

# **Drivers of unsustainable development in eastern Mediterranean SSF: an effort to convey fishers' views**

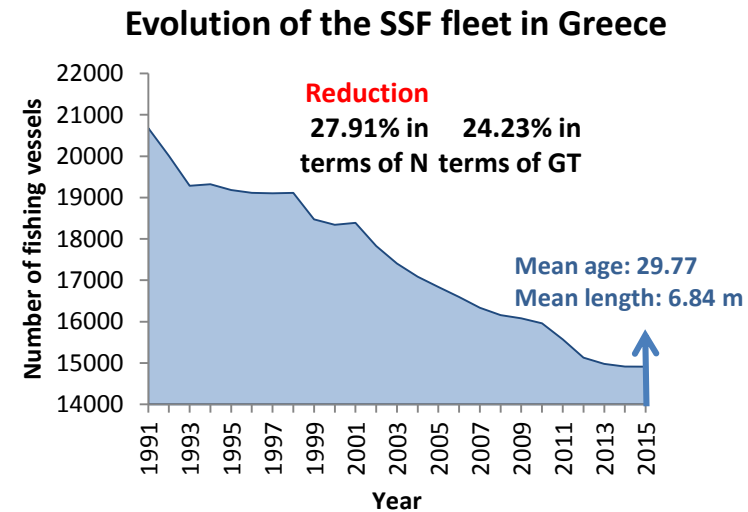
**Vassiliki Vassilopoulou & Aikaterini Dogrammatzi**

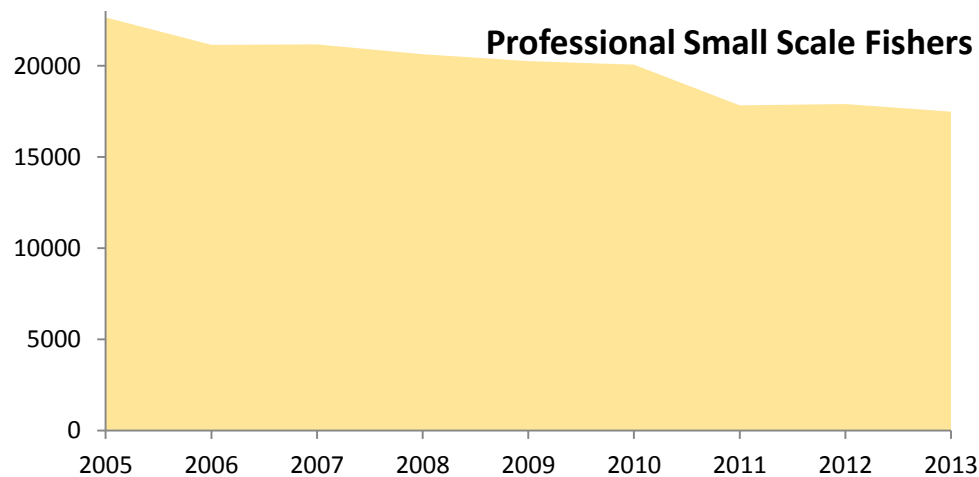
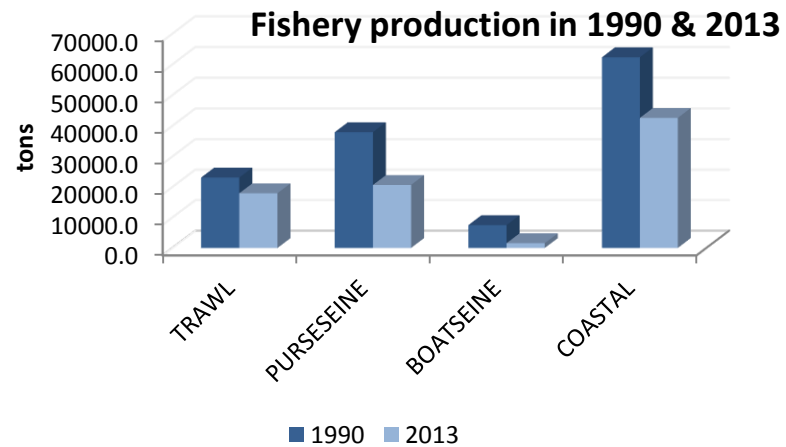
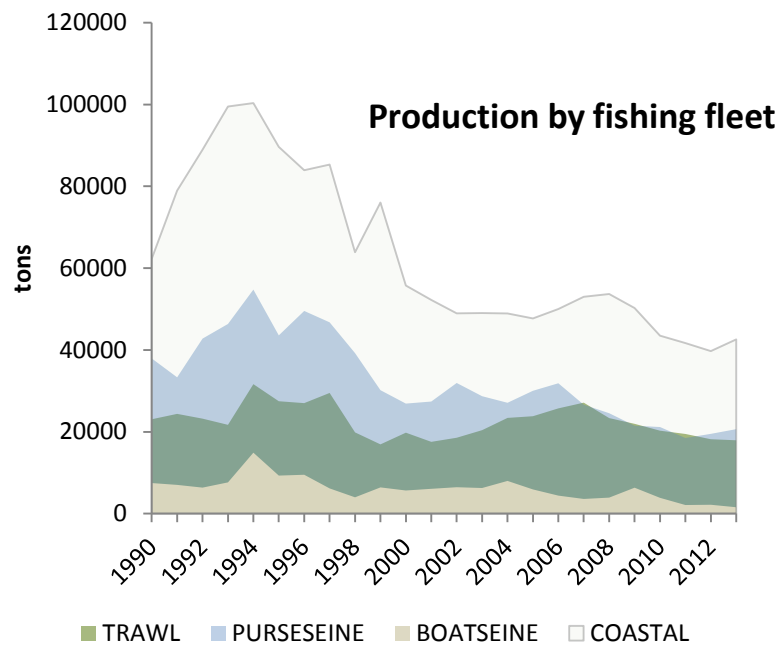
Hellenic Centre for Marine Research,  
Hellenikon 16777, Athens Greece

