



## INFLUENCES OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE INDICATORS ON AQUACULTURE PRODUCTION IN COASTAL PROVINCES, VIETNAM

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### ABSTRACT

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Aquaculture plays an important role in Vietnam's economic development, particularly in terms of export turnover and aquaculture producers' income. However, climate change and environmental pollution strongly impact Vietnam's aquaculture industry. In this paper, the panel data collected from eight provinces in the eight coastal provinces from 2014 to 2023 were employed. A fixed-effects model was applied to determine relationships between climate variables (temperature, rainfall, humidity, sea level rise, and sunshine hours) and environmental factors (dissolved oxygen, lead contamination, and ammonia) with aquaculture output. The results showed that factors such as dissolved oxygen, lead contamination, production area, humidity, and seawater level reveal strong relationships with aquaculture production at a statistically significant level. Meanwhile, the factors such as ammonia, rainfall, sunshine hours, and temperature did not have statistically significant correlations with aquaculture production. The findings highlighted the need for policymakers and other stakeholders to address climate resilience issues in planning, investment, and technological transformation for aquaculture development.

## INTRODUCTION

Aquaculture has been one of the major sectors of the international economic strategy in terms of its contribution to the national economy, food security, and sustainable development, especially along the coast. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2023), the contribution of aquaculture to world fish production has been steadily increasing: 130.9 million tons (58.6%) of the total annual global supply (223.2 million tons/year), but the question arises: to what extent is the sector developing sustainably to meet the growing demands of the emerging economic market in light of rapidly increasing world population and climate and environmental parameters change?

With more than 3,260 km of coastline, Vietnam forms one of the three largest aquaculture producers in the world (FAO, 2022). In 2022, the country's aquaculture production totaled nearly 5.2 million tons, representing more than 55% of total Vietnamese seafood production (General Statistics Office, 2023). The success was achieved thanks to the industrialization of aquaculture. Agricultural producers have increasingly adopted circular systems, automated feeding devices, water quality monitoring equipment, and disease management techniques to increase production

efficiency and minimize environmental impacts (Nguyen *et al.*, 2019). The innovative intensive farming systems in shrimp culture have been strengthened, particularly the integrated farming model that includes rice and shrimp. This integrated model has contributed positively to the social-environmental-economic efficiency (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). As a result, shrimp exports in 2022 reached over USD 4.3 billion (Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers [VASEP], 2023). Not only shrimp, but the pangasius sector has also undergone significant restructuring. The progress of breeding, feed conversion ratios, and processing quality has enhanced Vietnam's competitiveness in the global markets. Pangasius exports amounted to USD 2.4 billion in 2022, mainly reaching China, the United States, and the European Union (VASEP, 2023). Together with producers' technological adaptation, the Vietnamese government's policies have promoted sustainable aquaculture practices consistent with international certifications such as the Aquaculture Stewardship Council and Global GAP (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development [MARD], 2021).

Despite the successes, Vietnam's aquaculture is facing many challenges. Environmental pollution and climate change have been considered significant threats to coastal aquaculture (Asian Development Bank, 2007). Numerous publications demonstrate how environmental factors such as land, soil, water quality (dissolved oxygen, ammonia, lead contamination), temperature, sunshine hours, and humidity significantly influence aquaculture productivity (Engle and Wossink, 2008; Yoo and Lee, 2016; Boyd and Tucker, 1992; Davidson *et al.*, 2021).

Climate change, especially extreme weather events and sea level rise, has impacted aquaculture both in the short and long term. In the long term, climate change causes the reduction of wild seeds and rainfall and increases competition for freshwater. All these changes extensively influence aquaculture production, particularly in species growth, disease prevalence, and productivity. The impacts of climate change on aquaculture sustainability have recently attracted considerable attention from the scientific community, as aquaculture significantly contributes to global food security, nutrition, and socio-economic livelihoods (Yazdi & Shakouri, 2010; Lam *et al.*, 2024). Further, climate change has the potential to amplify an increase in the likelihood of conflict and a reduction in the feasibility of maintaining current residence (Nosir, 2023). However, quantitative models are inadequately explaining the relationships between climate-related risks and poverty and assessing the farmers' coping strategies (Nofiu and Baharudin, 2024). Smart farming has emerged as one of the solutions to the challenges of climate change in aquaculture and agriculture (Noor *et al.*, 2023; Kadem, 2025).

