

Sustaining a livelihood heritage: Climate challenges to Mexican fishing communities' health, well-being, and identity.

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Climate-related impacts on the ocean are increasingly jeopardizing coastal communities' health by impacting their livelihoods, food security, and cultural heritage. These impacts are particularly acute among small-scale fishers in the Global South. Fishing communities hold valuable local knowledge about sociocultural structures and natural resource management. This knowledge has been crucial in understanding changes in marine ecosystems, but less attention has been paid to the climate-induced disruptions in socio-ecological relationships that underpin community food sovereignty, nutrition, and health that shape communities' life quality.

Drawing on a community-based approach and prioritizing the voices of Mexican fishers, our research aims to: (1) document the diverse experiences of climate change on marine food systems; (2) characterize climate-affected socio-ecological factors shaping how fishing communities respond to potential health and wellness stressors; and (3) identify the barriers that fishing communities face when adapting to climate change.

Collaborating with two Mexican fishing communities, we employed an integrative qualitative methodology, combining open-ended interviews and photo-elicitation techniques to capture fishers' perspectives and emotions. We present our findings through selected narratives and a comparative thematic analysis. Fishing community members identified environmental changes as significant economic, occupational and cultural hazards. We reveal how the socio-ecological system can dynamically drive the livelihood system, shaping resource allocation to food, well-being, and culture.

The impacts of climate change on marine food systems have complex physical and emotional repercussions, encompassing nutritional stressors and cultural identity loss. This study provides insights into the threats and opportunities faced by small-scale fisheries within the climate change landscape.

Keywords: Climate change, Food security, Food sovereignty, Small-scale fisheries, Socio-ecological health

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