# Introduction

Small-scale fisheries (SSF) dominate the Mediterranean fishing sector (about 80% of units), and are an important social component of local coastal communities, and a source of high quality seafood.

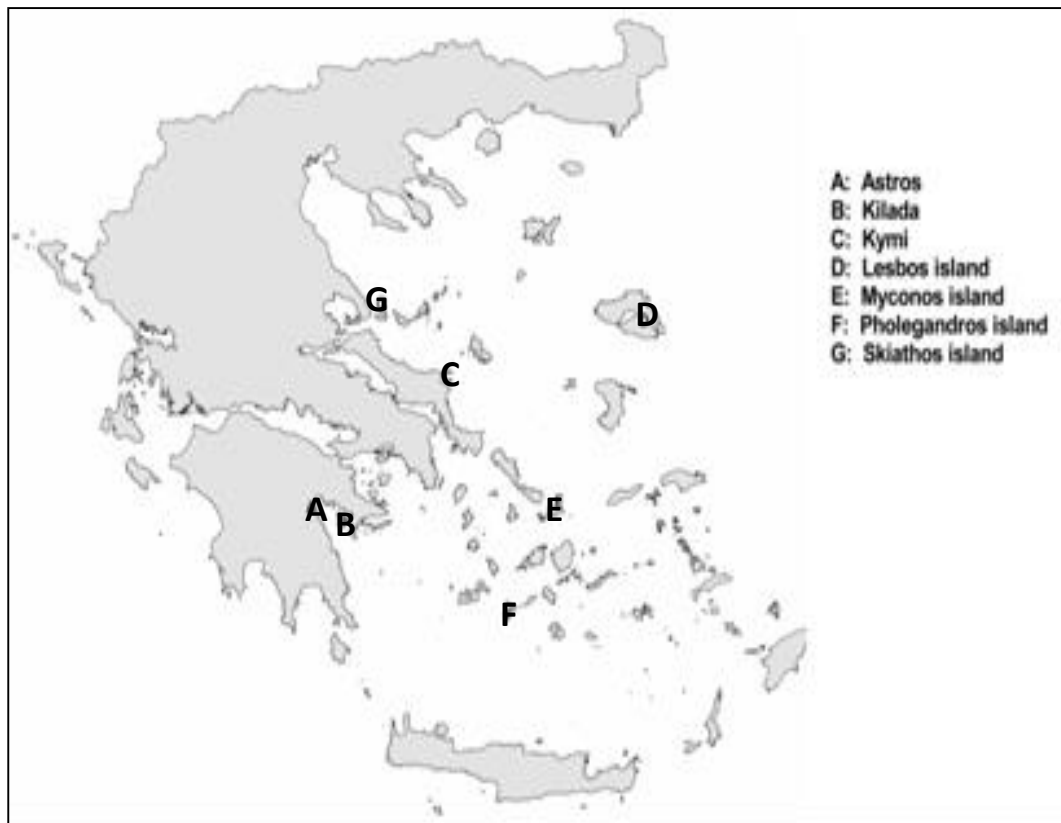
In Greek waters more than the 95% of the registered vessels belong to the SSF segment. Indeed, SSF in Greece have a prominent role in supporting the livelihood of local communities, and at the same time are extremely diverse and scattered geographically which renders their management an unwieldy task.





