

Main findings of the report

Impact and implications of COVID-19 for the ocean economy and trade strategy (UNCTAD-DOALOS): Case studies of Barbados, Belize and Costa Rica



INFOPECSA

September 2021



Outline and initial comments

- ▶ The following presentation will summarize the main findings of the report «Impact and implications of COVID-19 for the ocean economy and trade strategy (UNCTAD-DOALOS): Case studies of Barbados, Belize and Costa Rica”.
- ▶ This information is supplemented with recent trade statistics from INFOPECA.



COVID-19 in Barbados, impact on fisheries

- ▶ Main species is flying fish.
- ▶ The pandemic deeply impacted on the economy of Barbados. Tourism was completely halted for months starting in March 2020. Non-essential businesses were closed, resulting in layoffs or pay cuts of employees.
- ▶ Fishing, fish processing and marketing were initially categorized as non-essential businesses, bringing the activity to a halt for over a month.

COVID-19 in Barbados, impact on fisheries

- ▶ However, fishers, especially those undertaking short fishing trip (less than 5 days), needed assurance that landing sites, port, administration services and fish market were open to be able to land and sell their harvest.
- ▶ During the lockdown from 3 to 28 February 2021 the authorities closed fish markets, fish landing sites and sheds, and government run locations that supply or trade fish.
- ▶ They advised that fishing vessels should stay in port during the lockdown period, although the COVID-19 directive does not prevent fishers from taking their boats out to sea.
- ▶ Fishers were advised to carefully examine the circumstances so as to find markets open when back from fishing.
- ▶ Overall, since the beginning of the pandemic, fishing and post-harvest activities were reduced because of the successive lockdowns requiring: Confinement, and restriction on mobility and travels.



Barbados fish exports during COVID-19

- ▶ Total fishery products exports were USD 1.6 million in 2020, a USD 0.2 million increase from 2019, but a drop of USD 0.5 million from the normal export value which is around USD 2 million.
 - ▶ All fishery products go the United States of America, and almost all products are fresh whole yellowfin, which was not impacted by the problems of Barbados' fishers with products going to the domestic market.
- 

COVID-19 in Belize

- ▶ **Main species are Queen conch and lobster, mainly going to the US market.**
- ▶ **Marine fisheries and aquaculture suffered a triple burden as a result of the pandemic.**
- ▶ **Lockdowns halted completely fishing and post-harvest activities.**
- ▶ **Anxiety settled among fishers regarding the risks of COVID-19 to their health and the welfare of their families.**
- ▶ **When fishing resumed, fishers struggled before adapting to the sanitary measures on-board fishing boats.**
- ▶ **The issue was the high costs of fishing supplies, spare parts and repair.**
- ▶ **This was an obstacle because of limited cash flow. Lack of cash flow affected not only fishers but also fish workers and cooperatives because of lack or delayed cashing on export revenues, very low domestic and international demand, low prices and disruption of financial transactions.**

COVID-19 in Belize


- ▶ The pandemic wave coincided with the fishing seasons for spiny lobster (July to February of the following year), and the end of the fishing season for queen conch (October-July of the following year).
- ▶ For the 2020-2021 season, lobster fishing closed on February, instead of 15 February 2020 and opened on 15 June 2020. This change was necessary to comply with the protocols of the OSPESCA regulation.
- ▶ A key impact of the pandemic was the cancellation of the annual lobster festival which attracts tourists and provides a significant earning opportunity for fishers.
- ▶ Although the lobster harvests were generally good, prices were half as compared to 2019, and product was sold in the market at BZ\$ 15 instead of BZ\$ 30 per pound.
- ▶ The cooperative bulk price was BZ\$ 12 per pound, lower than previous years, to compensate for the decrease in the export price from BZ\$ 30 to BZ\$ 20 per pound.
- ▶ The beginning of the pandemic coincided with the end of the 2019-2020 queen conch fishing season, which closed 27 March 2020 as the quota was met.
- ▶ The 2020-21 season was officially launched on 1 October 2020, extending until 30 April 2021, or when the set quota is completed.

Belize exports during COVID-19

- ▶ The export value of fishery products from Belize to the US market were USD 14 million in 2020, a USD 3 million decline from the 2019 level. Two commodities account for all the exports: frozen rock lobster and Queen conch.
- ▶ The most important commodity of exports from Belize to the USA are frozen rock lobster, with a value of USD 8.4 million in 2020, more or less the same as in 2019.
- ▶ Belize exports of Queen conch to the US market were USD 4.7 million in 2020, a substantial decline from the USD 7.3 million recorded in 2019.




COVID-19 in Costa Rica, and fisheries

- ▶ Compared with Barbados and Belize, the fisheries in Costa Rica are more diversified.
 - ▶ Fish harvested in Costa Rica are distributed in the form of whole, fillets or dressed fish, as fresh (iced/chilled), frozen or canned products. It consists mainly of large pelagics (tuna), groundfish, sharks and shrimp.
 - ▶ The pandemic caused the paralysis of the service sector, a motor of the economy which employs 70 per cent of the workforce.
- 



COVID-19 in Costa Rica, and fisheries

- Severely reduced fishing and post-harvest activities because of confinement, and restriction on mobility and travels.
 - Low fish demand both for domestic consumption and export.
 - Closure of fish market and stores.
 - Reduced work force to carry out fishing and processing operations, in particular for vessels and factories that use seasonal labour and migrants.
- 



COVID-19 in Costa Rica, and fisheries

- ▶ Compared with Belize and Barbados, Costa Rica is a far bigger exporter of fishery products.
- ▶ Total exports accounted for USD 109 million in 2020, far below USD 138 million in 2019, and USD 152 million in 2018.
- ▶ US market represents about 60 percent, and neighbouring countries are also important importers of Costa Rica seafood.



INFOPESCA