Fair trade and artisanal fishing in Paraná coast: between speech and reality

Comércio justo e a pesca artesanal no litoral do Paraná: entre o discurso e a realidade

DOI: 10.55905/oe1v21n8-044

Recebimento dos originais: 10/07/2023
Aceitação para publicação: 11/08/2023

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ABSTRACT
Paraná Coast has 90 kilometers of coastline with an approximate population of 4,256 artisanal fishermen who carry out their activities in the bays and in the open sea, most of them classified as small fishermen, who historically have an asymmetrical distribution of commercialization profits imposed by retailers. Thus, in view of the need to establish new patterns of fish commercialization in the region, this research aimed to carry out a case study related to the fair trade of fish in this region. Descriptive exploratory research was carried out with 10 (ten) fishermen and the management of the only regional company that includes the practice of fair trade in its values. The study revealed that positive factors, especially security in commercial relations, fair value paid for fish and valuation of family labor, were the issues most valued by the interviewed fishermen. In relation to the negative factors, the company not absorbing the entire production, the time to pay for the production and the limited hours for delivering the fish, were the most cited issues, however they were not classified as situations that could be factors of rupture of the business process. Finally, the analysis of the fairtrade system adopted in the investigated company, allows to consider that it was installed, empirically tested and has had positive results, and can be classified in fact as a fairtrade practitioner. This model can be classified as an alternative development tool or model to the dominant neoliberal model in Brazil that can be replicated in whole or in part in other fishing regions.

Keywords: solidarity trade, traditional communities, fair trade, productive systems, market, small fishermen, fish, shrimp.

RESUMO
O litoral paranaense possui 90 quilômetros de costa marítima com população aproximada de 4.256 pescadores artesanais que exercem suas atividades nas baías e em mar aberto, sendo em sua maioria classificados como pequenos pescadores, que historicamente tem distribuição assimétrica dos lucros da comercialização impostas por comerciantes varejistas. Assim diante da necessidade de estabelecer novos padrões de comercialização de pescados na região, esta pesquisa objetivou realizar um estudo de caso relacionado ao comércio justo de pescados na região. Foi realizado pesquisa exploratória descritiva junto a dez pescadores e a gestão da única empresa regional que insere em seus valores a pratica do comércio justo. O estudo revelou que os fatores positivos em especial a segurança nas relações comerciais, o valor justo pago pelo pescado e a valorização da mão de obra familiar, foram as questões mais valorizadas pelos pescadores entrevistados. No que tange aos fatores negativos a empresa não absorver a totalidade da produção, o tempo para proceder o pagamento da produção e os horários limitados de entrega dos pescados, foram os mais citados, no entanto não foram classificados como situações que pudessem
ser fatores de ruptura do processo comercial. Finalmente a análise do sistema de comércio justo adotado na empresa investigada, nos permite considerar que a mesma foi instalada, testado de forma empírica e tem tido resultados positivos, e pode ser classificada de fato como praticante de fair trade, esse modelo pode ser classificado como uma ferramenta ou modelo de desenvolvimento alternativo ao modelo neoliberal dominante no Brasil e que pode ser replicado total ou parcialmente em outras regiões pesqueiras.

**Palavras-chave:** comércio solidário, comunidades tradicionais, fair trade, sistemas produtivos, mercado, pequenos pescadores, peixes, camarões.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The discussion about the practice of fair trade as well as its effectiveness in the development of socially vulnerable regions has gained strength in the world, and in Brazil, this discussion has also become relevant, given the multiple regions where its residents not uncommonly live below the poverty line.

