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TITLE: Uruguayan fisheries under an increasingly globalized scenario: Long-term landings and bioeconomic trends

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ABSTRACT:

The systematic dwindling over time of many commercially important fish stocks in developed countries and the increasing demand of international markets provided a window of opportunity for fishery sector development in many developing countries. Science-based assessments of how market forces impact on fisheries trends are particularly limited in developing countries. This study assessed long-term trends (1960?2013) of the Uruguayan industrial fishery sector, including: (i) landings discriminated by species and resource type; (ii) variations in nominal effort and fleet capacity; (iii) bioeconomic patterns for most important species; and (iv) export and import volumes at the Uruguayan seafood market. Results indicate the sector underwent four phases that depict long-term patterns: development, expansion, stabilization-diversification and declining yields and market contraction. The development of the sector was mainly due to the Argentine hake fishery, which was characterized by a sustained increase in landings, nominal effort and fleet capacity during the initial decades, but showed a decreasing trend afterwards. In response, a fishery diversification policy based on more valuable target species but with lower trophic levels was developed. Uruguay adopted a seafood net exporter role since the very beginning, with exports increasing linearly through time. More recently, seafood imports, with more competitive prices than locally caught seafood, have been gaining ground in the domestic market, reaching a third of all seafood currently consumed. Nowadays, the Uruguayan fishery sector is facing a crisis that is clearly reflected in the decreasing yields of the main species targeted, exports dwindling and increasing seafood imports. These results highlight the pressing need of the industrial sector to shift its model of fisheries exploitation. This study also provides evidence of the need to consider additional bioeconomic analysis to fully understand the behavior of the fishery sector as a dynamic social-ecological system operating in a globalized seafood trade scenario.

SOURCE: Fisheries research

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