

COOPERATION IN LATVIAN FISHERIES SECTOR

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Abstract. In the development of Latvia's economy, the fisheries have always played a significant role. In Latvia, the fisheries sector has not only a long-standing history and traditions, but also an internal potential of self-development and the ability to produce a competitive product in the world market. At the EU level, increasing attention is being paid to cooperation and its role in promotion of fisheries sector's growth potential. The aim of the article is to explore significance of cooperation in Latvian fisheries sector, determining further development opportunities. On the basis of the analysed scientific literature, the EU and Latvia legislation, different planning documents as well as the results of the interviews and questionnaires, the article reflects the study of significance of cooperation in the Latvian fisheries sector. The research results acquired by author may assist the institutions involved in the fisheries' policy formation to work more successfully and improve the common policy in the fisheries sector.

Key words: cooperation, social economy, producer organizations, fisheries, Latvia.

JEL code: K2

Introduction

In the development of Latvia's economy, the fisheries have always played a significant role - especially in the development of the Baltic Sea and Riga Gulf coastline areas. In Latvia, the fisheries sector has not only a long-standing history and traditions, but also an internal potential of self-development and the ability to produce a competitive product in the world market (Biuksane I., Judrupa I., 2016). Cooperation plays a significant role in promotion of sector's competitiveness and development and, at the EU level, continuously increasing attention is being paid to such cooperation. The European Commission believes that cooperation opportunities are still not used in full, and the role and position of cooperative societies should be enhanced both at the national and European level (Kaktins J., Ancans S., Pabērza K., 2005).

The scope of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) extends to measures related to the markets for fishery and aquaculture products in the Union, where the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products (CMO) is an integral part of the CFP and should contribute to achieving its objectives. Fishery and aquaculture producer organisations (PO) are the key to achieving the objectives of the CFP and of the CMO (European Parliament and Council, 2013a; European Commission, 2013).

PO are formed in order to improve trade of products and economic profitability, stabilise the

market and reduce environmental impact of fishing (European Parliament and Council, 2013a; Saeima, 2004). PO are the main participants that may promote vitality of fishing and aquaculture (European Parliament and Council, 2014). Consequently, it is essential to strengthen the responsibility of PO and provide the necessary financial support in order they, in accordance with CFP, could undertake more significant tasks in daily management of fisheries (European Parliament and Council, 2013a; 2014).

The aim of the research - to explore the significance of cooperation in Latvian fisheries sector, determining further development opportunities. In order to achieve the aim, the following tasks were put forward: 1) to identify the essence of cooperation; 2) to explore the role of PO in the Latvian fisheries sector; 3) to draw conclusions and propose recommendations.

The novelty of the research - explored and gathered information on significance of cooperation and opportunities of its development promotion in the Latvian fisheries sector that may assist the institutions involved in the fisheries' policy formation to work more successfully and improve the common policy in the fisheries sector.

The author applied quantitative and qualitative methods in elaboration of the research. The method of sociological research was used for evaluation of scientific literature, the EU and Latvian legislation, as well as different

planning documents. In order to obtain the topical opinion on PO and their performance in Latvia, the author interviewed fishery PO and representatives of the institutions involved in the fisheries' policy formation and implementation. In addition, the questionnaire was prepared and sent to fisheries companies and state direct administration institution, which is responsible for authorization of PO, supervision and control of their performance.

The author used the monographic or descriptive, graphical and logically-constructive (induction and deduction) method for information processing and evaluation. To draw conclusions and elaborate suggestions, mainly the methods of analysis and synthesis were applied.

Research results and discussion

1. Essence of cooperation

Cooperation from the Latin word 'cooperatio' denotes a joint action or collaboration; its main aim is benefit obtained by every participant via joint action in cooperation, using the services provided by cooperation and opportunities obtained collectively (Kucinskis J., 2004). Economy based on cooperation is called cooperative or social economy (European Commission, 2016), and the most significant its participants are different types of co-operatives.

International Co-operative Alliance, founded in 1995, the aim of which is to promote the development of cooperation all over the world, defines co-operatives as „autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise“ (International Co-operative Alliance, 1995).