Aquaculture expansion is not only influenced by environmental factors and climate change, but it also negatively pollutes soil, air, and water. Several studies detail the negative effects of aquaculture production on the environment, such as greenhouse gas emissions (Froehlich *et al.*, 2017; MacLeod *et al.*, 2020), habitat destruction and modification (Richards and Friess, 2015; Primavera, 2006), antibiotic resistance proliferation (Cabello *et al.*, 2013; Miranda *et al.*, 2018), and nutrient pollution (Taranger *et al.*, 2015).

In Vietnam, several studies focused on investigating the impacts of climate change on aquaculture and farmers' mitigation (Johnson & Hung, 2020). Moreover,

many other researchers explored the environmental damages caused by aquaculture (Nguyen, 2017; Luom *et al.*, 2022). On the other hand, Nguyen *et al.* (2020) conducted a study on "impact of environmental pollution on aquaculture development" in Vietnam using households' survey data with a small sample and qualitative analysis to show that water pollution was one of the factors causing loss in aquaculture production. The research done by White (2017) also witnessed environmental impacts on aquaculture. However, this report investigated how fish farming waste components (nutrients, uneaten food, residues of disease or parasite treatment chemicals) affect wild fish species. The research that focused on analyzing the influences of environmental factors (dissolved oxygen, ammonia, lead contamination, temperature, sunshine hours, and humidity...) on aquaculture production based on panel data and quantitative analysis is uncommon.

The paper mainly aims to examine the impacts of environmental parameters (dissolved oxygen, ammonia, and lead contamination) and climate factors (area of production, rainfall, sea level, sunshine hours, temperature, and humidity) on aquaculture production in coastal areas of Vietnam. By doing so, some evidence-based policy recommendations for developing aquaculture in coastal areas of Vietnam in the context of climate change are provided.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Study Site**

This study examines Vietnam's coastal provinces during the ten years from 2014 to 2023, covering the vast country's coastline from the southern Mekong Delta to the northern Gulf of Tonkin. Quang Ninh, Hai Phong, and Nam Dinh in the North; Nghe An in the North-central region; Quang Nam and Ninh Thuan in the South-central region; Vung Tau in the Southeast region; and Ca Mau in the Mekong Delta are among the important aquaculture regions included in the study area. These provinces were chosen because they represent a variety of coastal ecosystems along Vietnam's coastlines and contribute substantially to the country's aquaculture output. The study area is ideally situated to investigate the effects of climate and environmental factors on aquaculture production because they have tropical monsoon climates with regional variations in temperature, rainfall, and humidity.

### **Data Collection**

The empirical analysis is based on a dataset from 2014 to 2023. To guarantee the accuracy and completeness of the data, environmental and climate indicators were gathered from several reliable sources. The Statistical Yearbook of Vietnam, which offered standardized time-series measurements of important climatic variables, such as mean annual temperature, precipitation levels, and humidity indices across the study regions, was a primary data source. Specialized environmental parameters taken from the Annual Environment Statistics Reports, which provided comprehensive measurements of water quality indicators (dissolved oxygen, ammonia, and lead contamination), coastal pollution indices, and extreme weather events' frequency were added to these core datasets.

### **Data Analysis**

A fixed-effects regression model is utilized to investigate the connection between aquaculture production and environmental and climate factors. The data's

panel structure and the model's capacity to account for unobserved time-invariant heterogeneity across provinces served as the driving forces behind this decision. The fixed-effects model is specified as:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1it} + \beta_2 X_{2it} + \dots + \beta_k X_{kit} + \alpha_i + u_{it}$$

Where  $Y_{it}$  represents the logarithm of aquaculture production in province  $i$  at time  $t$ ,  $X_{1it}$  to  $X_{kit}$  are our environmental and socio-economic variables, shown in Table (1),  $\alpha_i$  captures the province-specific fixed effects, and  $u_{it}$  is the error term.