The concept of fair trade, in a simplified form, is suggested by García (2011) and by the Fair Trade Labeling Organization International (2023) that define it as a set of commercial practices that contemplate regional socioeconomic conditions as an alternative to conventional national and international trade, which rules are globally unfair and, in particular for small productions, resulting in an economic model at the service of human beings. Tiburcio and Valente (2007) complement the concept and describe that for the practice of fair trade to be valid, it must present solidary characteristics, establishing relationships among producers, service providers, retailers, wholesalers and consumers based on equity, partnership, trust and shared interests, which result in obtaining fairer conditions for socially vulnerable groups, developing them through practices and rules with the support of conscious consumers.

Fair trade practices must go beyond the scope of commercial relations among people, giving rise to a new movement that allows the establishment of a direct relationship between producers and consumers with the elimination as much as possible of intermediaries and speculators. However, this is not always possible, and when these actors are present, it is then possible to envisage the application of a fair and stable price that allows those who produce to live with dignity. As García (2011) reports, the
establishment of long-term contracts based on mutual respect and ethical values, such as the pursuit of the common good, equity and care for the environment, allows the establishment of sufficient payment prices in order to satisfy the producers' needs, but also to create conditions for the sustainable development of other segments of the production chain without burdening the consumer. When these situations are met, fair trade works as a tool to change the economic model which objective is to correct the failure of the current capitalist system.

Specifically with regard to fishing in Paraná Coast, Anacleto and Baptista-Metri (2021) describe that a significant portion of the group of artisanal fishermen are socially vulnerable because, as a rule, they have precarious access to the market due to the lack of commercial structures, insufficient human capital, insufficient productive capital, weak institutions and, generally, weak bargaining power with other social actors in the productive chain. Thus, families, who are mostly socially vulnerable, have difficulty in accessing financing programs due to the lack of technicians who present feasibility projects, lack of guarantors and debt payment guarantees. A cycle of difficulties is created in which impoverished producer communities are unable to access funding resources in order to improve production and, therefore, remain impoverished.

Still according to Anacleto and Baptista-Metri (2021), apparently these communities in Paraná Coast are not able of solving their own problems by themselves, and it is urgent that interventions coming from other links in the production chain can intervene in a beneficial way in the search for solutions to collective problems.

The development of a region can occur in several ways, but in the cases of impoverished communities, income generation is an urgent factor given that it is a guarantee of survival and in the case involving small communities such as artisanal maritime fishing, the adoption of the concept fair trade by intermediaries can be a conscious and beneficial form of intervention based on new forms of commercialization, as pointed out by Tiburcio and Valente (2007) and Garcia (2011).

Paraná Coast has 90 kilometers of coastline and, with the bays of Guaraqueçaba, Paranaguá and Guaratuba, sum more than 400 kilometers of coves or bays. In these areas, approximately 60 communities, with an approximate population of 4,256 artisanal
fishermen who carry out their activities in the bays and in the open sea. Still according to the authors, artisanal fishing is practiced in the capture and landing of all kinds of aquatic species, they work alone or use family or self-employed labor, exploring ecological environments located close to the coast, since the vessel and equipment used for this purpose have little autonomy. In recent decades, the coast of Paraná has shown a strong reduction in fishing capacity, according to Anacleto et al. (2018) one of the main reasons for this fact may be linked to the asymmetry in the distribution of profits where traditionally the fisherman has the smallest share and retailers and wholesalers obtain the highest levels of profitability. However, despite fair trade is finding a good place for development in other regions and countries, with regard to artisanal fishing, in Paraná Coast, only one company was found that describes in its business values of fair trade practice (OLINDA, 2022).

Given the importance of this activity for the municipalities on the coast of Paraná, as well as the importance of adopting fair trade concepts as an alternative for development, the study aimed to investigate the impacts of the only company that practice fair trade in the region and its impacts on families of small fishermen.

2 METHODOLOGY

A case study was carried out between June 2022 and March 2023 on a fish company on the coast of Paraná, and the company was chosen because it is the only one that defines itself as a practitioner of fair trade, and this condition is described in its business values, having become a reference among socially correct consumers in the region.