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity solidarity. In performance of co-operatives, several ethical values are respected: honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others (International Co-operative Alliance, 1995). Elitism, consumer society,

human exploitation, tyranny and slavery are not typical of cooperation (Kucinskis J., 2004).

Cooperation strives for improvement of social, economic and environmental conditions of the society (Rothschild J., 2009), frequently turning to those members of the society who are in disadvantaged position (Bird A., 2015; Baltaca B., 2003). Cooperation normally develops in conditions when many people suffer from poverty, misery and unfairness (Balodis Ed., 1927).

Cooperation reflects solidity of the sector and interest in promotion of sector's common development and growth. Performing in isolation, a company cannot achieve a high degree of competitiveness – cooperation with surrounding companies (Lacis V., 2006), state institutions and other organizations is necessary (Kassalis I., 2010).

Cooperation works as a stabilising, harmonising and humanising factor, integrator of fairness and rebuilder of balance (Kucinskis J., 2004). The French theorist Charles Gide has said: "Cooperation is a daughter of poverty and mother of prosperity" (Charles G., 1891). The principle of co-operatives' performance is: "One for all and all for one!" (Balodis E., 1927). As a result of cooperation, work productivity, quality and income increase, new jobs are created, time and energy is saved, education is promoted and community's spirit and inclination for common benefit is inculcated (Potter B., 1904; Balodis Ed., 1927).

Cooperation works as a tool of stable and sustainable economic development, harmonising services with the needs, increasing the value of economic activity in the social aspect, promoting a fairer distribution of income and wealth, preventing discrepancies in labour market and extending and strengthening democracy of economy (CIRIEC, 2007). Cooperation facilitates human well-being and economic development; it promotes public participation and business development (Baltaca B., 2003).

2. Role of PO in Latvian fisheries sector

In Latvia, one can find different types of PO – fishery PO, aquaculture PO or inter-branch organisation, which combines the mentioned PO (MK, 2014).

In Latvia, 3 fishery PO have been founded. They include fisheries companies fishing in the Baltic Sea and Riga Gulf beyond the coastline area. In the period from 2005 to 2014, fishery PO embraced a comparatively small proportion (on average 15 %) of companies from total number of companies in Latvian fisheries sector (CSB, 2016; PO, 2016).

The aim of founding a fishery PO was to use marine resources rationally and sustainably, improve trade conditions and circumstances, plan and forecast production and economic processes and activities related to it as well as improve mutual collaboration between the members of PO and represent their common interests. The objectives defined by fishery PO are directed towards improvement of their performance (Table 1).

Table 1

Compliance of performance of Latvian fishery PO with EU CMO policy

EU CMO objectives	Fishery PO objectives
Contribute to the CFP achievement of the objectives, and in particular to the sustainable exploitation of living marine biological resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rational use of marine resources - Development of fishing methods - Management and regulation of catch quotas - Control and protection of fishing activity - Elaboration of catch plans and programs - Improvement of fish trading conditions - Harmonisation of offer and demand, taking into account quality and quantity - Increase of offer and supply concentration - Regulation and stabilisation of the prices - Implementation of intervention measures in the market for fishery products - Common organization of the markets for fishery products - Planning and forecasting of production - Harmonisation and coordination of economic and political issues related to production of fishery products - Harmonisation, coordination of members' performance, promotion of mutual assistance and collaboration development, representation of interests - Eradication of discrimination - Assistance in equipment modernization and performance - Collection of statistical data on production and sale
Enable the fishery and aquaculture industry to apply the CFP at the appropriate level	
Strengthen the competitiveness of the Union fishery and aquaculture industry, in particular producers	
Improve the transparency and stability of the markets, in particular as regards economic knowledge and understanding of the Union markets for fishery and aquaculture products along the supply chain, ensure that the distribution of added value along the sector's supply chain is more balanced, improves consumer information and raises awareness, by means of notification and labelling that provides comprehensible information	
Contribute to ensuring a level-playing field for all products marketed in the Union by promoting sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources	
Contribute to ensuring that consumers have a diverse supply of fishery and aquaculture products	
Provide the consumer with verifiable and accurate information regarding the origin of the product and its mode of production, in particular through marking and labelling	

