Stakeholder perceptions of enhancement opportunities in the Chilean small and medium scale mussel aquaculture industry

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Resumen
The Chilean mussel aquaculture industry is a prime example of a thriving industry. However, the industry growth rate, aquaculture concessions and market prices have stabilized signalling a shift in the industry from exponential growth to, if handled correctly, economic stability. Here we used perception research, an efficient tool to inform on the implementation of management strategies, to provide policy makers with the tools necessary for the development of strategies that will aid in the sustainability of the industry through its current shift. We assessed the perceptions of four main small and medium scale stakeholder groups in the mussel industry (i.e. seed collectors, growing centres, processing plants and service providers) on the challenges, obstacles and improvements in the industry. This information was divided into five main domains, namely: (1) finance, (2) human resources, (3) knowledge, (4) management and policy and, (5) technology and infrastructure, and was used to determine the gaps and opportunities that impact the biologic and economic productivity of the industry. Stakeholders displayed significantly different perceptions on the challenges, progress and obstacles they face, suggesting that segregation among groups exists. Despite this heterogeneity, there are areas that can provide the greatest enhancement opportunities for the industry; these are mainly based within the seed collectors group and the collection and transfer of local and scientific knowledge among all stakeholders. Notwithstanding the aforementioned areas, the Chilean mussel aquaculture industry perceives it is working towards overcoming its current obstacles and displays important progress in the incorporation of technology and infrastructure, finance and management domains. Our results indicate that with targeted interventions a promising future for the mussel aquaculture industry in Chile is achievable.

Statement of interest:

This study shows how perception research can be used to determine the gaps and enhancement opportunities in the productivity of developing aquaculture industries.
Palabras clave
Palabras clave de autor:
Perception research; Mussel; Aquaculture; Gaps; Productivity; Enhancement opportunities

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