Biodiversity in Senegal

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Biodiversity refers to the variety of plant and animal life in the world. Senegal has a coastline of 435 miles. It has a range of ecosystems represented by some forest environments, agriculture, river and lake and marine and coastal environments. These main ecosystems contain plants, species and animal diversities. Senegal’s biodiversity and the services that it provides to the country, allow the society to benefit from resources on a nutritional, economic, health, environmental, cultural aspect. These services are the foundation for the welfare of the society. Senegal has a wide range of biological resources that support the bulk of the country's development sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and livestock.

There are many connections between biodiversity and the cultural identity in Senegal. I will focus on three connections that I have noticed. Since Senegal is the westernmost country in Africa, one of the primary Senegalese natural resources is fishing. Fishing provides the economy with many benefits. Fish is a part of the diet. There are many dishes with seafood that are a part of the culture, such as, Poisson Yassa (caramelized onion sauce with grilled or bake fish), Payla (rice with seafood), Soupou Kanja (okra sauce with a lot of seafood in it). Even though seafood is used for food and it boost the economy. The culture of fishing can influence biodiversity in a negative way due to overfishing and illegal fishing by foreigners.

“Between March 2010 and April 2012, the Senegalese government granted fishing licenses to European and Russian fishing vessels, without adherence to limits and legal requirements. According to the country’s fisheries law, foreign trawlers are forbidden from trawling in the central Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). However, foreign trawlers were discovered trawling for pelagic fish in Casamance and within the EEZ, with permission granted by the Ministry of Maritime Economy of Senegal, under the government of Adboulaye Wade. Local fisher groups staged mass demonstrations and opposition to the granting of licenses. Macky Sall, the Senegalese President who came to power in March 2012, canceled 29 fishing authorizations granted to foreign pelagic trawlers. In their 2 years of activity, they had caught 125,000 metric tonnes of fish, half the overall annual catch of pelagic fish by the entire Senegalese fleet. Some trawlers are reportedly still illegally fishing in Senegalese waters” (Environmental Justice Atlas, 2014).

Along with fishing providing food to the Senegalese society, there is livestock that is a huge part of biodiversity and the culture. The Fulani tribe is known for raising livestock. They have gained their wealth from their cattle. Senegal is a predominately-Muslim country. Therefore, many holidays are celebrated in Senegal. During the holidays, people sacrifice a cow, sheep or lamb to cook and eat during their feast. Livestock is very much a part of the cultural identify in Senegal.

Another connection is the agriculture. For example, peanuts are a big crop that are grown in Senegal. It is used for many different purposes but many culinary dishes use peanut oil or a peanut sauce. Cotton is also grown in Senegal. “The cotton industry in Senegal accounts for 2% of the country’s GDP and 5% of export earnings” (Better Cotton Initiative, 2015). The majority of the cotton grown in the the Kolda region of Senegal. It is considered the most impoverished place in Senegal. The fact that the area produces cotton can help the residents of that area with jobs.

Senegal does not depend on tourism for any of the connections, and it does not have any environmental issues that affect the balance of biodiversity besides the overfishing and illegal fishing of foreigners. Biodiversity and the cultural identity in Senegal are interconnected. As long as they stay connected then both will continue to grow.

References

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