



Fishing for the Future: The Why and How of Nature's Most Abundant Protein Source

Q & A Transcript

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Zachary Baquet:

I'd like to thank Richard and Bryan for a great talk. We're now going to open at for Q&A and what I would ask is that when you're asking a question, please state your name and organization before asking the question and we'll get started.

Brian Greenberg:

Thank you. My name is Brian Greenberg and I'm with Interaction and I just wanted to thank you for a terrific presentation, really. The amount of information and also for not sugarcoating the realities for us. But in addition, giving us constructive ways to engage on policy, regulation, and program stuff. The overall message that you build up is of fisheries in trouble and that it's in the hands of society and economy and governance and so forth to manage.

That being the case with your core messages, I wanted to ask you about what seems to me to be one of the primary problems in getting this kind, the perspective that you offer to get traction which seems to me to be the persistence of a 19th Century myth of inevitable and endless abundance generated and regenerated by nature.

And with that in mind, I wanted to ask you if the contrast, I think I heard between your core messages and the titling of your presentation, which is in some ways evocative of that sort of 19th Century myth of natural abundance – has something to tell us about the kinds of messaging that you think is needed to change frames and to give us a greater sense of urgency about that or am I just kind of misunderstanding that? So – is that clear? Do you understand –

Richard Volk:

Well, I think it's very clear and I think you've made the point better than I think I can. You've raised a very important point is how do we raise this to the appropriate level of urgency? And it's the same question I guess we could ask for climate change going on in the world today or whatnot and what comes to mind about that is we have so much sunk capital in the fisheries sector. There is so much capital that has been plowed into boats and refrigeration and transportation. In the same way we have so much sunk capital in oil and gas, right, around the world. That's a heck of a lot of inertia to overcome and people don't want to – people involved in those industries – don't want to admit that we have a problem.

So it's a question of how do we turn that sunk capital into, and get people to realize that we're actually not only losing money in fisheries today, we're out there fishing at a loss right now in most places. An economic loss. And yet we're still racing to catch the last fish. It makes no sense. It's crazy. And similarly, in climate change, we're doing similar things that do not make sense.

But how do we get that message across is I don't think there's any other way but being on the ground and I think our USAID as _____, as a donor is extraordinary. We put people on the ground in these communities and we talk. We embed ourselves in the ministry. We have offices with staff that are running all over up and down the coast. Other donors don't do this. The World Bank, if I may say, is about ready to put in \$54 million of loan into the Ghana fishery and continue with the same labor pool of government personnel to implement a brand-new fisheries Reform program worth \$54 million.

I don't want to be totally critical of that because it's very important that they've taken that initiative but it's equally important, if not more so, for us to remain on the ground and continue to try to influence the direction of those changes.

Bryan Gillooly:

I just wanted to hit on the point and say – I mean I really appreciated your comment and I mean for me, it should be on the front page of every newspaper. It should be on, you know, the top of every development agency's priority list to be looking at fisheries. And I think my biggest concern is when you start talking about food security, we talk about, you know, the year 2050 that the population's supposed to double and we're trying to have enough food for the future but what we're relying upon is the fact that we think that this protein source is going to be there and I think a lot of people are predicating decisions based on information that's false because they really think that this protein sources going to be there 50 years from now. If things continue along the lines of how they are now, I mean we're in some serious trouble. So we're going to actually have to increase food production. We're going to have to come up with different sources of protein, like livestock that we haven't mentioned today, either. So –

Male 1:

We have a question from online.

Female 1:

Yes, this is a question from our webinar audience. It's from Lucy From TNC and she is interested in knowing any success stories of mechanisms for avoiding counter effects of aquaculture and she gives some examples of clearing mangroves, pollution, pushing small fishermen out, and introduce species.

Richard Volk:

Well, I want to thank the questioner because it's an important one and one that we need another seminar to do. And hopefully we can arrange that in the future because this interaction between aquaculture and wild fisheries is really critical. There's a lot of opportunity in aquaculture and there are a lot of challenges that remain to make sure that we progress in a responsible way. Do we have any great success stories to hold up on how we've turned that tide? I would ask that maybe we defer that question to the next seminar and get Harry and a panel of experts appear to talk about some of the things that are going on.

I would say, though, that the kinds of things that we're doing in the Coral Triangle Initiative, for example, of educating the people in those countries in Southeast Asia about the live reef food fish trade and the sustainability issues associated with cage culture and so forth is a very important example to follow and have we turned the tide entirely? No, no way. I think our – in my small world of where I work, what we have had some success on is things like shellfish culture or shellfish collection from the wild where we've gotten women's groups involved in Nicaragua, in the Gambia and elsewhere to actually go out and create plans that would limit the amount of take that they take over the course of a year so that we have a sustainable harvest and we actually have a couple really nice examples there. You could call that aquaculture; you could call that gleaning but maybe Bryan you have some examples.