Source: author's calculations based on European Parliament and Council, 2013b; Lursoft, 2016

In order to achieve the objectives of EU CFP and ensure proper management of CMO, every year PO have to submit to the state direct administration institution, responsible for authorization of PO, a performance supervision and control, production and marketing plan, including: a production programme for caught or farmed species; a marketing strategy to match the quantity, quality and presentation of supply to market requirements; measures to be taken by the PO in order to contribute to the objectives

laid down in European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) No. 1379/2013 Article 7; special anticipatory measures to adjust the supply of species which habitually present marketing difficulties during the year; penalties applicable to members who infringe decisions adopted to implement the plan concerned (European Parliament and Council, 2013a).

In order to promote achievement of PO objectives defined by the European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) No. 1379/2013

Article 7, fishery PO in Latvia are required to implement at least 2 compulsory and at least 2 additional optional measures, and at least one or several measure activities (MK, 2014).

In the period from 2014 to 2016, fishery PO have chosen all compulsory and additional optional measures established by Latvian legislation, but not all possible measure activities (Table 2).

Table 2

Measures implemented by Latvian fishery PO and their implementation results for achievement of the objectives defined by the European Parliament and Council (EU) No. 1379/2013 Article 7 in the period from 2014 to 2016

Measures' type and name	Activity No.	Execution (%)			
		2005-2013	2014	2015	2016
Promoting sustainable fishing activities	3.1.1.1., 3.1.1.2., 3.1.1.3., 3.1.1.4., 3.1.1.5., 3.1.1.6.		-	-	-
	3.1.1.7.		100	100	✓
	3.1.1.8.		-	-	-
Avoiding and reducing unwanted catches	3.1.2.1.		100	91.67	✓
	3.1.2.2., 3.1.2.3.		-	-	-
Contributing to the traceability of fishery products and access to clear and comprehensive information for consumers	3.1.3.1.		30	35	✓
	3.1.3.3.		50	-	✓
	3.1.3.2., 3.1.3.4.		-	-	-
Contributing towards the elimination of IUU fishing practices	3.1.4.1.		75	87.5	✓
	3.1.4.2.		100	90	✓
Improving the conditions for the placing on the market of their members' fisheries products	3.1.5.1.		100	100	✓
	3.1.5.2.		100	100	✓
	3.1.5.3.		50	100	✓
	3.1.5.4., 3.1.5.5., 3.1.5.7.	-	-	-	-
	3.1.5.6.		-	-	✓
	3.1.6.1.		-	-	-
Improving economic returns	3.1.6.2.		66.67	58.33	✓
	3.1.6.3.		100	-	-
	3.1.7.1.		50	75	✓
Stabilising the markets	3.1.7.2.		100	100	-
	3.1.7.3.		100	100	✓
	3.1.8.1., 3.1.8.2., 3.1.8.4.		-	-	-
Contributing to food supply and promoting high food quality and safety standards, whilst contributing to employment in coastal and rural areas	3.1.8.3.		50	100	✓
	3.1.8.5.		100	82,50	✓
	3.1.9.1., 3.1.9.2.		-	-	-
Reducing the environmental impact of fishing, including through measures to improve the selectivity of fishing gears	3.1.9.3.		100	66.67	✓
	Total execution:	x	85,12	83,64	x

Note: In the period from 2005 to 2013, fishery PO did not have to submit production and marketing plans.

Source: author's calculations based on European Commission, 2014; MK, 2014; Rural Support Service, 2016

Fishery PO chose measures that were directed towards promotion of sustainable fishing activities, reduction of environmental impact caused by fishing, preservation of fisheries resources, improvement of economic return, stabilisation of the market and improvement of conditions for placing fishery products on the market as well as precise compliance with food quality and safety standards etc.

Although the measures chosen by fishery PO are relatively homogeneous year after year, thus, reflecting constant needs and problems of PO, in general, the performance of fishery PO can be

considered as positive: in 2014, the production and marketing plans were implemented at the rate of 85.12 %, but in 2015 – at the rate of 83.64 %.

According to the responsible representatives of the state direct administration institution, the main reasons for non-fulfilment of the prescribed measures and activities may be different, and it is difficult to define them.