The research has a qualitative nature, regarding the objective of the study, it has a descriptive exploratory character, being directed to the managers of the analyzed company and also to the fishermen who promote commercial relations with the referred company. The study was carried out in two stages, namely:

The first phase was the search for information from the company's managers, similarly to that proposed by Gonzalez and Martins (2007) and Vuarant (2020), the study was conducted through semi-structured interviews, guided by a pre-established script,
which addressed in particular the aspects of management, relationship with customers, relationship with fishermen and relationship with the proposal of socially fair trade. Still according to the proposition of Gonzalez and Martins (2007) and Anacleto et al (2020) there were returns when informal conversations were held with managers and employees who participated in the entire phase of the processes, from the receiving of the production to the final destination for the final consumer.

The second phase was aimed at ten fishermen who have commercial relationship with the company, and initially a survey was carried out on socioeconomic issues such as area of activity in fishing, age, gender, marital status and income.

In order to assess whether the company studied was in fact a fairtrade practitioner, information was collected from managers and subsequently measured from fishermen, as proposed by Tiburcio and Valente (2007), Garcia (2011) and Fair Trade Labeling Organization International (2023), namely: a) they promoted commercial activities that resulted in a beneficial relationship for all stakeholders (win-win relationship); b) there was equity in the distribution of the mark-up (profit); c) the partnership and shared interests were perceived by the fishermen; d) there was a relationship of trust among the various parties involved; e) the contracts were long-term; f) the relationship was based on mutual respect; g) payment prices were sufficient to meet the needs of fishermen; h) the company adopted ethical values and transparency; i) consumers consciously perceived the benefits of the marketing system. Finally, the company could only be classified as a fairtrade company if it systematically meets all the requirements described above.

Each of these factors was classified according to Alves and Anacleto (2018) and Moro et al. (2023) according to the report of the fishermen interviewed in: A = adequate: incidence favoring the development; R = fair: deficient incidence of the factor hindering the development, but still not compromising the development; I = insufficient: absence of the factor being classified as restrictive to family development.

In order to investigate which were the main positive and negative factors to assess the perception of fishermen if fair trade was actually practiced, the interviewees described the three most important factors in each factor, and in possession of this information as proposed by Negrelle et al. (2012), a cross-impact matrix was organized between the
positive factors and then the negative factors, with the set of cross-implications among them. The matrix as proposed by Negrelle et al. (2012) employs percentage values from 0 to 100 for each opinion expressed by respondents collectively in relation to the other opinions expressed. Each item is analyzed in relation to the influence exerted on the different types of activities related to fishing, so the higher the index, the greater the relevance of the item.

The impact matrix generates a relevance index (importance for development) that can be obtained by the equation:

$$\text{IR} = \frac{\text{FA x FB x 100}}{\sum \text{SF}}$$

**IR** = Index of Relevance of the evaluated situation;
**Fa** = Received influence Index;
**Fb** = Caused influence Index;
$$\sum \text{SF}$$ = Sum of index (Fa x Fb) of all analyzed questions.

After completing the primary data collection, an interpretative analysis was adopted using the data triangulation technique between the observation of the researchers and similar responses obtained from the fishermen and managers.

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 MANAGERS’ PERCEPTION

The company is located on the coast of Paraná and has been operating for 4 years, it currently has 8 employees and serves an average of 400 customers and sells the production of 11 linked fishermen, the company's value proposition is to maintain a fair business relationship with the fishing class, establishing a “win & win” relationship with customers. It is important to emphasize once again that the analyzed company refers to itself as a partner and despite formally and informally demonstrates that profit is not the main reason for the enterprise.

The average sale is one thousand kilograms of fish per month and there is no record of fish sold that are on any level of the red list of endangered animals, as well as it is an essential condition of the fish purchased that they are not in the closed period.
The company makes use of ecological and degradable packaging, different from what is traditionally seen in other shops in Paraná Coast. In relation to fair trade and profitability indexes, the final price charged for the sale of fish is the fee paid to fishermen of 40%.

