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Socioeconomic performance of fisheries in the "Stretto" Coast FLAG in Southern Italy

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Abstract

The importance of fisheries and their central role in creating strong relationships in the territories of some coastal communities has generated a revision process of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) with the inclusion of Fishery Local Action Groups in the definition of bottom-up local development strategies that involve the participation and planning capacity of fisheries communities. Nowadays, in some EU areas, there is a lack of information on fishermen activities from a technical-economic point of view, with negative consequences in fishery planning at the local level. The present study provides an analysis of the economic performance of the vessels operating in the area of the "Stretto" Coast FLAG in Southern Italy. The information on costs and revenues have been gathered in 2015 through a technical-economic survey on a sample of 34 fishing vessels representing 24.11% of the total number of vessels active in the area. The direct survey aims at quantifying specific economic indicators in order to link the data on fishing effort with those on the profitability of enterprises, differentiated into 3 classes of Gross Tonnage (GT), for an assessment of the technical and socio-economic results of fisheries in the area.

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1. Introduction

The fisheries sector in Calabria shows particular issues and aspects related to environmental and socio-economic differences of the various maritime sectors. In general, underdeveloped conditions are known to characterize the economy of Calabria from the rest of Italy. The causes of this situation can be traced back to some determinants, going from the insufficient organizational level in various sectors to the lack of infrastructure and to difficult environmental conditions. On the other hand, the complexity of the fisheries sector is due to the interdependence among biological, technological (vessels, gears and equipments) and economic and production factors (families, cooperatives, companies, management problems, etc.) (Marcianò, Gulisano, & Strano, 2011).

Notwithstanding the complexity characterizing this sector, it is also true that the small-scale fisheries could represent an important sustainable resource for coastal areas, even if it is necessary to tackle the several issues and problems concerning the fishing activity (Cambiè, Ouréns, Vidal, Carabel, & Freire, 2012). Indeed, some of the municipalities of the Calabrian territory are characterized by a high level of fish production and moreover, the fisheries sector is strongly and positively linked to the other sectors important for local economy. The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) Regulation 1198/2006 (EC, 2006), through the application of Axis 4 provides for a wide range of actions to help fisheries communities through the implementation of local strategies for the sustainable development of fisheries areas. Nowadays, the lack of adequate and proper information at a local level about the socio-economic aspects of fisheries evolves into a vulnerability for policy planning activities (Lam, Sumaila, Dyck, Pauly, & Watson, 2011).

The economic assessment by adopting indicators measuring performance of fisheries allows local governance to identify the most proper development strategy and, therefore, the best management plan (Cambiè, Ouréns, Vidal, Carabel, & Freire, 2012). In particular, costs and incomes are important variables in determining fishing behavior (Gordon, 2010).

In this context, the present study assesses the main economic results of the fisheries of the "Stretto" Coast FLAG in South Italy (Marcianò, Romeo, & Cozzupoli, 2015). The methodological approach has been subdivided into three phases: in the first one, a statistic analysis has examined both the socio-economic situation of the interviewees and the techno-structural characteristics of the vessels. Later, the sample has been segmented on the basis of Gross Tonnage (GT) into three classes (0-4; 5-10; >10). The budget analysis has been carried out and the obtained average values have allowed to describe the costs and incomes for each group, with a distinction between variable cost and fixed cost and the identification of various indicators, in order to assess the level of economic performance. The last phase examines the perceptions by fishermen of their needs and exigencies in order to improve the efficiency and profitability of their activities. The study is structured in the following way: Section 2 describes the collected data and the used methodology, section 3 shows the obtained results and the last section deals with conclusions.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data collection

A techno-economic survey was conducted during the period July-August 2015 about fishing vessels operating in Calabria, in the "Stretto" Coast FLAG area, located in the Tyrrhenian coast of the province of Reggio Calabria, including the landing points of Villa San Giovanni, Scilla, Bagnara Calabra, Palmi and Gioia Tauro. The vessel owner or members of the crew were interviewed face-to-face through a questionnaire properly prepared for the retrieval and the subsequent processing of the *income statement* of each vessel (Baldari, 2006). The questionnaire is structured in three parts. The first one deals with the interviewee's basic information (age, marital status, education level, the year and reason for the beginning of activity, legal form of enterprise, fishing category, authorized fishing systems in license, the most adopted fishing system, number of crew members). This part includes the characteristics of the vessel (Gross Tonnage, Engine Power, auxiliary deck equipment, on-board electronic instrumentation, gears used for fishing). The second part refers to the *income statement* related to the costs, earnings and fishing days in order to quantify specific economic indicators (Baldari, 2006). The last part includes an analysis of the exigencies of the fishermen. Data were collected from a random sample of 34 fishing vessels representing