

The need for recognizing the fishing and processing rights of the small-scale-artisanal shrimp trawling in Barra del Colorado, Costa Rica



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The livelihood and the culture of people in Barra del Colorado, located on the Caribbean shore in north of Costa Rica, is dependent on artisanal shrimp trawling. This fishery, with only two annual harvests, has a strong value chain and provides work for hundreds of women and youth in the community.

In 2013, the Constitutional Court of Costa Rica, through its vote number N°201310540, stopped the government in allowing new extensions to shrimp trawling licenses until adequate technical and scientific studies have been done that can attest to the environmental and social sustainability of shrimp trawling in the country.

In Barra del Colorado, the licenses for small-scale trawling fishers started to expire in 2017 and 2018. The lack of license extension had a strong repercussion for small-scale fisheries (SSF). The request for the 2013 vote was initiated by the national environmental organizations as a way to stop the semi-industrial shrimp trawling. At that time, the government was not aware of the impact the lack of the license extension would cause and how this decision would impact the rights and livelihoods of this community.

Photo: Barra del Colorado shrimp fishing season 2019, Barra del Colorado, Costa Rica, .2019. ©CoopeSoliDar R.L

Location:
Barra del Colorado, Costa Rica

Ecosystem type:
Marine, freshwater

Main gear:
Trawls (small-scale)

Target species:
Shrimp

Vessel type:
Wood and fiber

No. of small-scale fishing vessels:
20

No. of small-scale fishers:
20 trawlers, 300 shrimp peelers

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Justice in context

Types of justice:

- **Distributive**
- **Social**
- **Economic**
- **Market**
- **Infrastructure/wellbeing**
- **Regulatory**
- **Procedural**
- Environmental
- COVID-19 related

The social and environmental impacts of semi-industrial trawling are not the same as in the case of small-scale artisanal trawling fishery. Moreover, the condition of the Caribbean fisheries and the Pacific fisheries cannot be treated in the same way. The SSF have important value chains and they impact gender equity and women's rights.

The issue of traditional fishing rights and tenure rights is fundamental, as well as the issue of traditional knowledge related to the use of marine resources in the area. The fishers from Barra del Colorado have requested a Marine Responsible Fishing area where they can have a voice in the management and conservation of the marine territory. The Marine Responsible Fishing Area of Barra del Colorado has been recognized in May of 2020 and now constitutes the only possibility of recovering the fishers' fishing rights.

Definition of small-scale fisheries (Costa Rican Fishing and Aquaculture Law. 8436)

Artisanal fishing: Fishing activity carried out in an artisanal way by individuals, with the use of a boat, in continental waters or in the coastal area and with an autonomy to fish, up to a maximum of five nautical miles from the coast, carried out for commercial purposes. It includes subsistence and commercial fishing.

Commercial fishing: Fishing carried out to obtain economic benefits. Within it, small-scale fishing is classified as fishing carried out in an artisanal way by individuals, with the use of a boat, in continental waters or in the coastal area, or practiced on board of a boat with an autonomy to fish, up to a maximum of three nautical miles off the Costa Rican territorial sea.

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Dealing with justice

In 2014, the Coastal and Marine Local Council of the Barra del Colorado Refuge, CoopeSoliDar R.L and FAO started a process to strengthen the capacity of the community to organize and advocate for their rights based on the SSF Guidelines. This joint initiative also supports participative research. The overall aim is to force the recognition of the human right in a framework of sustainability and social and environmental resilience. Research licenses have been provided in the previous shrimp-fishing seasons to guarantee fishers' work, support their livelihood and facilitate research.

Civil Society, through CoopeSoliDar R.L, has promoted collective work towards supporting men and women's organizations, provided economic support to facilitate participation in meetings and supported participative studies concerning condition of shrimp population.

After 4 years of collective work, the government has recognized a share governance model for the area, recognized as the Barra del Colorado Responsible Fishing Area. Hopefully, the rights and knowledge of the small-scale fishers in that area will be respected.

A big media campaign, organized by civil society at the national and international level, together with biological studies on the shrimp population, were promoted. Videos depicting the situation of the SSF in this community were produced, showcasing at the national level the conditions of the local small-scale fishers.

For more information visit:

- https://youtu.be/EK1B_dE4eHE
- <https://youtu.be/Wnez-BA6kWo>
- Documental Internacional:
Ocean Grabbing:
https://youtu.be/hLG9-FwUo_s



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