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*Source / Izvornik:* **Journal of Cleaner Production, 2022, 333**

**Journal article, Accepted version**

**Rad u časopisu, Završna verzija rukopisa prihvaćena za objavljivanje (postprint)**

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.130072>

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:235:595969>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2024-11-26**

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# Environmental and economic assessment of mariculture systems using a high share of renewable energy sources

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## Abstract

Increased demand for fish products has resulted in greater investment in and modernization of the aquaculture sector. These processes have led to higher energy needs of aquaculture farms globally, resulting in their greater environmental impact. Fossil fuel is the main power source in aquaculture, and its combustion generates a large amount of Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) and other emissions. This paper considers the use of renewable energy sources (RESs) in mariculture systems to ensure at the same time cost-effective and environmentally friendly powering options. This paper investigates an alternative solution which relocates the majority of equipment and tasks from a mariculture vessel to a barge to reduce the energy demands of the vessel and to significantly lessen emissions of the system. The solution includes the full electrification of the workboat and the installation of PV cells and a wind turbine onboard the barge, combined with a diesel generator in an integrated power system. A Life-Cycle Assessment (LCA) was performed to evaluate the considered power system configurations from an environmental point of view, while a Life-Cycle Cost Assessment (LCCA) was performed to evaluate the economic performance of the proposed solutions. The results of the implementation of RESs in the mariculture system indicate an emission reduction of about 20% and an increase in capital costs by 0.61%. Feed reduction and the use of electricity in an alternative mariculture farm design in Croatia increase profitability by 4% in most cases.

**Keywords:** aquaculture, mariculture, carbon footprint, renewable energy sources, Life-Cycle Assessment, Life-Cycle Cost Assessment.

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## NOMENCLATURE

### Variables

<i>A</i>	area (m <sup>2</sup> )
<i>BC</i>	battery capacity (kWh)
<i>BP</i>	battery price (€)
<i>BSE</i>	battery's specific energy (kWh/kg)
<i>BW</i>	battery weight (kg)
<i>C</i>	discounted annual cashflow (€)
<i>D</i>	diameter (m)
<i>d</i>	day
<i>DP</i>	diesel price (€)
<i>EC</i>	energy consumption (kWh)
<i>EF</i>	emission factor (g emission/kg fuel)
<i>FC</i>	fuel consumption (kg/h)
<i>i</i>	time of cash flow (year)
<i>IC</i>	investment cost (€)
<i>LCFC</i>	Life-Cycle Fuel Cost (€)
<i>LCMC</i>	Life-Cycle Maintenance Cost (€)
<i>n</i>	lifetime (year)
<i>NPV</i>	Net Present Value (€)
<i>P</i>	power (kW)
<i>r</i>	discount rate (%)
<i>SFC</i>	specific fuel consumption (kg/kWh)
<i>TE</i>	tailpipe emission (kg/h)
<i>t<sub>s</sub></i>	daily sun hours (h)
<i>v</i>	wind speed (m/s)

### Abbreviations

CF	Carbon Footprint
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GWP	Global Warming Potential
IEA	International Energy Agency
IMO	International Maritime Organization
LCA	Life-Cycle Assessment
LCCA	Life-Cycle Cost Assessment
ME	Manufacturing emissions
PTW	Pump-to-Wake
PV	Photovoltaic
RES	Renewable Energy Source
WTP	Well-to-Pump
WTW	Well-to-Wake

### Subscripts

<i>A</i>	annual
<i>B</i>	battery-powered ship
<i>D</i>	diesel-powered ship
<i>rad</i>	irradiation
<i>s</i>	sun
<i>w</i>	wind

$\eta$	efficiency (-)
$\rho$	density (kg/m <sup>3</sup> )