# Material & Methods

Greek small scale fishers' perceptions of issues related to deficiencies of the overall system that need to be tackled towards achieving both environmental and socio-economic sustainability have been evaluated using the questionnaire approach.



Interviews took place in seven Greek ports in 2012 at premises of fishers' associations or at facilities in the port. They had about one hour duration and were based on open-ended questions.

In all cases representatives of the local associations, from three to ten members, attended, and replies captured the concerns of either the whole group or at least the vast majority of the participants.

# Material & Methods

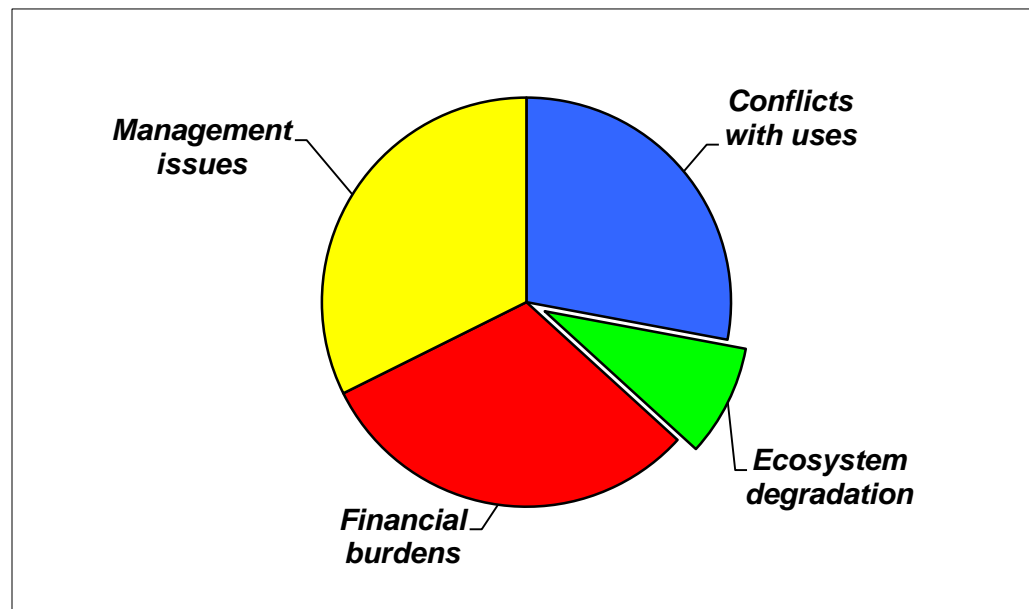
During analysis, the material was categorized to convert a qualitative response into a quantitative one to enable prioritisation of emerging issues in the different areas.

Points of concern were grouped in four categories:

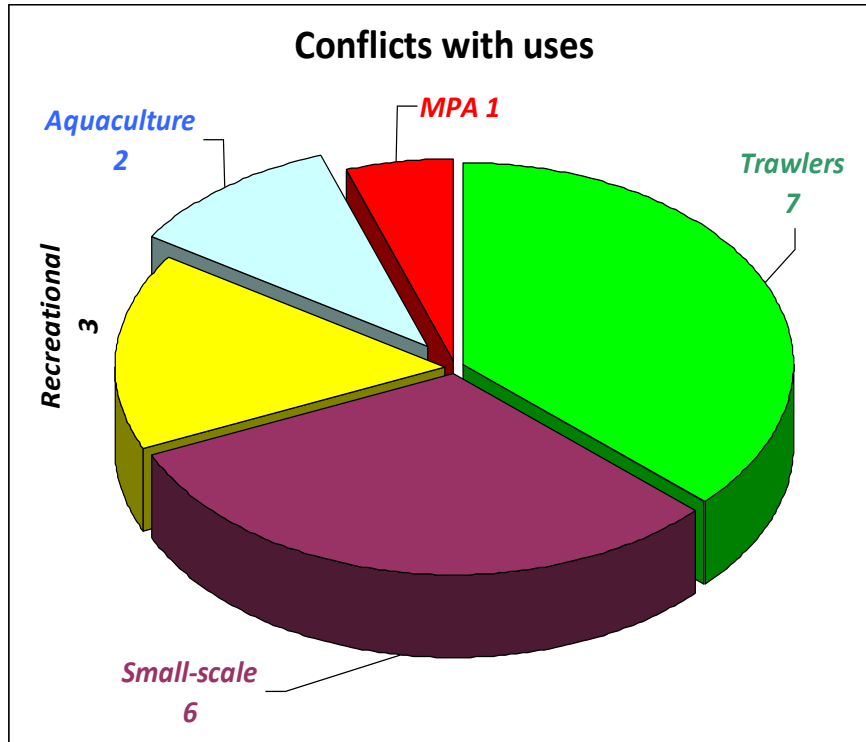
1. spatial conflicts with other activities,
2. ecosystem degradation,
3. financial burdens,
4. management deficiencies.