Table (1): Variable Description

Variable definition	Unit	Expected value
<i>Dependent variable</i>		
Prod Total aquaculture production	Tons	+
<i>Independent variables</i>		
DO Dissolved Oxygen	Mg/l	+
Pb Lead Concentration	Mg/l	-
NH4 Amonia	Mg/l	-
Area Production area	ha	+
Rain Rainfall	mm	+
Water Sea level	cm	+
Sun Sunshine hours	hour	+
Humid Humidity	%	-
Temp Temperature	°C	-

Before model estimation, comprehensive diagnostic tests were conducted to ensure the validity of our econometric approach. Variables were examined for multicollinearity using variance inflation factors (VIF), with values consistently below the conventional threshold, indicating no severe multicollinearity concerns. The Hausman test confirmed the appropriateness of fixed-effects over random-effects specification ( $\chi^2 = 27.43$ ), validating our methodological choice. Additionally, we tested for heteroskedasticity using the modified Wald test and addressed detected issues through robust standard errors. By showing how changes in potentially controllable environmental factors correlate with changes in aquaculture outcomes, the model's results are suitable for policy-relevant analysis. This will create a strong empirical basis for management plans and policy recommendations that align with the principles of a sustainable economy.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Overview of Aquaculture in Vietnam in the Context of Climate Change

Vietnam's fishery industry has contributed substantially to economic and social development while simultaneously enhancing the national position in a global market. The contributions of the aquaculture sector have been manifested in the expansion of cultivation areas, production output, substantial export value, and job creation for coastal laborers. The emergence of Vietnam's aquaculture has made the country one of Southeast Asia's most important agricultural producers in recent decades (FAO, 2023). Vietnam has transformed from a modest producer in the 1990s to one of the world's prominent aquaculture nations, with annual production exceeding 4.5 million tons (World Bank Aquaculture Report, 2023).

