



Fishery self-governance in fishing communities of South Korea



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ABSTRACT

In order to sustainably develop the Korean fisheries sector for the benefit of fishermen and the environment, fishing communities must play a significant role via a self-governance system of resource management under supervision of the Korean government. Government intervention in coastal fisheries of Korea thus far has shown multiple negative aspects including lack of confidence on the part of fishermen, and voluntary restructuring plans in coastal fisheries are needed. The number of communities participating in a self-governance system in Korean coastal fisheries increased dramatically in its first decade, to 16 times that at its introduction.

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1. Introduction

Many countries world-wide employ self-governance in fisheries. A fishery self-governance system occurs within the context of legal, political, economic, and cultural institutions [1]. Management costs are shown to decline in effectively co-managed fisheries [2]. Townsend and Shotton [3] reported a cost reduction effect of co-management in a study of the New Zealand scallop industry. New Zealand was among the first nations to recognize the value of fishery self-governance [4]. In Canada, self-governance is commonly referred to as co-management. The FAO [1] has cited multiple cases from Canada that demonstrate the diversity of self-governance that operates there. A Self-governance system is also employed in Australian fisheries, with the total allowable catch system in Queensland being a good example of successful implementation. In Europe, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have traditionally had voluntary harvest criteria for capture of herring stocks [1]. In Asia, the large number of small scale fisheries, historic conflicts, and high level of seafood consumption has made monitoring a self-governance system more difficult. In Japan the concept of self-governance involves co-operation of government and the local fishery cooperative association [5–7].

In Korea, fishery management under government supervision has shown multiple negative aspects such as lack confidence in the government on the part of fishermen, weakening of ownership, overfishing, and confusion about the fishery regulations. Limited human and financial resources hamper effective government

response to such issues [8]. Consequently, the Korean government has introduced a self-governance program in which fishermen, bolstered by a sense of ownership along with government support, voluntarily make decisions involving management and use of resources to create sustainable fishing.

The Korean program of fishery self-governance has been in place for 10 years. Extensive government support has made dramatic development possible; nevertheless, a specific review of the effect of relevant policies has yet to be made. To ensure sustainable growth and development of the fishery it is important to assess the current state of fishery self-governance, identify problems and challenges, and suggest directions for the future. This paper will introduce and describe the fishing village self-governance system in South Korea, identify major issues and challenges related to its implementation, and suggest policies to foster improvement.

Since fishing villages are considered as the smallest major unit for conducting the self-governance system in South Korea, in the first part of the paper the history and present condition of fishing villages is explained. The structure of fisheries self-governance in Korean fisheries is introduced and main issues in conducting this system at both fisherman and government levels are explained. In the end for further development of this system, multiple policies were introduced.

2. Fishing villages in South Korea

After Korean liberation at the end of World War II, with the founding of the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (NACF), cooperatives of primary industries such as agriculture and fisheries began systematically working to improve the economic and social

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status of small-scale individual producers across the country [9]. On January 19, 1962, the Standing Committee of the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction, then the national legislative body, passed the Fisheries Cooperative Act amendment. The Fisheries Cooperative Act Enforcement Ordinance was promulgated by Presidential Decree No.619 on March 31, 1962 [9]. The draft legislation passed by the National Assembly then stated, “The Joseon Fisheries Ordinance Article 6, an old provision effective based on Constitution Article 100 is no longer relevant to the current state of affairs, so new legislation needs to be established to promote fishermen cooperatives and fish production, to improve their social and economic status, and to strengthen fishery productivity.” The Fisheries Cooperatives Act comprised General Provisions, Fishermen’s Cooperatives, Fishermen’s Production Cooperatives, National Fishery Cooperatives, Accounting Provisions, Supervision, Penal Provisions, and Supplemental Provisions [9].

