

The implications of global climate change for fisheries management in the Caribbean

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Concerns about the socio-economic impacts of observed and projected climate change have been high on the research agendas of scientists for the last several decades. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the recent observed warming is largely human induced, and the trend will continue well into the next century owing to 'thermal inertia', related to the concentration of greenhouse gases already emitted to the atmosphere. While there is a dearth of research on the effects of climate change on commercial and artisanal fisheries in the Caribbean, valuable insights can be gleaned from observations in other jurisdictions. This paper concludes that the consequences of climate change on Caribbean fisheries are likely to be mostly negative. Adverse impacts are expected to manifest themselves through habitat alteration and loss, reduced abundance and diversity, and shifts in distribution induced by changes in ocean currents. Stakeholders in the regional fishing industry might therefore wish to give greater credence to the challenges posed by climate change and climate variability than currently appears to be the case. Appropriate response strategies may not require radical changes in current approaches to management, but rather more effective implementation of existing and proposed arrangements.

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