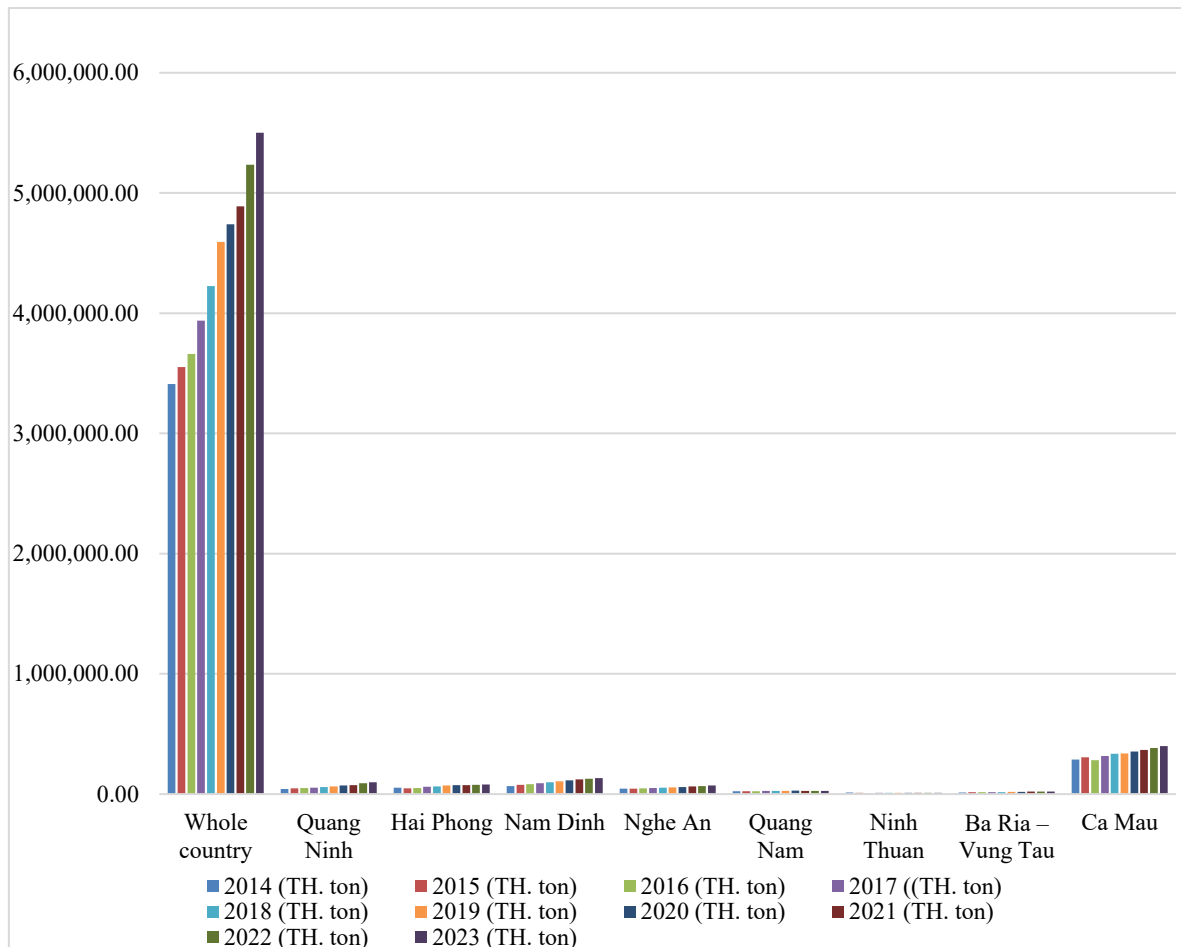
Over ten years (2014-2023), the aquaculture area increased at an average annual growth rate of 0.13%. Among the eight selected provinces, the aquaculture area expanded rapidly at a rate of 3.63% in Quang Ninh, followed by Quang Nam province with an increase of 1.89%, and Nghe An province with an increase of 0.95%. The remaining provinces experienced decreases in total aquaculture area Table (2). Looking at the whole country, the aquaculture area has expanded across all geographical regions with increasing offshore development. The expansion witnesses that the Vietnamese government has implemented effective policies and land use planning measures, especially converting ineffective rice land and other crops into aquaculture cultivation.

Table (2): Aquaculture Area of Vietnam

Location	2014 (TH.ha)	2015 (TH.ha)	2016 (TH.ha)	2017 (TH.ha)	2018 (TH.ha)	2019 (TH.ha)	2020 (TH.ha)	2021 (TH.ha)	2022 (TH.ha)	2023 (TH.ha)	Average growth rate (%)
<i>Whole country</i>	1,048.9	1,054.5	1,066.6	1,100.6	1,118.0	1,138.0	1,118.3	1,089.5	1,097.7	1,061.3	100.13
Quang Ninh	18.50	19.10	19.00	20.10	20.80	21.00	23.50	27.70	29.00	25.50	103.63
Hai Phong	12.60	12.00	12.20	13.00	13.30	12.60	11.70	10.70	11.00	8.90	96.21
Nam Dinh	15.80	16.00	15.40	15.40	15.20	15.50	15.80	14.40	14.80	14.50	99.05
Nghe An	20.20	20.60	20.70	21.10	21.40	21.40	21.50	19.00	19.70	22.00	100.95
Quang Nam	4.90	5.00	5.10	5.20	5.50	5.50	5.40	5.20	5.10	5.80	101.89
Ninh Thuan	1.30	1.20	0.90	1.20	1.20	1.10	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.80	94.75
Ba Ria – Vung Tau	7.00	6.90	6.80	6.90	6.90	6.80	6.80	6.70	6.50	6.60	99.35
Ca Mau	298.10	299.80	301.50	302.90	302.40	305.00	285.50	279.40	280.10	287.60	99.60

