

according to available data, FPI increased by 4%. The upward trend in seafood prices in 2023 contrasts with the decline in the FAO General Food Price Index, which fell month-over-month after peaking in March 2022. However, the FPI is only an average

value that conceals existing differences between species and between aquaculture and capture fisheries. Over the years, the fisheries sub-index has tended to be less volatile than the aquaculture sub-index. However, in 2022, this trend reversed, which experts

from the Subcommittee on Fisheries explained was due to the instability of the cost structure in different sub-regions on the supply side. A particularly important influencing factor is the development of transport costs, which are still significantly higher than

the levels of the pre-Coronavirus years. According to the United Nations (UNCTAD), transportation costs increased by 50% in 2020 and by as much as 208% in 2021. This increase cannot be offset by a slight decrease of 3.2% in 2022. *Manfred Klinkhardt*

A marketing strategy by the Latvian **Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics**

# Revitalising Latvia's coastal fishing industry

In a pioneering move towards the revitalization of Latvia's coastal fishing industry, the Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics (IARE) has unveiled a comprehensive Coastal Fisheries Development Marketing strategy. This initiative aims to address the socio-economic challenges faced by coastal communities and emphasises the need for a more inclusive and supportive approach from national and EU fisheries policies.

The Coastal Fisheries Development Marketing Programme is a response to the challenging situation prevailing in Latvia's coastal fisheries. The primary culprit is identified as the improper implementation of national and EU fisheries policies. Despite recognising the significance of coastal fishing, these policies often fall short in meeting the diverse needs of coastal communities. Coastal fishing, while remaining a significant employment provider, is frequently sidelined in policies that prioritise production, industrial development, technical efficiency, and market-oriented management mechanisms.

## Coastal fishing faces several threats

Coastal fishing enterprises are witnessing a decline, particularly in the number of year-round fishers who consider fishing as their primary



Valis Brikmānis

The coastal fishery in Latvia must overcome several challenges if it is to thrive in the future. A marketing strategy developed by the Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics aims to address some of these.

livelihood. Flatfish and round fish including plaice, flounder, cod, salmon, pikeperch, herring, and sprat, constitute the primary catches. However, annual catches are decreasing, and the lack of consumer knowledge about local fish species hampers direct sales.

Coastal fishers often possess basic secondary education supplemented with knowledge passed down within the industry. Fishing primarily employs sustainable methods, and fishermen often engage in additional income-generating activities like fish processing including smoking, and limited tourism. Fishers possess special skills such as manufacturing and repairing fishing nets and equipment, assessing weather conditions, and understanding environmental conditions at sea. They typically show a deep devotion to their land and industry, coupled with a profound respect for nature, and a practical, cooperative approach.

### Fishers have ambitious growth plans

Coastal fishers' processing activities are passed down through generations with promotion relying on word of mouth. Their future development plans include establishing fish processing facilities, tasting and smoking masterclasses, fish kiosks with automated dispensers, brand development, equipment modernisation, additional boat acquisition, guesthouse establishment, freezing facilities, refrigerated store acquisition, and initiation of tourism services.

The Coastal Fisheries Development Marketing Programme sets ambitious goals, including the strengthening of the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Riga coastal fisheries, preservation of existing coastal villages, utilisation of coastal potential in tourism, enhancement of added value, investment in cultural and historical preservation, promotion of coastal fisheries' image, and mitigation of seasonal impacts. The



The coastal fisheries logo presented at the launch of the Coastal Fisheries Development Marketing Programme.

strategy outlines a series of activities that aim to develop the sector. These range from the creation of a website and an app to scientific research, organisation of international conferences, and the establishment of coastal fishing centres and tourism infrastructure.

### Development is retarded for many reasons

The marketing strategy identifies several factors that hinder development of the sector: Coastal industry entrepreneurs lack direct support for business development; consumers have a distorted perception of coastal fishing and the species caught along Latvia's coastline; coastal fishermen are eager to expand their activities, the integration of coastal fishermen's catches and processed products, along with tourism, can contribute economically to the entire coastal region; challenges in realizing the fishermen's role stem from various factors, including a lack of information

about available offerings; coastal fishers, as patriots, aim to preserve their ancestors' legacy; and the failure to implement EU guidelines advocating measures for the decent living of those dependent on coastal fishing activities.

The implementation of marketing activities will be more effective through collaboration with fisheries and coastal development organisations that unite a significant number of coastal fishermen in Latvia. The lack of a unified platform for the promotion of coastal fishing and the popularisation of caught fish necessitates attention. A comprehensive approach, coupled with a development plan, legislative changes, and collaborative efforts, is essential for the holistic development of Latvia's coastal fishing industry. IARE will now seek funding to implement its strategy which will contribute to a sustainable and thriving future for coastal communities.

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Coastal fishers often have special skills such as manufacturing and repairing the fishing nets they use in their profession.