The company also, due to the high training of its work team, provides guidance to fishermen regarding the regularization of fishing and the correct conservation of captured fish. The company principle is transparency, issuing public reports on its activities and its commercial relations with the fishing community and various consumer groups.

The competitive advantage related to customers comes, according to the managers, from the offer of nutritional analysis of fish, which is carried out in partnership with a university in the region. Consumers, through the adopted commercial management model, have access to a product with guaranteed origin and quality, fresh products, without preservatives, and coming from the family labor of artisanal fishing families.

Another action is the creation of a customer feedback process, where even after consumption they promote an evaluation of the products purchased and this information is systematically passed on to the fishermen, revealing in the view of the consumers what the requirements are.

The use of fish waste has also been carried out in order to serve consumers, many waste from the fish cleaning have noble meat such as filleting trimmings known as "fish face", "belly strips" or even "fish cheek" (from the heads that are discarded), shrimp heads, small oysters and native oyster shell powder are common foods on the coast of Paraná, and this company broths and soups that are also sold.

3.2 FISHERMEN’S PERCEPTION

The competitive advantage when related to fishermen is given in valuing the product with the certification of origin, the specification that it is a product from artisanal family fishing, and also describes who is the family responsible for production and the maritime area where the fish is caught.

The group of fishermen interviewed were mostly married (60%), male (70%) whose race consisted of white (70%) and brown (30%) people, aged between 28 and 54
years old. The level of education among respondents was surveyed, with 50% of respondents having only elementary education, 41.7% having secondary education and 8.3% having higher education.

The relationship established with fishermen goes beyond simple trade, and permeates with collective information through electronic media, especially when adverse weather conditions are present. The divulgation of special types of fish and custom sales in some cases.

The association of the capture and trade system with the cultural traditions of remaining communities of ‘caiçaras’ is another factor that has significant non-monetary value for the fishermen involved in carrying out the transaction, however, according to the fishermen interviewed, the average monthly income obtained from trading with the referred company was approximately US 425.00 (dolars) with a tendency to rise as more fish are delivered.

Among the interviewees, most (n=30%) reported that the company does not absorb all production, most of them, however, in addition to trading with the company object of this study, also had a portfolio of traditional customers and who are interested in the trade of more than one company.

The main products captured were fish of the following species: mullet (*Mugil liza* Valenciennes 1836), catfish (*Cathorops spixii* (Agassiz 1829)), bluefish (*Haemulopsis corvinaeformis* (Steindachner 1868)), mackerel (*Scomberomorus sp* Lacepède 1801), parati (*Mugil curema* Valenciennes 1836), sole fish (*Paralichthys orbignyanus*, *P. patagonicus* and *P. isosceles*); catfish (*Genidens barbus*), sea bass (*Centropomus parallelus*) and white hake (*Cynoscion leiarchus*), as well as seven beard shrimp (*Xiphopenaeus kroyeri*), and the commercial relationship was built more than four years ago, so some of the fishermen have already started the sale to the company right at the beginning of its activities and they are with this partnership until the present moment.

With this information it can be noticed the loyalty of the fishermen to the research company, which can be confirmed in the testimonials in relation to the price paid by the product, all of them said they believed that the value was adequate and that selling the
products to the company increased an average of 53% of the total income of the families involved in the commercial transaction.

The set of positive factors obtained in the transaction show that fair trade actually occurs, and that it was relevant in the perception of the interviewed fishermen (Table 1). This situation reveals a largely favorable scenario, where the set of opportunities can represent the future hope of better profits and consequently the valuation of family work.