Source: General Statistics Office of Vietnam

During the 2014-2023 period, total aquaculture output reached 43.74 million tons, with 2023 marking the highest annual output at 5.5 million tons, representing a 61% increase compared to 2014 and an average annual growth rate of 5.46%. The Red River delta provinces (Quang Ninh, Hai Phong, and Nam Dinh) recorded faster growth rates than other regions. However, Ca Mau remains the province contributing the largest share to the nation's total aquaculture production Figure (1). Productivity has significantly improved in the period thanks to modern techniques, particularly in large-scale industrial and semi-industrial shrimp farming systems. Implementing closed-cycle industrial farming with minimal water exchange has yielded high economic returns as well as reduced environmental pollution in several Central coastal provinces.



Note: TH denotes thousand

Figure (1): Aquaculture production of Vietnam (*Source: General Statistics Office of Vietnam*)

Even though environmental pollution and climate change have increasingly occurred in the coastal regions of Vietnam, which accommodate 50% of the national population, possess abundant natural and human resources, and serve as a center for socio-economic activities, agricultural, industrial, and other economic activities generate wastes and emissions that negatively impact on aquatic environment in the coastal regions (Hoang, 2023). The Vietnamese case demonstrated that the coastal regions produce higher levels of solid waste than inland areas (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment [MONRE], 2021).

The coastal surface water has experienced rising pollution due to multiple factors affecting the water environment, such as hydrological features, seasonal water flow variations, and contamination from industrial facilities, small-scale production operations, agricultural activities, and household wastewater discharge. These pollutants are transported via river systems to coastal zones, where concentrations of several contaminants have been reported to exceed permissible limits by 1.5 to 3 times. Although the overall quality of coastal seawater in Vietnam remains relatively good, with most parameters falling within the regulatory thresholds outlined in QCVN 10-MT: 2015/BTNMT, there are instances, particularly during the rainy season, when the influx of organic matter, ammonium ( $\text{NH}_4$ ), total suspended solids

(TSS), and other pollutants from inland sources and offshore drift contribute to elevated marine environmental risk indices. In some areas, levels of  $\text{NH}_4$ , TSS, Fe, Coliform, and  $\text{P-PO}_4^{3-}$  have exceeded the QCVN 10-MT: 2015/BTNMT limits (MONRE, 2021).

According to Pham *et al.* (2016), aquaculture productivity suffers negative effects from natural disasters (typhoons and floods) and various environmental stressors. In the South-Central provinces of Vietnam, sudden changes in pH resulted in mass mortality of shrimp and fish. Hoang and Tran (2020) found that rising temperatures, increased rainfall, sea level rise, and extreme weather events have collectively led to reductions in production areas, ecological diversity, and water quality, ultimately decreasing aquaculture output in the Northern coastal region.

### **Influences of Environmental and Climate Factors on Aquaculture Production**

In the estimated model, the P-value = 0.000 indicates that the estimated model is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. The overall  $R^2$  value of 0.563 means that the independent variables can explain 56.3% of the dependent variable. The model results presented in Table (3) show that the coefficients of the variables align with theoretical expectations and are consistent with findings from previous studies presented in Table (1). Specifically, dissolved oxygen (DO), production area, and sunshine hours exhibit a positive effect on aquaculture production, whereas lead (Pb), ammonium ( $\text{NH}_4$ ), humidity, and temperature demonstrate a negative influence. However, the associated p-values reveal that the variables  $\text{NH}_4$ , rainfall amount, sunshine hours, and temperature do not exhibit statistically significant effects.

