

Invited Report on the IIFET 2000 Conference

Presented at the closing session of the conference

Parzival Copes

This has been, without doubt, the grandest occasion of an IIFET meeting—and it is fitting that this should be the case. After all, we are celebrating our tenth biennial conference, in a millennium year, on the campus which has been our organization's home and headquarters since its foundation. To top it off, the conference has been organized by our founding father, Dick Johnston, a man of vision and energy who was bound to make something very special of this occasion. And so he did.

A major feature of this conference has been its inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary thrust, of which I am personally very much in favor. In my opinion, fisheries cannot be properly understood and cannot be properly managed, but in an inter-disciplinary fashion. Fisheries policy is inextricably bound up in the triple objectives of biological conservation, economic efficiency and social equity. To serve policy needs, good fisheries economics inevitably must mesh with ecological and social considerations.

Another positive feature of the conference has been its reaching out to non-academics in the fisheries field. Of course, from the start we have encouraged participation from the fisheries trade—as our organization's name suggests—and also have attracted some fisheries managers. But this time we have tried harder with these groups and have also succeeded in drawing representation directly from the harvesting sector.

I must say, further, that a very nice touch has been Dick Johnston's special effort to attract some of the stalwart founders of the fisheries economics sub-discipline. I was very pleased to meet here old friends and colleagues such as Tony Scott, Jim Crutchfield, Giulio Pontecorvo and Joel Dirlam.

Dick has asked me to give my critical assessment of the conference. I intend therefore to temper my legitimate praise with critical comments on some features. As already noted, this has been our first deliberately inter-disciplinary conference. But in the inevitable haste with which biennial conferences are organized, I think we have jumped into multi-disciplinarity a little too fast and too far. Looking at our program, it seems to me that the connection to fisheries economics—or even to fisheries—of some of the material in the program has been rather remote.

Effective fisheries inter-disciplinarity, I would suggest, should be expressed *within* individual papers, more so than by placing side-by-side papers dealing with fisheries from different single-disciplinary perspectives. For the future, I suggest we should deliberately seek out authors noted for their competent inter-disciplinary treatment of fisheries topics, to present key papers featured in the program. We should include some inter-disciplinary authors from primary disciplines other than economics in order to forge more effective fisheries links with their disciplines. However, I am conscious that we remain the International Institute of Fisheries Economics and Trade, with a mandate expressed in that title. Therefore, the inter-disciplinarity that we pursue should always contain features inclusive of fisheries economics or trade.

Microbehavior and Macroresults is the expression that has been chosen as the theme for our conference. Of course, micro behavior has macro results—in fisheries as in other endeavors—but this is a pervasive phenomenon and therefore of limited use in providing a major theme focus for our conference. The success we have had in pulling together such a large gathering with such a great diversity of papers has added to the appearance of lack of focus. For the future, I suggest it will be more fruitful to provide focus through a multi-theme organization of the conference around identified key areas, featuring advertised key speakers and panels with well-known scholars in the areas concerned. It is true that this year's program has had some of the ingredients for such an approach, but without featuring them to provide an evident sharper focus.

I will be brief in my comments on logistical aspects of the conference. They are matters on which I am disinclined to spend much thought. Of course, I have noticed inevitable micro problems and have been the victim of some. But I am nevertheless much impressed with the general macro results. We owe a debt of gratitude to Dick Johnston, Ann Shriver, Debi Mandigo, Pamela Garland, their helpers and the members of hard-working committees involved in conference planning and organization. Their effective efforts have resulted in a successful conference, and one that is, by IIFET standards, on a grand scale. In closing, I ask you to join me in expressing our great appreciation for their work.