Bryan Gillooly:

Well I would just like to say I think that aquaculture tends to get a very bad name, especially in the environmental community and we have to be really careful about talking about aquaculture, I think, because there's a lot of people out there that are trying to do it in an environmentally sustainable manner. Anytime you're working in agriculture, anytime you're working with livestock, it comes down to your management practices on the front. So if you're an irresponsible farmer and just letting pesticides run off into the rivers; if you're in aquaculture farmer and you're letting your discharge go into the rivers; I mean these are irresponsible management practices. And so you're asking about examples of, you know, around the world of where we've been able to

really turn the tide with the negative effects of aquaculture – I mean I think it comes down to training and that's what we do with our Aqua Fish Program, you know, training farmers to be better farmers and to be, have this ecosystem approach to farming, in general, whether it's terrestrial aquaculture or underwater agriculture.

Randy Brum:

Hi. Randy Brum and World Bank. I would like to address briefly this apparent conundrum of the use of fish meal and fish feeds and for about the last 40 or 50 years, forage fisheries that are transformed into fish feeds or fishmeal and oil has been steady, right around 50, 60 million metric tons, constant over a period of time when aquaculture production has increased by an order of magnitude. The original use for all that fishmeal was or, especially the oils, was to have it rendered and turned into solid fats that were used in industrial processes and thickeners and things like that.

As the cost of animal production increased and the value of transforming that fishmeal into other products increased, it went into pig feeds and then chicken feeds. Now aquaculture's the high-value industry and so the same product, the same amounts, are now sold to aquaculture to turn into fish food. If you take a wild fish and you grow it up in the wild, it consumes about 10 kilograms of forage fish for every kilogram of fish flesh that it produces that turns into human food. That same fishmeal used in aquaculture comforts at about 2.5 kilograms per kilogram of fish sold in the trade.

For the years over this 40 or so years when fishmeal production stayed constant, the Peruvian industry, in particular, which is the dominant fishery for fishmeal product, has been struggling and struggling and struggling to get people to eat those anchoveta, instead of transforming them into something else. And they've managed to get about half a million tons into the human food chain. Over time, that's increasing a bit because of health consciousness. They're now increasing I think about almost ten percent of the – well about five the last time I heard – five percent of the total production is going into fish oil tablets but the message I'm trying to convey is that the sustainability of this industry using fish to feed fish depends not on aquaculture. It depends on sustainable fisheries' management of that stock, just as you were indicating about the rest of the capture fisheries. If we can get that capture fishery right – nobody was complaining about turning this into pig or the fish-in-pig-out ratio;

the fish-in-chicken-out ratio. Does something emotive about a fish-in-fish-out ratio that distorts this argument. Thank you.

Richard Volk: Very interesting point. Yeah.

Zachary Baquet: Do we have any – we have a question online?

Female: We do. We have another webinar question. This is from Marc Shapiro, who is the Chief of Party for USAID's Global Climate Change M&E Project and his question is if you could design a USAID project to better understand and learn how to address the key underlying issues involved in climate change related impacts on fisheries and aquaculture for food security in developing countries, what would you focus on?

Richard Volk: Well, again, thank you for the – may I take this one?

Bryan Gillooly: Please *[laughs]*.

Richard Volk: Thank you for the question and I think we're doing that. We're trying to do that. Again, in the coral triangle; again in the Philippines, we have the follow-on to the fish program will be a program called Eco-fish and basically, what we're trying to do is create resiliency. We're trying to rebuild the ecosystem so that it can withstand additional perturbation; whether it's sediments, whether it's ocean acidification, whether it's pollution, whether it's elevated sea surface temperatures – these are all things that are continuing to increase and we found that if coral reefs are returned to some semblance of health, they have a greater chance of being resilient to those changes.

But I think we have to take this ecosystem approach. The kinds of things that I mentioned for Ghana are a good example. The fisher communities that presumably the targets of our effort, are facing attacks from the oil and gas industry and are sufficient revenue; they're also losing their agricultural lands and then losing their homes to coastal erosion and sea level rise. And if we're

talking about their total security, we have to deal with all of those. We can't just say, "Oh, were only going to be concerned about your food security but sorry, you guys are all going to have to move real soon, but you guys figure that out."

So we can't do that and this is the approach we're taking in Ghana. It's a very holistic approach. We struggle with this, because of our programming constraints at an ID in terms of different colors of money, of how to make this sort of integrated approach really happened. This is our perennial struggle and I would hope that everybody here and who has, you know, ability to influence agency policy can understand that challenge and help us open up the doors to some of the constraints that we have.

