

Economic Challenges and Livelihood Resilience in the Baltic Fisheries Sector

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Abstract : The European fisheries sector has long been a dynamic and adaptive cornerstone of coastal livelihoods. However, environmental changes and the evolving Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) pose significant challenges for the fishing community. This study examines the perspectives of Polish Baltic fishermen regarding the current landscape of their profession and market dynamics. Using a Likert scale questionnaire with 129 respondents from 17 coastal harbors and in-depth interviews with 28 participants. Key issues include livelihood security, government responsiveness, and adaptation strategies, revealing widespread dissatisfaction and significant disparities across regions, unit sizes, and employment statuses. The Kruskal-Wallis test further analyzed these responses, exploring variations based on port location, employment status, and vessel size among respondents. Communities like Łeba and Wolin Island reported the highest dissatisfaction with CFP regulations and the lowest resilience. Large-scale fisheries (LSF) in full time employment demonstrate greater resilience due to their ability to adapt to changes in target species and market demands but are undercut by limited quota allocations. While, small-scale fisheries (SSF) in part time employment face greater financial challenges, including high operational costs and limited fishing opportunities leading to increased vulnerability and dissatisfaction. The consistently low resilience scores across all fishing groups highlight that the fisheries sector in Poland is increasingly hostile to its fishermen. With a likely unsustainable future within this sector, many fishermen are likely to abandon the profession in pursuit of better economic opportunities. Future research should assess if similar trends exist in other fishing communities globally to inform policies that balance sustainability and economic resilience.

Keywords : small-scale fisheries, large-scale fisheries, common fisheries policy, Ecological knowledge, stakeholder participation, sustainable livelihoods

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