



FISHERIES POLICY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE CITY- REGION FOOD SYSTEMS



La Restinga, El Hierro, Spain. Photo: Jose Pascual-Fernández.

INTRODUCTION

The EU Common Fisheries Policy provides a general regulative framework for European fisheries. The European Commission sets the total allowable catches (fishing quotas) for each member state, which are then allocated by those states to specific fleets. It also allows differentiation in control systems between large-scale, small-scale, and recreational fisheries, leaving it up to each member state to set some of the rules and procedures for monitoring and enforcement. This has resulted in different approaches to the management of small-scale fisheries in different countries, with some countries more likely than others to allow local fisheries to participate in sustainable CRFS. Access to fishing opportunities and quotas has often disadvantaged small-scale fisheries. This fact sheet uses the case of the Canary Islands to illustrate the situation.

CHALLENGES

Tuna fishing for export has a long history in the Canary Islands, dating back to the early 19th century. Local small-scale fishermen in Spain are organised in *cofradías* (fishermen associations) to control the first sale of the catch and to regulate a variety of issues related to fishing, such as proposals to regulate fishing gear in order to achieve sustainable use of resources. In some Canary Islands, *cofradías* also manage the marketing of the catches. They compete for resources with both large-scale and recreational fishermen and face a number of policies that disadvantage them:

Small-scale fleets in the Canary Islands have received only a tiny share of the fishing quotas for Atlantic Bluefin and Big Eye tuna, despite the fact that these species have been caught in the archipelago in the past, the fishery is of socio-economic importance and the fishing technique using angling has a favourable environmental balance. Atlantic Bluefin and Big Eye Tuna are two very high-value species on which Tenerife fishermen traditionally make a living and which add considerable value to the local economy.



Photo: Jose Pascual-Fernández

Large-scale fleets have traditionally been able to lobby for favourable conditions; subsidies and advantageous fishing quotas increase their profitability. In addition, the high fishing capacity of industrial tuna fleets in the open sea using fish aggregating devices (FADs) and unsustainable fishing gear such as large purse seine nets with a high proportion of small catches can affect tuna stocks, impacting the viability of artisanal fleets that depend on these resources.

Competition from industrial fleets, imports, illegal products and new consumer trends pose major market challenges for small-scale fisheries. Developing strategies to improve the value and market position of fishery products from artisanal fisheries is crucial to ensure the long-term viability of artisanal fisheries. It is necessary to differentiate the local product from those of industrial fleets or imports from other parts of the world and to take advantage of new commercial opportunities, such as alliances with the restaurant sector or new customer segments interested in sustainable city-regional food systems. Strong organisations are needed to develop new marketing strategies.

EXAMPLE OF CHALLENGE

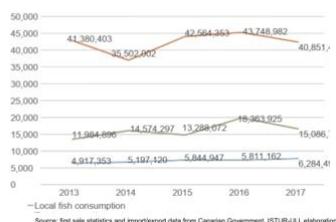
The World Health Organisation recommends a daily intake of 500 mg of ω -3 fatty acids which can be obtained mainly from certain organisms of aquatic origin. While in Spain citizens aged 65 and over consumed on average almost 19 kilos of fresh fish per capita in 2020, the figure for younger people under 35 was just four kilos. Notwithstanding the traditional attachment to the sea, fresh fish consumption in the Canary Islands is only half the Spanish average. Furthermore, the overweight/obesity rate among school-age children in the Canary Islands is over 44%, one of the highest in Spain. Meanwhile, 80-90% of tuna catches (six species) in Tenerife are exported raw (6-9000 tons a year), while thousands of tons of frozen tuna loins are imported. The consumption of frozen and fresh fish in the Canary Islands can be estimated at over 40,000 tons a year. Between 9 and 17% of that amount is from local sources (estimated at around 5,500 tons). At the same time, almost three times the local consumption is exported (more than 15,000 tons). Better use of local seafood resources in the Canarian markets is strongly needed.

EMERGING INNOVATION

A government policy focused on strengthening fisheries organisations would enable them to develop the necessary capacity to take advantage of new processing and marketing opportunities in response to new trends among local consumers.

These measures should first include the development of processing facilities on each island to transform raw fish into cuts that are in demand locally and to preserve a large proportion of these cuts through freezing. The products of artisanal fisheries must be clearly distinguishable from those of the large fleets, from other world markets and from illegal products through publicly controlled labelling. Information campaigns and education in schools and universities can be used to promote local fish consumption. The pilot project by Islatuna, the University of La Laguna and other FoodE and local stakeholders and partners in the FoodE project has shown that projects involving different actors to link local producers with local consumers can improve the profitability of the sector and the sustainability of small-scale fisheries. Taken together, these measures would add value to local seafood catches, increase the number and quality of jobs related to local seafood processing and distribution in the archipelago, and help restore local cultural ties with local marine resources.

Consumption of seafood (fresh, frozen) in the Canary Islands 2013-2017 (tons)



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish an appropriate quota allocation for the main tuna species for the artisanal fleet of the Canary Islands, taking into account historical catch levels and socio-economic importance, in order to promote the viability of the artisanal fleet in the Canary Islands.
2. Improve the capacity of local fisheries organisations for collective action and marketing opportunities, including the establishment of processing facilities on each island.
3. Establish a legal framework that reflects the reality of artisanal fisheries.
4. Promote artisanal fisheries to foster food security, secure employment and livelihoods in coastal areas and contribute to the conservation of local maritime heritage and the protection of the marine environment.
5. Reduce fish imports to measurably reduce the carbon footprint of the food supply in the Canary Islands.
6. Involve public administrations in developing appropriate policies and legislation. Public institutions should invest in human capital and collective action in the fisheries sector to effectively manage this change.