

### **Capacity building**

The aim of the European Union, from a development as well as a food-safety point of view, is to stimulate countries to set up their own, well-functioning food-safety authorities so as to be able to meet the EU food-safety requirements. For this purpose, a few years ago, the Project Management Unit for the Strengthening of Fishery Products (SFP) was set up. 10 million euros are invested in this five-year SFP programme, focused on institutional capacity-building, knowledge-building and staff-training.

By recruiting and training local inspectors, this programme aims to provide the ACP countries with technical assistance that will help them live up to SPS standards and comply with food-safety regulations. Furthermore, SFP informs local industries about the measures applicable to export products.

Although SFP's activities are much-needed and in theory appropriate, in practice SFP faces major difficulties in realizing its aims. NGOs such as the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA) warn that the ACP fisheries sector, in particular artisan fishermen, find it difficult to approach SFP for assistance. SFP performs poorly in communicating to target ACP countries. Other ACP countries (both governments and private sector) complain about bureaucratic procedures to apply for assistance. The funding procedure is far too complex and longwinded. Also, SFP is deeply understaffed.

As a result, NGOs have pointed to weaknesses in institutional set-up of the project, a slow rate of identification, design and launch of local projects. On the other hand, SFP points to complications concerning the local competent authorities, who commit only partly to fruitful cooperation with SFP.

*Source: Paper on Sanitary Measures, trade barriers and market access to the EU for fishery products, Netherlands Ministry for Foreign Affairs, April 2005.*