

Abstract

Managers and fisheries scientists providing advice have for many years discussed and argued definitions of ecosystem-based approach to marine fisheries. This concept has been on the agenda of international fora in recent years and on several occasions dedicated international conferences and symposia have been held. The Reykjavik Conference on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem, held in 2001 addressed the scope of the concept and subsequently the FAO produced basic guidelines for implementation. As a follow-up, various fora have devoted immense efforts to define indicators and scientific criteria to be applied. Despite all the efforts, we still do not move very fast towards implementation and there is even some misconception as to what this is about.

The Reykjavik Conference concluded that there was no reason to wait, since many of the measures that are being implemented under single-species management schemes are in the spirit of ecosystem-based fisheries management. We need simply do it better. Also it was stressed that although a fully fledged ecosystem-based management scheme of the ocean resources is the ultimate goal, it needs to be understood that in order to achieve this we may have to undergo a lengthy incremental process. But it is urgent to start now.