

Organizer: Pablo Pita

Special Session: “Using economics to allocate fishing rights between recreational and commercial fisheries in complex socioecological systems”.

Description: There is no doubt that policy makers must ensure that the different regulation frameworks contribute to the maintenance of resilient ecosystems that sustain healthy resources for commercial fishers, contributing to the economies that depend on their activity and supply markets with healthy products. However, marine recreational fishing also contributes significantly to the national economies, e.g., in the US or in Australia. Therefore, the promotion of recreational fisheries is increasingly frequent in developed countries. Thus, in the European Union the European Parliament recently stated that “recreational fishing has been practiced for centuries across the EU and is an integral part of the culture, traditions and heritage of many coastal and island communities”, and urges to “provide support, including financial support, for the development of recreational fishing in the tourism sector, as an important contributor to the development of the blue economy in small communities, coastal communities and islands, particularly in the outermost regions”.

Worldwide tourism sector is expanding in many coastal regions, which adds complexity to the socio-ecological system in coastal seas because tourists have an increasingly stronger presence. Even when marine recreational fishing is not often the main motivation for tourists, because they engage in many different recreational activities including swimming, snorkeling, scuba diving or sailing, their involvement on fishing may be increasingly relevant due to the high number of tourists and the growing number of people living in the coasts. Although the relevance of this thriving sector should not be overlooked, it should be noted that in some cases, public policies favoring allocation of fishing opportunities to recreational over commercial fisheries are leading to undesired loss of valuable provisioning ecosystem services to local populations.

Given the serious shortage of basic information the session contributed to review the economic relevance and social benefits of recreational fisheries to the world economy. Some of the contributions focused on the synergies and trade-offs of provision and cultural services derived from commercial and recreational exploitation of marine ecosystems and fish stocks which will help to inform decision-making and to establish policies for the distribution of fishing rights and spatial planning. Also, in the session it was reviewed the contribution of marine recreational fisheries to the blue and green economies and linkages between practices related to the circular economy, like catch and release of live fish.