# Results

In all, the main issues of concern for the Greek SSF coincided with financial burdens and management deficiencies.

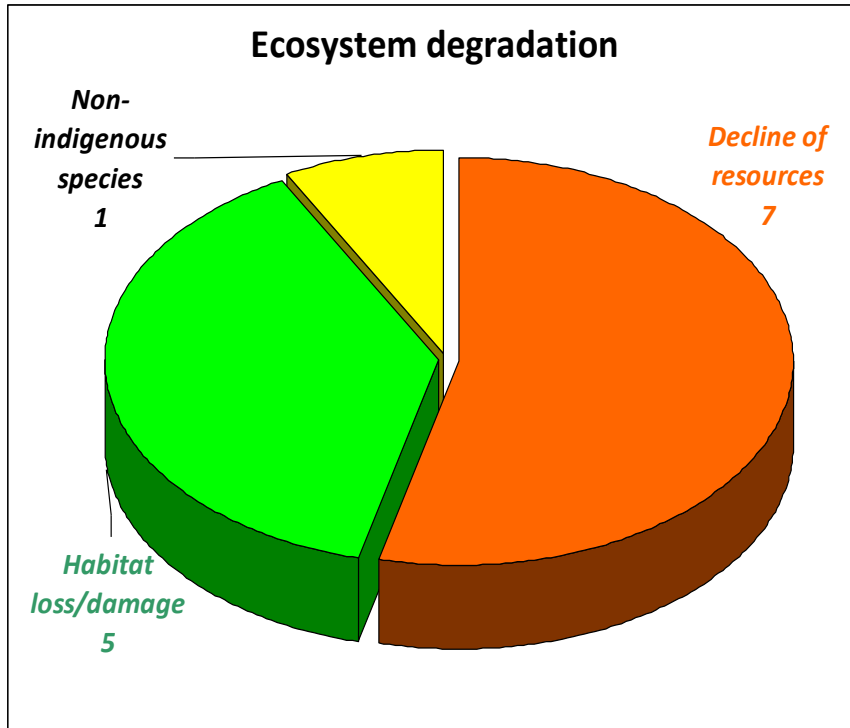


# 1. Spatial conflicts with other activities



- Clashes among **small scale fishers and trawlers** targeting resources in overlapping fishing grounds were of major concern in all areas.
- Unregulated operation of different **small scale gear users, commercial and recreational**, had increasingly fuelled disputes in almost all areas over the past decades.
- Marine space allocated to **aquaculture** and/or **conservation priority areas** were among complaints made at specific locations where those uses existed.

