

Incentivising lionfish removals through development of markets for jewellery: preliminary experiences from Belize, the Bahamas and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Incentivando la supresión del pez león a través del desarrollo de los mercados para la joyería: experiencias preliminares de Belice, Las Islas Bahamas y San Vicente y las Granadinas.

Inciter suppression de poisson lions à travers le développement de marchés pour les bijoux: les expériences préliminaires de Belize, aux Bahamas et Saint Vincent et les Grenadines.

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Description

The Indo-Pacific lionfish (*Pterois volitans/miles*) invasion poses a unique threat to Caribbean marine ecosystems and as such requires an innovative approach to control. Due to rapid re-colonisation rates, commercially incentivising removals presents the most feasible option for sustained population suppression, conferring long-term benefits to coral reefs and their associated fisheries. Across the Caribbean, efforts to develop markets for lionfish meat face a significant barrier; the high opportunity cost faced by fishers targeting lionfish in place of traditionally-caught species. Value addition along the market chain can help overcome this barrier, and emerging markets for jewellery made from previously discarded parts of the fish – spines and fins – can increase the value of fishers' landed catch by up to 40%. Through comparing experiences from three Caribbean countries with different socioeconomic contexts and fishing cultures, we discuss the relative success of interventions, such as jewellery-making workshops and marketing assistance, used to jump-start these markets since 2013, as well as associated socioeconomic benefits. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with jewellers in Belize and the Bahamas captured perceived improvements in personal, social and economic wellbeing, and were used to monitor contribution to household income and identify challenges. Lionfish jewellery markets provide an opportunity for women's economic empowerment, livelihood diversification in small-scale fishing communities, and a new platform for outreach, increasing awareness, and engagement in lionfish control. Through developing regional guidelines, standards and a possible common brand, we conclude by discussing opportunities for expanding the benefits of this integrated approach to lionfish management further across the Caribbean.

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