception between actors (scientists vs professionals in the fishing sector) and sources of information. These differences invite us to think about strategies to improve our ability to perceive and record the ecological changes occurring in marine ecosystems and to document them in real time. Such reflection is necessary in West Africa as elsewhere, since this knowledge is an essential prerequisite for a better understanding of the functioning of the ecosystems in question and to meet the needs of their management, exploitation and conservation.

Keywords: Ecological event, marine environment, West Africa, development, exploitation, conservation.



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