The responsible representatives explain that fishery PO have difficulties to plan their work in the long term, and one of the reasons is unstable situation in the market (Biuksane I.,

2016). Conversely, fishery PO explain that implementation of production and marketing plans in full (100 %) is hampered by different subjective and objective reasons, for instance, priority changes in season, complete or partial delay of the planned activities for (in)definite duration etc. Fishery PO acknowledge that the plans rarely can be implemented in full due to

current socio-economic and political situation (Biuksane I., 2016).

Although the measures implemented by fishery PO are directed towards improvement of their performance, they are not sufficient for promotion of competitiveness and development of the Latvian fisheries sector (Table 3).

Table 3

Measures to be implemented by PO for promotion of competitiveness and development of Latvian fisheries sector

Measures' name	Problem of fisheries sector to be solved	Measures to be implemented by PO					
		F PO		AQ PO		IBO	
		in now	in future	in now	in future	in now	in future
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
Promoting sustainable fishing/ aquaculture activities	Particularly sensitive environment of the Baltic Sea that is valuable resource of ecosystem. Considerable losses caused by wild animals.	CM	CM	CM	CM	-	-
Avoiding and reducing unwanted catches		CM	CM	-	-	-	-
Contributing towards the elimination of IUU fishing practices		CM	?	-	-	-	-
Reducing the environmental impact of fishing, including through measures to improve the selectivity of fishing gears		AOP	CM	-	-	-	-
Stabilising the markets	Low income, wage, productivity and gross added value in fishery. Fragmented, homogeneous production in aquaculture that is not based on export. Unsteady export markets in fish processing. Low productivity in aquaculture and fish processing.	AOP	CM	AOP	CM	-	CM
Improving the conditions for the placing on the market of their members' fisheries/aquaculture products		AOP	CM	AOP	CM	-	-
Improving economic returns		AOP	CM	AOP	CM	-	CM
Contributing to the traceability of fishery products and access to clear and comprehensive information for consumers		CM	?	-	-	-	-
Endeavouring to ensure that aquaculture feed products of fishery origin come from fisheries that are sustainably managed		-	-	CM	?	-	-
Ascertaining that the activities of their members are consistent with the national strategic plans		-	-	CM	CM	-	-
Contributing to food supply and promoting high food quality and safety standards, whilst contributing to employment in coastal and rural areas	Decrease in population density can be observed in the territories significant for fishery.	AOP	?/CM	AOP	-	-	?/CM
.....		-	CM	-	CM	-	CM

Note: F PO - fishery producer organisations, AQ PO - aquaculture producer organisations, IBO - Inter-branch organisations, CM - compulsory measures, AOP - addition optional measures, ? - difference between implementation of these measures in PO and performance and functions of the respective responsible state institutions must be evaluated and realized, *.....* - in accordance with European Parliament and Council (EU) No. 1379/2013, PO may achieve also other objectives that are not currently prescribed by MK Regulations No. 753.

Source: author's calculations based on European Commission, 2014; Ministry of Agriculture, 2014; MK, 2014

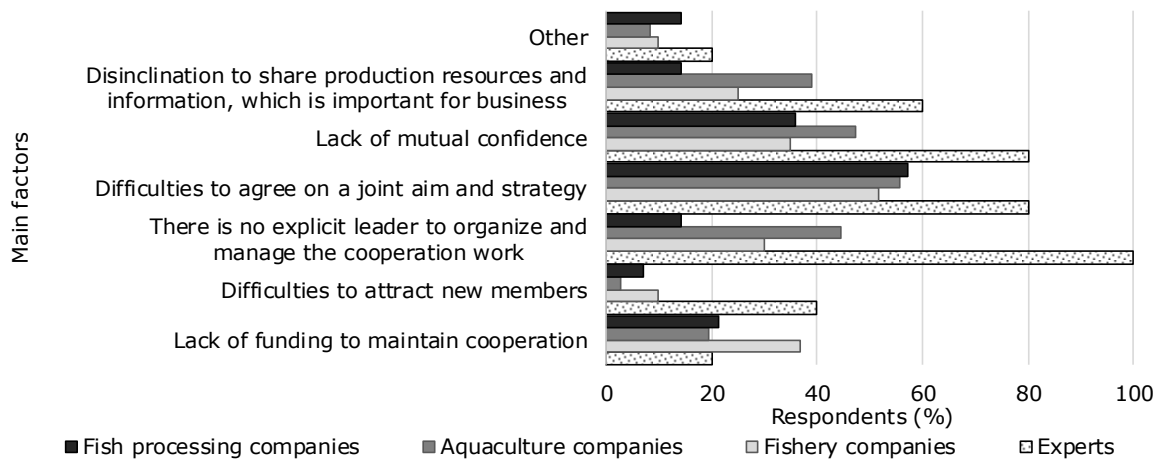
In accordance with the abstract of the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 753, the elaborated regulations prescribe increase of administrative burden for existing PO and those companies that will wish to form producer or inter-branch organisations – the regulations are not expected to have a direct impact on development of economy (MK, 2014).

