

MED-JELLYRISK

Conference and Training Seminar

Addressing jellyfish blooms to safeguard coastal economic activities
Research, innovation, management and education

Corinthia St. George's Hotel, St. Julian's, Malta
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THE IMPACT OF JELLYFISH BLOOMS ON THE MALTESE AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY

In order to assess the impact of jellyfish blooms on the Maltese aquaculture industry, a survey, in the form of a questionnaire, was developed under the framework of the EU funded 'MED-JELLYRISK Project' (<http://jellyrisk.eu>). The survey questionnaire consisted of twenty questions, and was set up with the objective of gathering baseline data on the perception of aquaculture workers on the impacts of jellyfish blooms on local fish farms. The methodology involved the use of the 'mixed methods approach', where primary data was collected in both quantitative and qualitative forms in order to understand the blooms impact more thoroughly. Within such a method of research, the 'parallel mixed design' approach was followed, where simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data was conducted.

Quantitative methods generated numerical results, while qualitative methods produced narrative data. All relevant information was collected by the researcher through direct, semi-structured interviews in Malta with individuals having different professional profiles within fish farm com-

panies (directors, farm managers, divers, etc.). The aquaculture workers were encouraged, through open-ended questions, to express in detail their individual opinion and personal experience on various aspects related to the impacts of jellyfish blooms on the operations of the aquaculture company they represent. To motivate respondents to cooperate, the researcher motivated the individual to talk with ease by: (1) explaining thoroughly the aim of the study before commencing with the face-to-face direct interview, (2) portraying the study as being worthwhile, and (3) overcoming any initial barriers during the course of the interview as, otherwise, the respondent would have been hesitant to cooperate. Individuals, hailing from all the local fish farm companies (six companies in all), were interviewed using the direct interview approach, during the months of February, March, and April 2014.

The exact same survey questionnaire was carried out in Italy, Spain, and in Tunisia by researchers involved in the MED-JELLYRISK Project through telephone interviews. The Maltese aquaculture industry opera-

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