

Role of Scientific Information in Decision Making for Sustainable Marine Resources

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Abstract

This study examines scientific information use and influence in managing the shrimp and groundfish resources in the Brazil-Guianas Continental Shelf. The study will use surveys and content analysis to identify information pathways among various stakeholders. The opportunities for and barriers to effective and efficient use of scientific information will be described.



Introduction



Fig. 1 The Brazil-Guianas Continental Shelf.

- The Shelf extends along the north-east coast of South America (Fig.1).
- Scientific information on the status of the shrimp and groundfish resources is produced by national fisheries agencies in association with fisheries advisory bodies:
 - FAO (UN-Food and Agricultural Organization)
 - CRFM (Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism)
- This information is largely available as grey literature (reports are not controlled by commercial publishers).
- Continuing declines in the fisheries affect a wide range of stakeholders.
- Information may not be used efficiently by managers and policy makers.

Methods

This study is being conducted under the project 'Environmental Information: Influence on Decision Making' (B. MacDonald & P. Wells, co-investigators).

The study runs from May – August 2009 and will use:

Content analysis

To examine available grey literature for:

- scientific information
- management advice
- requests for information
- mechanisms for communicating information

Surveys

To study sample populations drawn from Trinidad and Tobago and from Venezuela.

About 40 participants will be selected from the five major stakeholder groups in the fishery (Fig. 2):

- Scientists
- Managers
- Policy makers
- Fishing Industry
- Fisheries Advisory Bodies

Expected Outcomes



Improved understanding of:

- pathways of information sharing among the five main stakeholder groups.
- opportunities and barriers for using scientific information for fisheries resource management.
- Is the information useful; too much, too little information; production too late, too early?
- contrasts in information pathways in Trinidad and Tobago and in Venezuela.
- Formulation of recommendations for increasing the effective use and influence of scientific information in the fisheries policy process.

Relevance to APLA

- This project can provide insights on the role that libraries can play in influencing fisheries policy through their methods of information dissemination.
- The results can be relevant to both large and small libraries in any geographic or subject context.
- The study can also demonstrate a library's importance to the community, in terms of ensuring sustainability of natural resources.
- The new knowledge can assist library managers in developing strategies to facilitate efficient communication of scientific information to policy makers.

Guiding Questions

How is information from fisheries agencies used by decision makers?

Does this information result in better resource management decisions?

How is scientific information communicated in public policy decision-making?

- What information do fisheries managers need?
- What questions are being asked of scientists by fisheries managers?
- What information has been produced by scientists?
- How is management advice conveyed to policy makers?

What are the information pathways in policy-making for local fisheries?

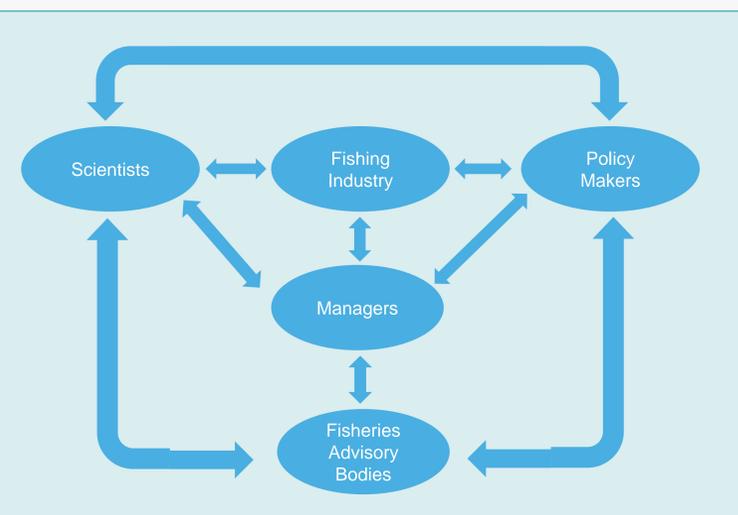


Fig. 2 Hypothetical flow of information among stakeholder groups

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