The General Provisions divided fishery cooperatives into fishermen’s cooperatives, fishermen’s production cooperatives, and the National Fisheries cooperatives. The fishermen’s cooperatives were further divided into regional fishery cooperatives and fishery cooperatives by fishing type. Each regional fishery cooperative was allowed to have affiliated fishing villages cooperatives, and ‘only persons who run a fishing business or are engaged in the businesses were accepted as members, based on a one person per household principle. The Fishery Cooperative Act went into effect on 1 April 1962, and marked the creation of the Korea National Federation of Fishery Cooperatives.

Fishery self-governance is a management regime to create a sustainable fishing environment via voluntary responsible management within the context of existing relevant institutions and laws. Basically, fishery self-governance is driven by voluntary management communities with the goal of increasing the income of fishermen and building sustainable fisheries. The system empowers fishermen to conduct fishing grounds management, resource management, and production management autonomously, within the context of existing legislation, for effective preservation and use of fishery resources and promotion of a sense of ownership and independence. Fishermen are directly involved as participants or management, unlike state-led compulsory, non-voluntary fishing management. In this sense, fishery self-governance in Korea is similar to Japan’s Fishery Resource Management in practice and to the western co-management systems, in terms of regulation and management programs [10].

Fishery self-governance involves the creation of a fishing management regime through the voluntary efforts of fishermen with the aim of increasing income and boosting the economy of fishing villages by improving productivity and can serve as an alternative for addressing difficulties within and outside of the fishing industry. In community-based fishery management, the fishing community is responsible for its own management and must identify problem areas and adjust their fishing activities accordingly. For this, policies for fishery self-governance can be part of a socio-economic fishing village movement, led by fishermen.

Fishery self-governance varies widely among regions, ranging from community-level management to inter-region. In practical terms, the system is complex, and active participation of fishermen as management is required [11]. Collaboration among fishermen, management, and local and central governments is a prerequisite to prevent fishery self-governance from being another example of institutional failure [12]. Disputes between communities, industries, or regions in community-based fishery management are addressed by meetings of involved parties to voluntarily resolve problems through consultation and discussion. A fishing village guidance officer is appointed by the fisheries office for each participating community to provide technical guidance and advice. Private consultants with diverse experience in the fishing industry provide one to one customized education to newly participating communities and those



Fig. 1. Location of fishing villages in South Korea. ((1) Seoul, (2) Busan, (3) Daegu, (4) Incheon, (5) Gwangyog, (6) Daejeon, (7) Ulsan, (8) Gyeonggi, (9) Gangwon-Do, (10) Chungcheong-Buk, (11) Chungcheong-Nam, (12) Jeolla-Buk, (13) Jeolla-Nam, (14) Gyeongsang-Buk, (15) Gyeongsang-Nam, (16) Jeju).

showing poor progress. To achieve balanced development between rural and urban communities, the government has divided fishing communities into 160 areas and provides support for their production facilities and income stability [13].

The coastal fishery of Korea comprises a diversity of technologies, and an individual fisherman usually engages in multiple business types, making it difficult to develop a business type-based self-governance organization [14,15]. Fig. 1 shows the main provinces/cities of South Korea and the fishing villages located in these areas, mainly in the south. In the fishing village community, individual members are subject of the rules of the community. Jeolla-Nam-Do and Gyeongsang-Buk-Do provinces contain the highest number of fishing villages (Fig. 1).

Traditionally, fishing villages have been built on a social relationship based on blood ties and regionalism of people that share economic interests, i.e. coastal fishing grounds. Accordingly, strong solidarity centered in villages and an attitude towards excluding outsiders has developed, a favorable factor for the management of commonly held resources at a community level.

3. Fishery self-governance in South Korea

In Korea, fishing villages unique in socio-cultural characteristics are common along the coasts, and the village cooperatives are controlled by modern production associations called regional cooperatives. These regional community organizations may serve as a base for the formation of the self-governance organization. It is more effective to have local communities implement self-governance for their fishing grounds. Generally, local communities can better select objectives, targets, and means of effective management. They have advantage of relatively easy creation of the group structure and control of members, maximizing effective management and enabling consideration of regional characteristics of fisheries.

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