

The Status of *Sardinella tawilis* in Taal Lake, Batangas, Philippines

Ma. Theresa Mutia

Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
National Fisheries Biological Center, Butong, Taal, Batangas, Philippines

Abstract

The status of the world's only freshwater sardine, *Sardinella tawilis*, is presented by its population dynamics, related aspects of biology, and production trends. A policy matrix was designed to show strategies on how to conserve and manage *tawilis* in Taal Lake. Fish landed catch survey was conducted for five years in eight landing centers around the lake. Hired enumerators used questionnaires to record daily catch, fishing effort and length measurements. Population parameters were analyzed using the Food and Agriculture Organization-International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management (FAO-ICLARM) Stock Assessment Tools (FISAT).

Production of *tawilis* over the years has slowly declined, from 744 MT in 1996 to 637 MT in 1999. Operation of prohibited active gears like the motorized push net (*suro*) and ring net (*basing*) has threatened fish production in the lake. High exploitation rate of 0.59 caused by increased fishing pressure has exceeded the optimum 0.3-0.5 range. Proper management and regulatory interventions are required to help resolve the existing problems affecting the sustainability of the lake. To improve the production of *tawilis*, a stock enhancement scheme in the Lake is recommended.

Keywords: *Sardinella tawilis*, freshwater sardine, Taal Lake, conservation, management