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## 35 **1 INTRODUCTION**

36 Global demand for food is increasing as the human population grows, which leads to the  
37 sharp development of aquaculture. The development of this sector comes from fishing and the  
38 application of different types of fishing equipment for the cultivation of freshwater organisms  
39 (freshwater aquaculture) and marine organisms (mariculture). Over time, overfishing has  
40 occurred, which endangers the ecosystems. For this reason, aquaculture systems have been  
41 designed to grow organisms for food production, and spawning has been applied to rebuild  
42 fish stocks. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2011), in 2008,  
43 world aquaculture production reached 52.5 million tonnes (excluding marine plants), with an  
44 annual increase of 8.4%. By 2018, world aquaculture production was 82.1 million tonnes,  
45 with an additional fishing catch of 96.4 million tonnes. The largest consumers and producers  
46 of fish and fish products are Asian countries, especially China. A sharp increase in production  
47 by 2018 was seen in North and South America, Africa and Oceania. Europe's fish production  
48 declined slightly from the 1980s on, but, in recent years, it has been recovering, primarily due  
49 to the development of mariculture in Norway (FAO, 2020). Aquaculture is a part of the Blue  
50 Growth sector, with large growth expected in the future (European MSP Platform, 2021). The  
51 European Commission encourages the production and competitiveness of aquaculture through  
52 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and through employment in aquaculture, especially in  
53 coastal communities (European MSP Platform, 2021).

54

### 55 **1.1 State of the art in fish farming**

56 Aquaculture is a wide area that can be divided according to different criteria. The basic  
57 division is seawater and freshwater aquaculture, depending on the level of salinity of the  
58 habitat. Another example of differentiation is water-based, land-based, recirculating and

59 integrated farming systems. Each technique requires a thorough decision-making process to  
60 design a quality farming system (FAO, 1987). Typical mariculture systems consist of cages,  
61 fishing vessels and an onshore energy network. In the majority of fishing vessels, energy is  
62 supplied by fossil fuels, which create a major environmental problem due to the harmful  
63 emissions generated by their combustion (Parker et al., 2015).

64 Sustainable farming methods are being investigated to reduce the environmental impact of  
65 mariculture farms, especially by electrifying the entire fleet. A good example of an  
66 environmentally friendly mariculture farm can be found in Norway. In 2015, Norway was the  
67 greatest aquaculture producer in Europe, exceeding the European Union (EU) in volume and  
68 value by 2% (Eurostat, 2020). In 2013, FAO (2020) ranked Norway as the world's largest  
69 producer of marine finfish, thanks to its salmon production. Norway has signed several  
70 agreements aimed at reducing its environmental footprint, with a strong focus on national sea  
71 transport and its fishing sector (Schau et al., 2009). According to Syse (2016), 50% of  
72 Norwegian fish farms still use diesel generators to produce electricity, while the rest are  
73 connected to the national electricity grid, whose major source is clean hydropower with a  
74 share of 95%. The goal is to electrify the entire sector. Considering the economic viability of  
75 the mariculture sector and the high share of Renewable Energy Sources (RESs) in the  
76 industry (Syse, 2016), similar steps should be taken in other countries.

77 Bohnes and Laurent (2020) conducted a detailed analysis of the environmental impact of  
78 mariculture production. The study included the impact of the infrastructure itself (materials,  
79 chemicals, nutrients, etc.), as well as the impact of feed decomposition and overall energy  
80 use. The infrastructural materials in prolonged contact with salt water can decompose and  
81 release harmful chemicals, especially the surface layers on which various antifouling coatings  
82 are most often found. However, fish feed and energy have the greatest environmental impact.  
83 Uncontrolled feeding creates an environmental problem by depositing uneaten feed on the

84 seabed and impacting the growth of marine flora, while feed production and transportation  
85 itself result in Greenhouse Gas (GHGs) emissions, as well as other emissions. Automated  
86 feeders, monitoring systems, sensors and other equipment help control environmental  
87 conditions but increase the energy needs of the farms (Winther et al., 2020).

