

Socioeconomic Status of Artisanal Fishers in the West Part of Moroccan Mediterranean

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ABSTRACT

Artisanal fisheries in Moroccan Mediterranean generally lack management and planning, thus development. Recently, some of these fisheries had received an attention in field of infrastructure, however, there is lack of data on socioeconomic conditions of these fisheries. The main objective of this article is an update of the state of knowledge of socioeconomic of the artisanal fishers, by means of a case study in Belyounech, Fnideq, Martil and Kaa Asras areas, through a diagnosis based on analysis of socioeconomic indicators derived from data obtained through a structured questionnaire. The data analyses revealed there was a high illiteracy rate and a low level of education among fishers. This community of fishers had lack of awareness about the issues related to the sustainability of resources. Despite species of a high commercial value, Income Net Profit is somewhat not satisfactory, thus, the wealth produced by these fisheries have no real impact on the quality of the fisher's lives, hence, do not ensure sustainable development of this activity.

KEYWORDS

Artisanal Fisheries, Interview, Moroccan Mediterranean, Socioeconomic

INTRODUCTION

Artisanal fisheries tend to be depend upon local environmental and socioeconomic factors (Stergiou et al., 2006; Guyader et al., 2013). In the last 20 years, socioeconomic studies on fisheries have been met with worldwide attention (Witherell et al., 2000; Baticados, 2004). These studies provide basic reference for the necessary management measures increasing thus their overall efficiency. Thus, the interest in socioeconomic data has increased (COM, 2002), but, most artisanal fisheries exist in a data-poor condition, making it difficult to capture the socioeconomic contributions of these fisheries (Gillett & Lightfoot, 2002; Zeller et al., 2006; Andrew et al., 2007).

Artisanal fisheries are defined as any small capital investment fishery, mostly operated by the owner, exploiting areas which can be reached in a few hours from the harbor or beaches where the fishers are based (Colloca et al., 2004). On the other side, the socioeconomic status term refers to measure of interrelated and diverse aspects relating to a combination of social and economic

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factors. These aspects could, in general, be categorized into several categories including, economic, demographic, public services, income, education, occupation and social (Rau & David 1980).

At the national, local, and individual levels in developing countries, artisanal fisheries often have potential to contribute to the development of coastal areas, food security, the preservation of marine ecosystems, and make substantial socioeconomic contributions to society (FAO, 2005; Béné et al., 2007; Garcia et al., 2008). It has been estimated that 90% of fishers worldwide are artisanal fishers (Berkes et al., 2001; FAO, 2004; Béné, 2005). In the Mediterranean, artisanal fleets represent more than 80% of the vessels of the European Mediterranean fleet and provide around 100,000 jobs (C.O.M., 2002; Maynou et al., 2013). The entire Mediterranean artisanal fleet is comprised of 42,000 small boats which use different gears and landing ports, reflecting an important socioeconomic role in the coastal communities (Morales-Nin et al., 2010; Maynou et al., 2013).

In Morocco, artisanal fisheries consider an important source of livelihood, especially in the coastal Moroccan Mediterranean. This sector provided direct employment to about 7,800 people in 1998 (INRH, 1998), and plays an important role in the Morocco economy by contributing to the national income, employment and foreign exchange. In 2010, artisanal fisheries consisted of 15,000 wooden boats spread over 94 sites (Nibani, 2010). It has presented significant development potential, especially, as having species with high commercial values are exporting mainly to foreign markets (M'rabet et al., 2011). In west coast of the Moroccan Mediterranean and North Atlantic (Larache – Jebha region), artisanal fisheries considered one of the most economic activities, being a source of foreign currency, generates various socioeconomic benefits and source of life for more than 4000 fishers, this Community is a young community and almost without any training and has a modest level of education. Their average invested capital per boat remains low, it is about 6,734 USD. They realized a profit net 3,775.51 USD per boat, and between 693.87 USD and 1,040.81 USD for fisher annually (Malouli Idrissi et al., 2007). In Dikky, artisanal fisheries have considerable potential for development, especially since the species which possess a high commercial value are destined mainly for foreign markets. The profits net realized by the fishers of Dikky are positive, it varies between 1,428.57 USD and 2,030.61 USD for fisher and between 1,653.06 USD and 3,979.59 USD for owners of boats. Furthermore, the average capital invested per boat is 19,132.56 USD. These fisheries are carried out by about 40 boats, it is practiced by 200 fishers, originally from the regions near Dikky and having good experience in the fishing sector. Unfortunately, their level of education and maritime training is low (CopeMed II and ArtFiMed, 2009). The fishers of Al Hoceima National Park are exclusively male and are a relatively young community. The fishing activity ensures a direct employment of about 3000 people, including artisanal fishers, most of them have a low level of schooling, while boat owners are in their majority illiterate. fishing activity at of Al Hoceima National Park, is a profitable activity, the total capital invested at the level of the Park is about 28,571,428.57 USD, Artisanal fishers invest about 10% (2,857,142.8 USD) of the total capital invested (Malouli Idrissi, 2004).

Malouli Idrissi et al., (2007) glanced at the socioeconomic conditions for fisher's communities in Belyounech, Fnideq, Martil and Kaa Asras areas as part of Larache – Jebha region. However, no study has yet described in detail the conditions at these sites. Through the last few years, these areas had received attention in the field of infrastructure such as construction auction halls, stores for fisher's equipment and a small ice factory, in addition to, starting to participate on social security net. Yet, there still limited numbers of scientific studies available and there is a lack of reliable data on socioeconomics of artisanal fisheries. Therefore, the aim of this study was to update and have the sound knowledge about socioeconomics of artisanal fishers in Belyounech, Fnideq, Martil and Kaa Asras areas, through the analysis of socioeconomic indicators, for a better understanding of the current socioeconomic situation of fishers communities and providing the decision makers with information concerning the socioeconomic behavior of the fishers, which will enable artisanal fisheries be a better benefited and contribute to human, socioeconomic development, fisheries management and bring sustainable developments.

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