

Preserving fish in Tanje Village

Tanje, on the Southern Atlantic coast of The Gambia, has for many years been a fishing village. The recent construction of a tarmac road to the capital city, Banjul, has led to many changes in the village, including a growth in tourism and trade.

It has also allowed those who fish for a living to look at new ways of trading their produce. This includes a variety of ways of preserving their catch.

This activity, suitable for Geography, Science and Design Technology, explores the advantages and disadvantages of different methods of fish preservation.

It comes from the work of British and German teachers visiting Tanje as part of the 'Young People on the Global Stage' project, funded by the EU.

Pupils work in groups, each looking at one technology, and then present back to the class about what they consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of this technology: not only for the people of Tanje, but also for the wider world.

To do this, they evaluate their chosen technology against seven headings, although not it may not be possible to evaluate every technology against every heading.

You could copy the box over page for pupils to use.



Storage



Smoking



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Technology:		
	Advantages	Disadvantages
Costs/Resources	Local Regional Global	Local Regional Global
Health	Local Regional Global	Local Regional Global
Technological capability	Local Regional Global	Local Regional Global
Energy	Local Regional Global	Local Regional Global
Good for development	Local Regional Global	Local Regional Global
Waste	Local Regional Global	Local Regional Global
Profitability	Local Regional Global	Local Regional Global



Salting

Fish for sale



The technologies



Fresh fish

Fish is brought in to shore by men sailing in wooden boats known as pirogues. It is then carried onshore by women, using bowls on their heads or wheelbarrows. Fresh fish is tasty and preserves its nutrients, but it does not keep well. People will often come down from the area around the capital city to buy fresh fish from Tanje. The local community will eat what is unsold, and any waste is discarded or used as fertiliser or animal feed.

Smoking

Tanje is famed for its fish-smoking sheds, which attract visitors – including tourists – from far afield. A particular variety – the bonga fish – is slowly smoked on racks over burning wood. The fish keeps well, and smoked fish from Tanje can be purchased as far away as Europe. The area around Tanje does not provide sufficient suitable wood for the sheds, so much of the wood is brought in by lorries from the Casamance area of neighbouring Senegal.

Salting

A relatively small amount of fish is salted for local markets. Some of this salted fish is also dried, preserving it further. Salting is time-consuming, but helps preserve the fish. Salt is bought in from elsewhere for this purpose.

Freezing

A Japanese development programme has paid for an ice plant in the centre of the fishing village. This large plant means that some fish can be frozen, and then shipped elsewhere in refrigerated lorries. Much of the ice is bought by local women, and kept in freezers on the beach. While these are not connected to an electricity supply, they are well-insulated, keeping the fish cool and preserving it for market. The ice plant doubles up as a local meeting place, as it offers a shady focal point close to the beach.

Drying

Some fish is dried in racks in the hot sun, although it is not possible to do this during the country's rainy season. Some of this fish has already been salted, helping give it flavour and keep it from going off. Shellfish and varieties of fish that are not suitable for smoking or selling fresh are also sometimes dried for sale at markets.

Canning

Tanje has no fish-canning facilities, and indeed there are none in the country at the time of writing. Canning allows fish to be preserved for a very long time, although it is energy – and resource – intensive, and it can cost a lot to set up canning plants in the first instance.