Christine: Thank you, this is Christine from Counterpart and thank you for the presentation. I had somebody, a couple weeks ago, explain that open access in the fisheries context equated to shared poverty. And so within that understanding and, you know, putting forward measures for a more regulatory framework that would, you know, increase maximum yields such as food security or productive ecosystems, can you speak to kind of based on your experience, what leverage points, tools, or discussions are most effective at municipal or national levels in convincing governments to transition from open access to a more regulatory framework?

Richard Volk: Oh, thank you for the question and I think, unfortunately, we don't have a whole lot of good examples yet. Remember the yield curve graph that I put up, though. I think that we can bring some discussion around that within a setting of government and stakeholders to talk about what is your objective for the fishery. What do you want to see on the ground in 20 years? Is it maximum employment where everybody is facing but below the poverty line and struggling to make ends meet or are we actually, you know, willing to take the political heat to have limited access and therefore raise the value of the fishery in totality to the point where we actually can create some stewardship and some growth and some economic return in the fishery?

That economic return shouldn't be an endpoint. It should be seen in terms of the country's overall development objective, you know, sending their kids to

school, you name it. But, you know, this – unfortunately, governments don't tend to take that view and they're very loathe to admit that we need to put more money back into managing the fishery and in the case of Ghana, it's a huge, huge political issue. The fishers, the canoe fishers especially, are seen as a way of gaining political influence through the subsidies, through actually going out and, you know, there's all kinds of maneuvering going on prior to the elections about how the fishery is being managed and what the government is willing and not willing to say to upset the fishers, yet you know, the fishers themselves and through our program – we've built, I really believe we've got some incredible social capital. The fishers want to change; they're taking responsibility. What we need to do is get the women involved in a greater sense. The women play a huge role in Ghana. We didn't talk about that yet in terms of marketing the fish and if we can get them to say, "Hey, we're only going to take sustainably sourced fish and the only way to do that is boom, boom, boom, these are the controls on open access that need to take place," then we have a dialogue. But we're not there yet; it's going to take a while.

Zachary Baquet: We have time for one more question from online.

Female: Okay, great. This question is from John Thomas of Vestergaard Frandsen and he is asking what is the balance of fresh versus cured fish and its impact in the value chain on fishery depletion?

Bryan Gillooly: Fish and cured fish. I don't know.

Richard Volk: What is the value of – I mean what is the ratio of first cured fish and its value overall on the food chain, on the value chain?

Female: And its impact in the value chain on fishery depletion.

Richard Volk: Well, I'm not sure I know the answer to that, to be quite honest. If we look at West Africa, for example, I believe it's like 97 percent of the fish taken out of the Gulf of Guinea is dried and –

Bryan Gillooly: Smoked.

Richard Volk: - smoked. Smoked and then a portion of it is dried and salted but all of – most of its smoked and so one thing we hadn't even talked about is what is the impact on the terrestrial wood sources for that incredible amount of wood going into the smoking operations. Bryan and I just got back from Ghana by the way. We have a report and a PowerPoint presentation about the Ghana fishery but it was just amazing to see how much stacks of wood everywhere lined up just waiting to go into these smokers and then to see how much was being put on trucks and sent off to the hinterland. Remember, a third of it is going to other countries.

So again, I don't think I'm answering the question but it's certainly a good one to look into.

Bryan Gillooly: And it brings up a number of different topics, 'cause we were seeing that some of the work was being taken from the mangroves so that's going to cut down your juvenile recruiting ground and the mangroves if you're cutting down wood to then smoke the fish. And then there's the other question of the nutritional value of that smoked fish. Is fresh fish, you know, does it have more vitamins than that smoked fish? So this question brings up a lot of different issues and we haven't addressed all of them yet but the more we go out, the more we go out to the field, the more we start looking at this, I think the better we can do in our development projects.

Zachary Baquet: Okay, with that, I'd like to thank everyone for attending today's Ag Sector Council and thank our speakers, Richard and Bryan, for giving a great talk and answering questions.

[Applause]

Please take a moment to fill out the evaluation. We take those seriously and as I said in August, we'll be trying to improve upon things. Those of you online, we have a link for you to follow, and the PowerPoint and other resources will be available on Agrilinks for the event page. So please check those things out there and if you'd registered for the event, you'll get an e-mail in about ten days or so letting you know that the audio-synced PowerPoint presentation where the recorded audio with the PowerPoints will be available online on Agrilinks as well, so you can access that later. We'll also have transcripts for the Q&A portion as well, so if you wanted to check those out as well. So thank you very much and we'll see you again in September.

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