



Research Brief: 2013-01

Giving European Small-Scale Fisheries a Place: Research Priorities and Opportunities

Why small-scale fisheries are important

Small-scale fisheries (SSF) in Europe are important for the employment and welfare they provide, as well as for suggesting a future in which environmental sustainability, food sovereignty and community wellbeing stand centre stage. Small-scale fisheries (SSF) are characterized by a high level of diversity and represent different values and ways of life that current assessments and management measures often fail to capture or address. A number of SSF organisations and networks have highlighted the important ecological, economic, social, and cultural contribution and value of sustainable (i.e. low-impact) SSFⁱ. Recently, research has been able to provide evidence illustrating the importance of SSF for the welfare of coastal communities in Europe. Although acting as a buffer against unemployment during economic recession, SSF are not immune to increasing pressures, resulted, for instance, from reduced access to resources,ⁱⁱ and also globalization. Because large-scale fisheries sector dominates the commodity market, which often determines landings and first sale prices, the contribution of quality value-added SSF products can be lost. Although 'small' when considered at a regional or national scale, the benefits of SSF in coastal communities can be big.

European fisheries policies: impacts and opportunities for SSF

Similar to those in other parts of the world, SSF in Europe face many challenges, like market competition, urban and tourism development, increasing regulation and reduced access to fishing opportunities. Despite their numbers, SSF receive relatively little attention in fishery management debates. However, there are new opportunities for SSF that began with the Green Paper Process in 2009 when the European Commission explicitly recognized the needs of small-scale fisheries. The new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), still under negotiation and expected to enter into force in 2014, will introduce specific new measures for SSF.

The CFP provides the opportunity to integrate SSF into European strategies and policies for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, as well as into policies and strategies for social inclusion, food security, and rural development. In the past, the focus of the CFP has mainly been on vessel-based fish catching activities with relatively little recognition regarding community and small-scale fisheries, especially non-vessel based activities (e.g. fishing on foot, mostly performed by women, and upstream and downstream activities). A key distinction was made by the Parliament in the CFP reform process between small-scale and large-scale or industrial fishing, outlining the benefits of 'small' and the need to recognise their social, environmental and economic contribution. Access is no longer to be based solely on criterion of historical catches but rather based on social and environmental criteria. In other words, those who fish in a socially and environmentally sustainable way should be rewarded and given priority access.

WHAT SSF LOOKS LIKE IN EUROPE TODAY

Despite comparatively low volume of landings the social and ecological sustainability of SSF and the high level of employment in this sector are often overlooked. Knowledge gaps and lack of systematic assessment of SSF throughout Europe still persist. However, some key characteristics of SSF compared to large-scale fisheries are identified by recent research:ⁱⁱⁱ

- Higher levels of employment - it is estimated that over 80% of the EU fleet (approx. 85,000 vessels) belong to SSF
- Smaller vessels (average length 5-7m)
- Shorter fishing trips and more reliant on the coastal zone
- Mostly use passive gears (although not exclusively), such as fixed and drift nets, traps, hook and line and multi-purpose fishing approaches with lower extraction rates
- Higher total capital investment, turnover and costs, lower fuel consumption and less dependent on subsidies
- Involvement in fisheries management is variable and conservation and access measures are largely local in origin.

With a high level of dependence on fishing, declining catches and access to resources are resulting in reduced income for the sector, impacting the wellbeing and viability of small-scale fishing households and communities.



Too BIG To
IGNORE

Global Partnership for Small-Scale Fisheries Research

The role of research in SSF

In a recent vote on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), the Parliament recognised the importance of SSF for the sustainability of local coastal communities, particularly concerning women and youth. According to the European Commission^{iv} the new EMFF fund aims to:

- Help fishers in the transition to sustainable fishing
- Support coastal communities in diversifying their economies
- Finance projects that create new jobs and improve quality of life along European coasts
- Make it easier to access financing.

However, there still remains little room for SSF to manoeuvre, with issues of access rights posing a key challenge. Reform will require key stakeholders in SSF to push governments at all levels, and researchers too, to address how fishing communities are going to adapt to the new changes. What are the (potential and actual) social, ecological and economic impacts of the new CFP and how will the different actors in SSF communities experience these? Unlike their large-scale counterparts, no systematic data collection and information system exists to capture key details about SSF. There have been repeated calls for *'stocktaking of existing information and data on SSF'* and *'rigorous study of characteristics of SSF'*^v. The recent EMFF vote by the European Parliament to greatly increase funding allocated for fisheries research in general highlighted the relevance of data collection in fisheries. An information system focusing on SSF should help contribute to and improve much needed and more systematic data gathering and research (see text box).