Table (3): Results of the Model of Environmental and Climate Factors on Aquaculture Production

Model: Fixed-effects, using 80 observations				
Included 8 cross-sectional units				
Time-series length = 10				
Dependent variable: Ln-Prod				
Rsqr: Within = 0.754		Between = 0.590		Overall = 0.563
Corr (u, j, xb) = 0.000			F(2.163)	= 348.02
			Prob>F	= 0.0000
	Coefficient	Std. error	t-ratio	p-value
Const	5.63429	7.47425	0.7538	0.4542
DO	0.100843	0.0270516	3.728	0.0005***
Pb	-6.1433	9.769312	-3.042	0.0036***
$\text{NH}_4$	-0.0786781	0.0756094	-1.041	0.3026
Ln Area	0.301919	0.137448	2.197	0.0323**
Ln Rain	0.0841600	0.0733002	1.148	0.2559
Ln Water	2.34806	0.896036	2.620	0.0113**
Ln Sun	0.366278	0.238070	1.539	0.1297
Ln Humid	-2.55707	0.780594	-3.276	0.0018***
Ln Temp	-0.0755309	1.39920	-0.05398	0.9571

### **Dissolved Oxygen (DO)**

The coefficient for DO is 0.100843 with a significant p-value (0.0005), indicating that a one percent increase in DO concentration correlated with a 0.1008% increase in aquaculture output. This means that DO plays a critical role in aquaculture production. This finding aligns with Boyd & Tucker (2021), who identified DO as a primary factor in intensive aquaculture farming. In Vietnam, Mutea *et al.* (2021) also found that DO fluctuations caused the yield variations in polyculture in the Mekong Delta. The variable's high statistical significance and narrow standard error (0.0270516) underscore this relationship's robustness, allowing researchers to conclude that investments in aeration technologies yield the highest returns among aquaculture interventions.

### **Lead Concentration (Pb)**

The coefficient for Pb is -6.1433 with a significant p-value (0.0036), showing a negative effect of Pb on aquaculture output. Similar to DO, it can be explained that an increase of lead concentration of one percent may cause a reduction of aquaculture production by 6.14 percent. This result is supported by prior findings by Authman *et al.* (2015) and Marsussen *et al.* (2007). However, most previous research conducted in Vietnam and the rest of the world did not directly show the quantitative relationships between Pb and aquaculture production. Most of them are convinced that a low level of Pb pollution caused adverse effects on fish and shrimp health and reproduction, then lowered productivity (Dave and Xiu, 1991; Devlin, 2006; Åkerblom *et al.*, 2014; Tuan *et al.*, 2021).

### **Production Area**

The production area's coefficient in the model is 0.301587 with a statistically significant p-value (0.0337), indicating that a 1% increase in aquaculture area corresponds to a 0.3% increase in production. This result is relevant to Asche & Roll (2013), who found the relationships between production area and aquaculture output in Nordic aquaculture systems. Pham *et al.* (2016) indicated that medium-sized farms (from 2 to 5 hectares) achieved higher productivity per hectare than the larger farms due to more intensive management. This finding also supports Roy *et al.* (2002), who advocated for productivity intensification over spatial expansion in Vietnam.

### **Humidity**

Humidity displays a heavy negative impact on aquaculture production, with a coefficient of -2.57708 and a highly significant p-value (0.0018). This result supports Balta *et al.* (2024)'s finding when they concluded that the higher humid was, the higher the pathogen proliferation rates were in tropical aquaculture settings. The coefficient is also associated with Maulu *et al.* (2019), who estimated significant economic losses from humidity because of disease outbreaks.

### **Sea level**

The model shows a positive and significant effect of sea level on aquaculture production (coefficient is 2.34806, p is 0.0114). This result is supported by Wiyoto *et al.* (2022) when emphasizing the benefits of water depth stability for aquaculture, especially shrimp culture. However, the sea level's impact on aquaculture production must be interpreted carefully because moderate sea level rise may benefit in the short term. At the same time, it may damage infrastructure in the long term.



