



Aim

To develop and test a methodology and template for consideration of social and economic impacts in the appraisal of policy options for decision-making for fisheries management study.

Introduction and methodology

The introduction of new policies or management measures requires an understanding of the potential environmental, economic and social consequences of introducing the proposals, so that the full range of potential effects can be considered in decision-making. This project sought to formalise the processes in the Fisheries Management team using best practice.

A review of existing socio-economic impact assessments for fisheries was undertaken, to identify strengths, weaknesses and good practice approaches. Guidance on undertaking socio-economic impact assessments, and a template for reporting the outcomes, were developed. They were designed to be flexible so that they can be adjusted to different types of policy or management measures under consideration, different scales of impact, and be applied in a proportionate manner in contexts relevant to MMO decisions. The applicability of the guidance was confirmed through a hypothetical case study using real data.

Results

The main aspects of the new guidance for socio-economic impact assessment for fisheries management measures, are:

- Profits - Identification of impacts on the fishing industry, using established approaches to consider potential impacts on profits, using landings data and HM Treasury Green Book guidance.
- Displacement - Consideration of the potential for displacement of fishing effort, and its effects on fish stocks, the environment (habitats and species), on fleet segments, on people and communities. The potential for displacement should at least be recognised, and potentially quantified.
- Other potential impacts on businesses - Consideration and quantification.
- Public sector costs - for example for monitoring and compliance activities.
- Wider economic impacts - beyond impacts on businesses immediately affected in relation to impacts on employment, and impacts on upstream and downstream supply chains.
- Distribution of economic impacts - can be explored in relation to fleet segment and location. Locations on land where impacts might be felt can be assessed using information on home port of vessels and port of landing of the catches.
- Social impacts - can arise as a result of economic impacts (e.g. through changes in employment which may affect individual wellbeing, careers, income and skills, and community sustainability more widely), as well as independently from the economic impacts (e.g. on social values and wellbeing outcomes), for example related to health and safety issues, impact on relationships and trust, uncertainty and identity.



Conclusions and recommendations

This study has reviewed a range of SEIAs relevant to fisheries and developed a template and guidance for undertaking social and economic impact assessments for fisheries. The template and guidance expand the consideration of potential impacts beyond the direct impacts on fishing businesses, to also include wider economic impacts on supply chains, and to consider the effect of the impacts on communities by linking to social impacts and impacts on social values.

The hypothetical case study confirmed that the guidance is workable using available fisheries data and can be proportionately applied. Data on catches affected and economic impacts are more readily available than data relating to employment and social aspects.

Recommendations of the project are:

- MMO should broaden the focus of its impact assessments for fisheries issues beyond the impacts on fishing businesses, to also consider wider economic impacts (e.g. on upstream and downstream supply chains, on employment), social impacts (e.g. on individuals, households and communities, and on social values and wellbeing outcomes), and where and by whom these impacts might be felt.
- Spatial resolution of fisheries data is important for assessing potential impacts related to specific areas, and opportunities for improving the resolution and availability of data for over-12m and under-12m vessels should be pursued.
- Additional data collection and research should be undertaken to support the understanding of social values related to fisheries, and values connected to specific locations. This would provide additional context and understanding of the social baseline for future assessments.
- Engagement with affected individuals and communities should be undertaken for proposed management measures that are anticipated to have more substantial impacts. This should build on an understanding of the involvement that these individuals have had in the discussion of potential management measures. Insights from the engagement can help identify social values, potential social impacts, and the cultural value of specific fisheries.
- The template and guidance should be used to support the consideration of potential impacts from decisions that may impact on fisheries.

MMO comments

The outputs from this project can be used by the fisheries management team to better consider the social and economic considerations of a potential management measure. In addition, the recommendations on where additional data is needed can be investigated to improve and add value to the process.

Further information

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