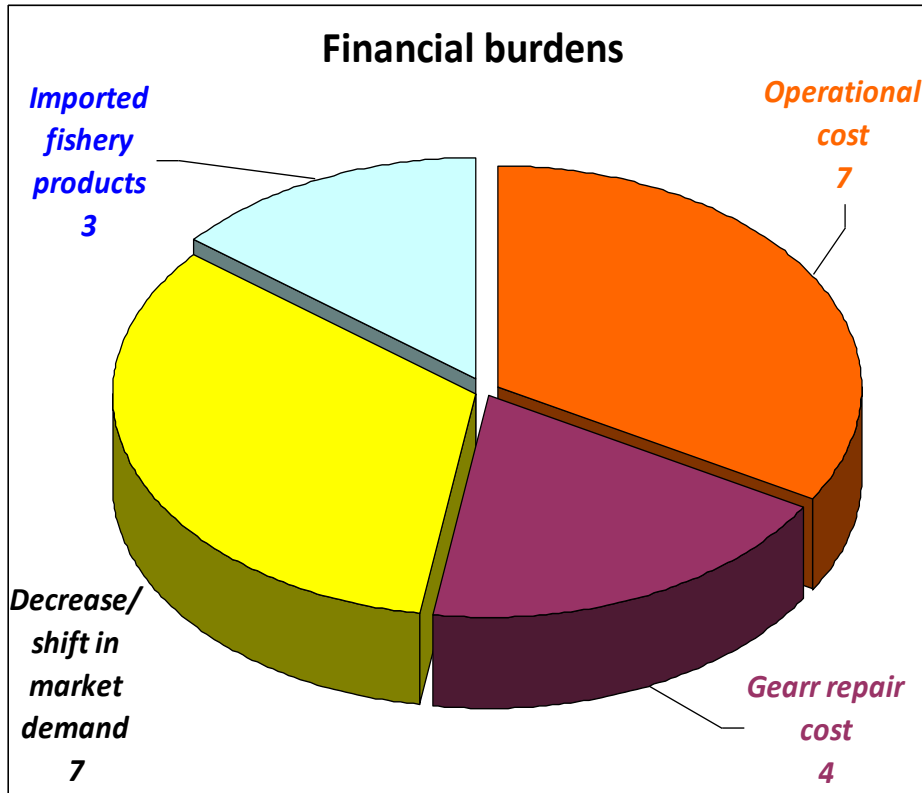
## 2. Ecosystem degradation



- **Decline of the fishery resources** was a major concern, linked mainly with pollution and/or over fishing
- **Habitat loss/damage** arising also from pollution effects or pressures exerted by fishery activities (e.g. abrasion from trawlers, ghost fishing).
- **Invasive species**, which had become established in certain places mainly as a result of climate change



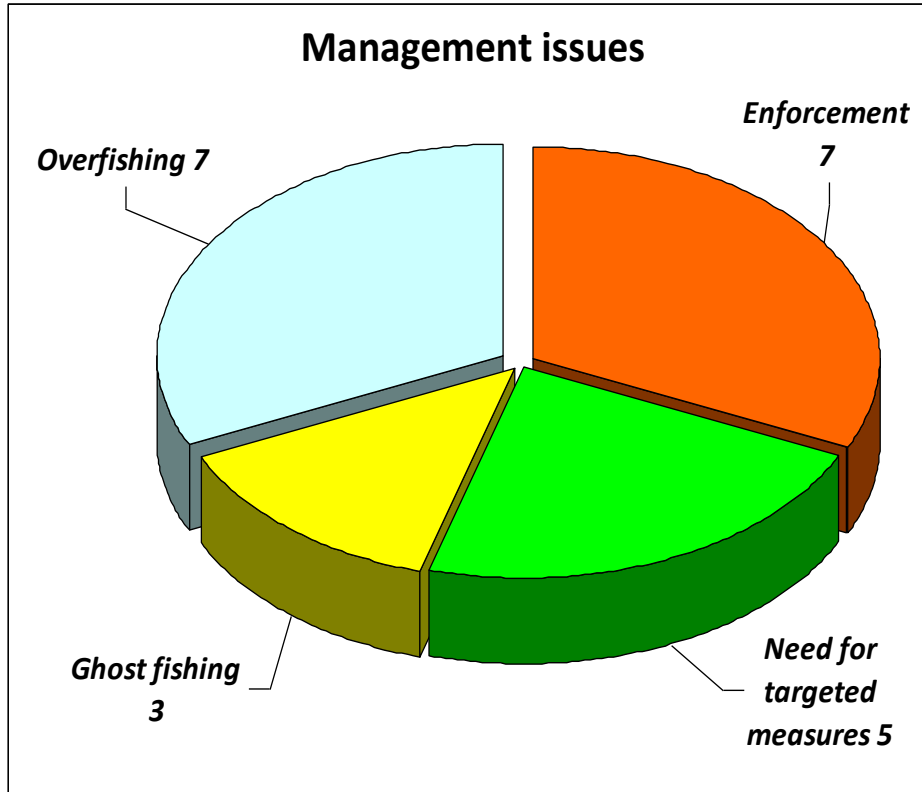
### 3. Financial burdens



In all areas fishers emphatically voiced their concerns about financial burdens, the most important drivers perceived as even threatening their livelihoods being:

- **operational and maintenance costs**
- **decrease of market demand and/or shift towards cheaper species due to the economic crisis**

## 4. Management deficiencies



- Need for effective management based on the **adoption of appropriate policy regulations** to resolve mainly intra-sectoral (i.e. fisheries) conflicts
- Stricter **enforcement of regulations** were considered of key importance.

Summing up, outcomes revealed several issues, stemming mainly from the **lack of an effective management approach**

- Small scale fishers were very positive in being involved in efforts related to **increasing their awareness on scientific results**, which may provide **incentives to change their behaviour** towards promoting more responsible fishing practices.
- One of their major complaints dealt with their not being consulted by decision makers, which may suggest that by strengthening their role through adopting a **co-management bottom-up process** considering local peculiarities can be a realistic solution for sustainable fisheries in complex cases like the SSF in Greece.