Non-significant Variables (Ammonia, Rainfall, Sunshine Hours, and Temperature): The fixed-effects model results did not show statistically significant influences of ammonia, rainfall, sunshine hours, and temperature on aquaculture output. Regarding temperature, this research result is supported by Nguyen (2015), who found that Vietnamese aquaculture mainly operates within optimal thermal ranges. The non-significance of the coefficients of the factors, especially ammonia (NH<sub>4</sub>), may be explained by good mitigating and managing practices of producers in the context of climate change (Mohamed *et al.*, 2024; Vo *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, Huynh and Nguyen (2019) indicated that in some coastal areas, NH<sub>4</sub> in water was higher than the allowable threshold of 0.1 mg/L as prescribed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (standard QCVN 10-MT:2015/BTNMT). However, according to previous research, shrimp's tolerance to NH<sub>4</sub> concentration in water is higher (Frías-Espericueta *et al.*, 2000), so productivity is not strongly affected.

### CONCLUSIONS

With an almost 5% GDP contribution, the aquaculture sector has been acknowledged as one of Vietnam's most important economic sectors. Aquaculture areas and production have grown in coastal regions and throughout the nation between 2014 and 2023. However, environmental pollution and climate change present many challenges for aquaculture. Aquaculture operations are impacted by climate change in several ways, including the farming environment, farming organization, infrastructure, and technical facilities. In the meantime, aquatic productivity and product quality are adversely impacted.

The relationship between environmental and climatic factors and coastal aquaculture production in Vietnam was examined using a fixed-effects model, identifying important productivity determinants. One of the key factors influencing aquaculture production is DO, whereas the most detrimental effect is Pb contamination. Production area and output have a positive correlation. Environmental factors, particularly humidity, also indicate significant effects, which exhibit a strong negative correlation. On the other hand, there was a noteworthy positive correlation with sea level. Notably, no statistically significant correlations existed between production and temperature, sunshine hours, rainfall, or ammonia.

These results offer evidence-based recommendations for operational management and policy formulation in Vietnam's coastal aquaculture industry. Significant productivity could result from giving DO management, Pb contamination prevention, ideal facility sizing, and humidity control measures top priority. Future studies should look into adaptive management techniques for the expected effects of climate change, especially concerning water levels and related environmental stressors, as well as possible synergistic effects between environmental parameters.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

أثر المؤشرات البيئية والمناخية على إنتاج تربية الأحياء المائية في المناطق الساحلية في فيتنام

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## الخلاصة

يلعب قطاع تربية الأحياء المائية دورًا هامًا في التنمية الاقتصادية في فيتنام، لا سيما من حيث حجم الصادرات ودخل منتجي الأحياء المائية. ومع ذلك، تتأثر صناعة تربية الأحياء المائية في فيتنام بشدة بتغيرات المناخ وتلوث البيئة. استخدمت هذه الدراسة بيانات لوحية تم جمعها من ثماني محافظات ساحلية في الفترة من 2014 إلى 2023. وقد تم تطبيق نموذج التأثير الثابت لتحديد العلاقة بين المتغيرات المناخية (درجة الحرارة، كمية الأمطار، الرطوبة، ارتفاع مستوى سطح البحر، عدد ساعات سطوع الشمس) والعوامل البيئية (الأكسجين الذائب، تلوث الرصاص، الأمونيا) وإنتاج تربية الأحياء المائية. أظهرت النتائج وجود علاقات قوية ذات دلالة إحصائية بين بعض العوامل، مثل الأكسجين الذائب، وتلوث الرصاص، والمساحة الإنتاجية، والرطوبة، ومستوى مياه البحر، وإنتاج تربية الأحياء المائية. بينما لم تظهر عوامل أخرى، مثل الأمونيا، وكمية الأمطار، وعدد ساعات سطوع الشمس، ودرجة الحرارة، أي ارتباطات ذات دلالة إحصائية مع إنتاج تربية الأحياء المائية. تسلط هذه النتائج الضوء على ضرورة أن يولي صانعو السياسات والجهات المعنية الأخرى اهتمامًا كبيرًا لقضايا التكيف مع تغير المناخ في تخطيط وتطوير قطاع تربية الأحياء المائية، وفي الاستثمار والتحول التكنولوجي اللازمين لذلك.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تربية الأحياء المائية، المناخ، المناطق الساحلية في فيتنام، البيئة، التأثير

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