The 'Too Big to Ignore' (TBTI) is a global research partnership that aims at elevating the profile of SSF around the world. One of TBTI's main initiatives is the development of an information system for small-scale fisheries (ISSF) that will help enhance our understanding by capturing and sharing information about SSF from around the globe at different levels of detail. Within TBTI, research is conducted to address issues related to economic viability, livelihoods and wellbeing, conservation and stewardship, access and rights, and SSF governance. In addition to affecting policies related to SSF and contributing to building local governance and research capacity, TBTI research will also be used as a basis to develop a transdisciplinary fisheries training programme.

SSF DEFINITION IN EU CONTEXT

After much debate, the definition of 'small-scale' and 'coastal fishing' remains unchanged and only for the purposes of the EMFF, they are defined as fishing carried out in vessels with overall length 12m or less, not using towed gear.

Challenge of defining SSF

A key aspect affecting management of SSF is the high level of heterogeneity within the sector, and across regions and countries. There is no universally accepted definition of SSF. Small is not just about size - the meanings of 'small-scale' are diverse and vary from region to region within the EU. *Ecological impact, social and economic importance* are key criteria outlined in Article 16 of the CFP for the provision of fishing opportunities. This has strong relevance for SSF and provides an opportunity for fisheries that don't fit the 'small' criteria.



"The future of fishing, including inshore, is mainly determined by negotiations between unions of the industry and NGOs. Communities do not play a role (in decision-making). We need examples of communities supporting fisheries that are successful and inspiring."

– SSF leader, Netherlands, August 2014.

Research priorities and opportunities for SSF

This section suggests some research priorities to address the needs of SSF and how this sector can best implement the CFP to create positive change. They are drawn from discussions at a recent policy day on SSF that took place at the MARE Conference (June 2013) in Amsterdam^v.

1. Improving our knowledge of SSF

Issues: Incomplete data and a lack of systematic profiling, or data collection framework for SSF.

Opportunities: The potential for the EMFF to support data collection and assessment of SSF as well as the establishment of partnerships between scientists and fishers.

Research needs:

- In-depth research and systematic profiling of the key characteristics of SSF.
- Explore new forms of knowledge and the role of transdisciplinary research, which emphasizes the importance of collaborative, participatory approaches and co-production of knowledge in SSF.
- Recognizing that a diversity of skills is needed to overcome new challenges (e.g. marketing, political engagement, nature conservation, media, technology and innovation), research could help identify the best cases of innovation and draw general lessons for sharing and exchange.

2. Creating new market opportunities for SSF

Issues: The value-chain in SSF is poorly understood, with value and quality of SSF often lost in larger commodity markets where they have little influence in.

Opportunities: Development of SSF labels are emphasized in the CFP and through the EMFF, SSF are able to access funds for direct marketing.

Research needs:

- Assess the development of new market niches – for example, systematic comparison of cases and their success.
- Enhance market opportunities – for example, market chain analysis and identifying training needs.
- Examine certification and sustainability schemes, through analysis of current and previous labelling and marketing experiences in SSF such as community supported fisheries (CSFs)^{vi} and knowledge exchanges to learn how certification schemes are being carried out elsewhere and to what end.

3. Enhancing economic viability and resilience – a focus on youth and women

Issues: Youth are challenged by high cost of access and perceived lack of future in fisheries. Women are still not properly included in the statistics of the sector^{vii} despite their high contribution to the local economy and communities.

Opportunities: The EMFF offers support for young entrants and recognises the importance of the role that women and spouses of self-employed fishers play in SSF communities.

Research needs:

- Understand the narratives of youth and generational transition – the ability to track changes in attitudes and outcomes. What narrative can be added to the image of SSF to improve its attractiveness for the youth, and how to do this?
- Explore more innovative ways to support training for a diversity of skills and opportunities linked to fisheries and grounded in local communities are needed, for example, 'mentoring' or apprenticeship programs to encourage intergenerational transfer of knowledge.
- Assess the gendered contribution of work in SSF in harvest and post-harvest activities as well as other tasks arising from the diversification of fishing activities.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES FOR SSF

- Improving knowledge
- Creating new market opportunities
- Enhancing economic viability
- Providing access to appropriate fishing rights
- Developing access to decision-making

"Research is needed to investigate and describe the economic, ecological and social benefits (of SSF)...training and support to organise exchange trips and initiate new ideas and 'hands on' action for initiatives in our region."