In order to enable promotion of not only performance improvement of PO, but also competitiveness and development of Latvian fisheries sector through the Regulations of the Cabinet No. 753, the author believes that the mentioned regulations need to be improved. They should be elaborated guiding not only by the legislative aspect regulating the EU CFP and

CMO, but also by the promotion aspect of competitiveness and development of the Latvian fisheries sector.

Currently, there is neither PO founded in inshore fishing, inland waters and aquaculture nor inter-branch organisation, although it would be highly significant and desirable for Latvian fisheries sector from the viewpoint of development and competitiveness promotion.

The major part (93 % of the respondents) of fisheries companies and experts believe that there are factors hampering the formation of strong cooperation in the Latvian fisheries sector (Biuksane I., 2016). In companies' opinion, the main reason for it is the fact that there are difficulties to agree on common objective and strategy, conversely, in experts' opinion – it is the lack of explicit leader (especially in inshore fishing and aquaculture) (Figure 1).



Note: Experts – the interviewed representatives of institutions involved in the fisheries' policy formation and implementation. Source: author's calculations based on Biuksane I., 2016

Fig. 1. Main factors hampering formation of strong cooperation in Latvian fisheries sector (%)

Responsible representatives of the state direct administration institution explain that PO authorization criteria prescribed by the Regulations of the Cabinet No. 753 also may be an obstacle why different types of PO are not founded in Latvia (Biuksane I., 2016). Fishery PO agree with this opinion; they hold a view that it is impossible to found a new fishery PO in accordance with the prescribed authorization criteria and due to the current situation in the Latvian fisheries sector. Separate fishery PO declare that implementation of the prescribed authorization criteria is not difficult and believe that the prescribed authorization criteria should be stricter (Biuksane I., 2016).

In order to promote formation of new PO and improvement of their performance, the representatives of institutions involved in Latvian fisheries' policy formation and implementation are advised to promote common understanding of the sector in relation to significance and

usefulness of PO as well as the prescribed PO authorization criteria should be revised. Foundation of a strong and powerful PO can promote competitiveness and development of the fisheries sector.

Conclusions, proposals, recommendations

- 1) Cooperation is collaboration of entrepreneurs; its main goal is benefit that could be obtained by every participant via joint action in cooperation, using the services provided by cooperation and collectively obtained opportunities. Cooperation is based on democratic values, and it facilitates human well-being and economic development, promotes public participation and business development.
- 2) In Latvia, there are 3 fishery PO; they perform in accordance with the EU CMO policy, although do not cover its objectives in full. The measures implemented by the PO are directed towards improvement of their

performance; however, the measures are not sufficient for promotion of competitiveness and development of the Latvian fisheries sector.

3) PO are the main participants responsible for achievement of the EU CFP objectives and ensuring proper management of CMO. In order to promote formation of new PO and improvement of their performance as well as facilitate competitiveness and development of Latvian fisheries sector, the representatives of

institutions involved in the fisheries' policy formation and implementation are advised to promote single understanding in the sector in relation to the significance and usefulness of PO, revise PO authorization criteria and improve the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 753. The mentioned proposals could promote formation of a more favourable environment and conditions for PO development.

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