Table 1. Cross-impact matrix of the implications of fair fish trade in the perception of fishermen on the coast of Paraná involved in commercial transactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Factors</th>
<th>IR</th>
<th>Negative Factors</th>
<th>IR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Security in business relationships</td>
<td>22,1</td>
<td>1 Not absorbing the entire production</td>
<td>54,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Fair price paid for fish</td>
<td>22,1</td>
<td>2 Time to proceed with the payment for the production</td>
<td>31,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Valuing Family labor</td>
<td>12,8</td>
<td>3 Limited delivery time</td>
<td>6,21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Reduction of dependence on sales associated with the summer season</td>
<td>9,32</td>
<td>4 Lack of capital to acquire new machines with better technology and equipment</td>
<td>3,48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Increase in family’s annual income</td>
<td>8,82</td>
<td>5 Tough competition with better structured fish industries</td>
<td>2,82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Improved fish quality due to the freshness of the sales process</td>
<td>7,64</td>
<td>6 Climate instability hampers fishing and marketing</td>
<td>1,39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Fish if associated with environmentally correct products</td>
<td>6,67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Divulgation of product origin</td>
<td>4,01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Dissemination of fisherman traditions</td>
<td>3,93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Good communication between the company and fishermen in feedback processes</td>
<td>2,61</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The authors

3.3 FAIR TRADE: BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

With regard to the challenges faced by this company, the reports of the managers referred that initially there was distrust on the part of the fishermen for being a new modality of commercial relationship. The quality standard requirements and respect for social and environmental issues were also perceived as different by the fishermen who, until then, had not been questioned about these factors by other buyers in the region. According to Orsiolli and Nobre (2016), the motivation for this type of company comes from the understanding on the part of people, that in the face of limited natural resources
and social aspects, they have stimulated the creation of a company that consider strategies aligned with the sustainable development, these are not actions taken in the singular, they happen through the inclusion of other factors and actors, so that all business aspects are encompassed.

The difficulty of managing the enterprise was also a reported factor given that the managers have training in the environmental area and not in business administration, and finally the low investment resources were also factors that proved to be a challenge, however despite the difficulties showed by the company evaluated, it presents the alignment between its theoretical discourse disclosed in its business values and the practical application of fair trade concepts (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beneficiary relationship for all</th>
<th>Market-up (profit)</th>
<th>Perceived shared interests</th>
<th>Trust relationship</th>
<th>Long-term contracts</th>
<th>Mutual respect</th>
<th>Fair price</th>
<th>Ethical values</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>Beneficiary consumers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
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</table>

A = adequate; R = regular; I = insufficient.

The company has a policy of valuing fish species of lesser commercial value and less sought after by consumers and tourists, this action becomes relevant as these fish, not uncommonly due to the lack of demand, end up being discarded at the time of hoisting nets on the high seas, the added values of this type of product are important for the survival of families. Still derived from this issue, the commercial model adopted according to the managers also aims to strengthen the sustainability of local products in the face of the large fishing industries that sell frozen fish in all regions of Brazil.

Despite the set of positive factors proving to be favorable, the set of negative issues that can generate serious implications for the development capacity of a productive sector must be considered, the set of implications as reported by Anacleto et al. (2018) are the factors that can reduce potential, often making them not noticeable by those
involved, in this context, the issue of payment processing time is the influencing factor that deserves to be highlighted, it is important to consider that in all interviewees who reported the issue, the factor did not cause the rupture of commercial relations, but it is a situation that can have increased efficiency, as well as the extension of hours for receiving fish. What is described as the problem situation of the company not absorbing the entire production deserves two important considerations, the first one is that despite having been reported as the most relevant negative factor in the opinion of the fishermen, from the perspective of the company, the factor considered can be classified as positive since it clearly demonstrates the confidence of the fishermen in the company. The second consideration is that commercial relationships with a single partner, despite facilitating production logistics, often reveal a closure for new commercial relationships that can also generate benefits for the production unit.

It is important to highlight that the other negative issues pointed out by the interviewed fishermen cannot be considered as a direct attribution of the company investigated in this study, therefore they should not be the focus of the analysis, although relevant they can be investigated in other types of research.