– SSF Fisher at the MARE Policy Day 2014, discussing the needs of SSF in Europe



4. Providing access to appropriate fishing rights and opportunities

Issues: The wellbeing of the SSF sector has been impacted by the unintended consequences of conventional management measures targeted at the large-scale sector. The challenge is how to maintain the flexibility of SSF activities that facilitate the sector's adaptation to both short- and long-term change.

Opportunities: Fair allocation of access to fishing opportunities is outlined in the new CFP based on a broader set of social, economic and environmental criteria as well as on-going debate about differentiated management regimes in policy and research.

Research needs:

- Explore current and new approaches to governance/management, such as area-based or differentiated management regimes, and how they can support the flexibility and adaptation of the SSF sector.
- Investigate ways to implement the new CFP for the benefit SSF - What is required in practice and how do Member States define the criteria for allocation of fishing opportunities?
- Develop more holistic approaches to integrate social aspects and the actual and potential social and cultural contributions of SSF in the management framework, going beyond economic benefits and indicators.

5. Leadership from the bottom-up: developing access to decision-making

Issues: Failure to participate in decision-making at EU-level has a lot to do with access and representation in formal, national and/or regional organisations.

Opportunities: A Regional Advisory Council (RAC) for SSF (or at least a more devolved system within the RACs) was proposed in the new CFP. Increasingly, there are examples of SSF (re)connecting with local networks and wider society for integrated solutions, such as CSFs. Alternative institutions in support of 'low-impact' fisheries are also developing but the question of how to build and support non-formal organisations also needs consideration.

Research needs:

- Understand the role, contribution and importance of both formal and informal networks and collaborative partnerships within SSF and between SSF and other actors and how they contribute to fisheries governance.
- Examine enabling and constraining factors for women in decision-making and/or leadership roles^{viii}.
- Review national experiences in terms of collective action and organisations and how to strengthen them, including capacity development.

Enhancing awareness and promoting the advancement of knowledge on the importance of SSF for employment, welfare and their potential for environmental sustainability, food sovereignty and community wellbeing is essential for securing the future of SSF in Europe.



**Too BIG To
IGNORE**

Global Partnership for Small-Scale Fisheries Research

How to cite: Britton, E., Pascual-Fernandez, J., Bavinck, M., and Chuenpagdee, R (2013) Giving Small-Scale Fisheries a Place: Research Priorities and Opportunities. Too Big to Ignore Research Briefing No.01/2013; toobigtoignore.net.

SYNERGIES BETWEEN CFP AND SSF GUIDELINES

Considerations of SSF in the new CFP align with the FAO International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable SSF^{ix} that are currently under negotiation, in terms of intention, principles and implementation. For example, the need for more holistic, inclusive and collaborative approaches that involve underrepresented groups such as those present in SSF. Synergies between these two initiatives give impetus to efforts in SSF, including research, to help secure the future of SSF in Europe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: We thank all the participants of the MARE policy day for their ideas and thoughts about the future of SSF in Europe.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT: Ryan Murphy

PHOTO CREDITS: Front page, Jose Pascual-Fernandez, Easley Britton; pages 2-3, Jose Pascual-Fernandez

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ See, for example: <http://medartnet.org>; <http://toobigtoignore.net>

ⁱⁱ Britton E. and Coulthard S. 2013. Assessing the social wellbeing of Northern Ireland's fishing society. Marine Policy Vol. 37, pp.28-36; Report: Employment on Board 2013, available at: <http://goo.gl/ZuHRZO>

ⁱⁱⁱ Guyader et al. 2013. Small scale fisheries in Europe: A comparative analysis based on a selection of case studies. Fisheries Research 140, pp.1-13; MacFadyen et al. 2011. Characteristics of small-scale coastal fisheries in Europe. European Parliament

^{iv} European Commission on the EMFF, available at: <http://goo.gl/FjoPyr>

^v GFCM symposium 2013; Ferreira J. 2012. Report on small-scale coastal fishing, artisanal fishing and the reform of the common fisheries policy. European Parliament

^{vi} The full summary report of the Policy Day is available for download at:

<http://toobigtoignore.net/?p=1157>

^{vii} see: <http://www.offthehookcsf.ca/> and <http://www.catchbox.coop/>

^{viii} Frangoudes K. 2011. Women's Contribution in Small-scale Fisheries in the European Union. In: World Small-Scale Fisheries Contemporary Visions, pp. 101-116

^{ix} International Guidelines on Securing Sustainable SSF, available at:

<http://www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/guidelines>

^x EU report on Women in Fisheries 2013, available at:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet/fil/es/documents/Women-in-fisheries-EN.pdf>