The fair trade system found on the coast of Paraná, although timid, it serves few fishermen of the existing total, it can be classified as hopeful, because it has proven to be a positive model and able of generating better living conditions for the fishermen involved, despite of being a formally incorporated company, it is possible to perceive a cooperative movement in the management model adopted, which can over time generate self-sufficiency and reduce the influence of the large fishing industries on consumption, given that the fair trade model investigated can be replicated in other fishing communities, however the realization of this endeavor is at the mercy of businessmen concerned in fact with social and environmental issues, in addition to the economic one.

The greatest limitation of the possibility of replicating the existing model Paraná Coast is that apparently there are not so many fishing entrepreneurs who, in addition to their well-being and profitability, are also concerned with respecting cultural issues, in the interests of fishermen, guiding the production at sea with feedback processes, and
streamlining the supply logistics so that the fish can arrive still fresh at a fair cost to the consumer's table.

The efficiency of the management model investigated and adopted in Paraná Coast may also have determining variables in taking advantage of the rise of consumers concerned about the food they consume, and the impacts that they generate on society in terms of environmental issues, as well as it is a perceptible increase in consumers linking their consumption to ethics and transparency of business processes and social impacts. The statement is corroborated by Silva-Filho and Moura (2011) who describe environmentally correct and socially fair production systems within globally accepted ethical financial standards that can meet a differentiated demand, capable of understanding that such practices raise the cost of production to a real cost that includes environmental externalities and minimum and indirect social charges.

The adopted fair trade is associated with the commercial relationship called "win-win" which according to Mckenna (1989) the main focus is to integrate over time the parties involved in the transactions, that is, company, customers, suppliers and producers, providing an enduring relationship which fruits are oriented economically to results of the type where all partners have benefits. Kotler (2000) reports that the final result of this negotiation model is the construction of a singular asset and network performance, in this case the operational principle is simplified in the construction of an effective network of relationships with the main interested parties and the profits will be a consequence and the division is made more symmetrically between those involved in the production and commercialization chain.

Finally, the analysis of the fair trade system adopted in the investigated company allows us to consider that it was installed, empirically tested and has had positive results, and it can be classified in fact as a fair trade practitioner, this model can be classified as a tool or an alternative development model to the dominant neoliberal model in Brazil that it can be replicated in whole or in part in other fishing regions.
4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study revealed that positive factors, especially the security in commercial relations, the fair value paid for fish and the valuation of family labor, were the issues most valued by the interviewed fishermen.

In relation to the negative factors, the company not absorbing the entire production, the time to pay for the production and the limited hours for delivering the fish, were the most cited issues, however they were not classified as situations that could be factors of rupture of the business process.

The set of positive factors were greater than the negative factors, and these were classified as having little impact on commercial relations between the company and the fishermen.

The adopted strategy obeys the “win & win” model, in other words, the commercial relations resulted in the benefit of all the interested parties, there was equity in the distribution of the mark-up (profit), the partnership actually occurred and the shared interests were perceived by the fishermen, there was a relationship of trust among the various parties involved, the existing contracts had a long-term existence, the relationship was based on mutual respect, the payment prices were sufficient to satisfy the needs of the fishermen, the company adopted ethical values and transparency and the consumers consciously perceived the benefits of the marketing system that valued the local identity, so it is possible to state that in the analyzed period, the fair trade discourse was aligned with commercial practice.

The analysis of the fair trade system adopted in the investigated company allows us to consider that it was installed, empirically tested and has had positive results, and it can be classified in fact as a fair trade practitioner, this model can be classified as a tool or an alternative development model to the dominant neoliberal model in Brazil that it can be replicated in whole or in part in other fishing regions.

This research was limited to an enterprise on the coast of Paraná, however it is recommended that further studies on sustainable entrepreneurship and fair trade be carried out in other Brazilian regions.
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