88 GHGs emissions refer to the emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous  
89 oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) and fluorinated gases, in low concentrations. These emissions cause the  
90 greenhouse effect, which results in the warming of the Earth's surface, causing climate  
91 change (UNFCCC, 2021). One of the latest climate agreements is the Paris Agreement (2016)  
92 which aims to keep the global temperature rise below 2°C above the pre-industrial level and  
93 limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C (UNFCCC, 2021). Considering that the high  
94 concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere greatly contributes to global warming, following the  
95 United Nations stance, all industrial sectors should contribute to reducing their Carbon  
96 Footprint (CF), including the marine sector, even though it generates a small share of global  
97 CO<sub>2</sub> emissions compared to land transport (IMO, 2014). The term CF represents a measure of  
98 the total amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that are directly and indirectly caused by an activity or are  
99 accumulated over the life stages of a product. The CF can be expressed in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> or  
100 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>-eq) (Wiedmann and Minx, 2008).

101 Several research projects have already been undertaken on replacing fossil fuels as the  
102 main energy source in mariculture. Mok and Gaziulusoy (2018) investigated a salmon trout  
103 mariculture farm in Finland. They developed a strategic design framework focused on  
104 anticipating and mitigating foreseeable problems, such as industrial pollution. Another  
105 perspective is given by Ton Nu Hai et al. (2020), who stated that the environmental impact of  
106 a mariculture farm is influenced not only by the production process but also by the production  
107 environment. In their case study, they compared two lobster farms located in Vietnam and  
108 concluded that various parameters, from nutrient input to farm size and the distance between

109 two farms, have a major impact on their environmental footprint. Especially high levels of CF  
110 can be found on a shrimp farm, due to the emissions of commercial and biological feed and  
111 the use of different substances for improving water quality (Chang et al., 2017). They  
112 emphasized the importance of integrating energy-conserving technology in aquaculture to  
113 reduce the CF. A common assessment tool used in the mentioned studies is the Life-Cycle  
114 Assessment (LCA), which is used to estimate emissions through a product's lifecycle (Chang  
115 et al., 2017). In general, the reduction of the CF in the context of an aquaculture farm can be  
116 achieved in various ways, including by integrating RESs into the system.

117 Statistical analysis performed by the International Energy Agency (IEA) shows an increase  
118 in the share of hydropower and wind power worldwide, while other forms of renewable  
119 energy are less common (IEA, 2020). When it comes to aquaculture systems, sea, solar and  
120 wind energy are most often considered (Syse, 2016).

121 Large funds are being invested in the development of new technologies related to solar  
122 energy. Photovoltaic (PV) technology presents an affordable energy source but the main  
123 problem is the lack of suitable space to instal it, which is not an issue in the case of  
124 mariculture farms (Pringle et al., 2017). PV system efficiency depends on the level of solar  
125 irradiation and, therefore, countries with a high level of sunlight are ideal for it to be  
126 implemented. Research conducted by Gagliano et al. (2019) confirmed this assumption by  
127 examining the effectiveness of PV technology in three countries with different levels of solar  
128 irradiation. The greatest drawback of a PV system is low efficiency due to the absorption of a  
129 high percentage of irradiation into the PV cells, allowing them to heat or reflect energy into  
130 the environment (Herez et al., 2020). While the lab efficiency reaches higher levels (24% and  
131 higher), the practical efficiency remains at lower values, approx. 11-17% (Peng et al., 2017).  
132 The heating creates an additional problem since increasing the temperature by one degree  
133 causes a decrease in efficiency by 0.40-0.65%. The energy obtained through the PV system

134 could drive sensors and devices for monitoring and controlling the growing conditions  
135 (nutrients, temperature, pH, salinity, turbidity, etc.), oxygenation manipulation, and lighting.

136 The exploitation of wind energy has significantly increased in recent years, especially in  
137 Northern Europe. Although similar technology is used for onshore wind farms as for inland  
138 ones, costs are increased due to difficult environmental conditions. Hadžić et al. (2014)  
139 presented an overview of offshore wind turbine structures, intending to reduce production  
140 costs and develop new technologies. Offshore wind turbines yield more energy than onshore  
141 ones but also require higher maintenance costs. Another way is to instal turbines on a floating  
142 feed barge, which is needed for an offshore aquaculture farm. This method of integration  
143 enables easier access for maintenance and reduces costs (Syse, 2016). However, the load  
144 capacity of the barge and thus the possible requirements to reduce feed should be considered.

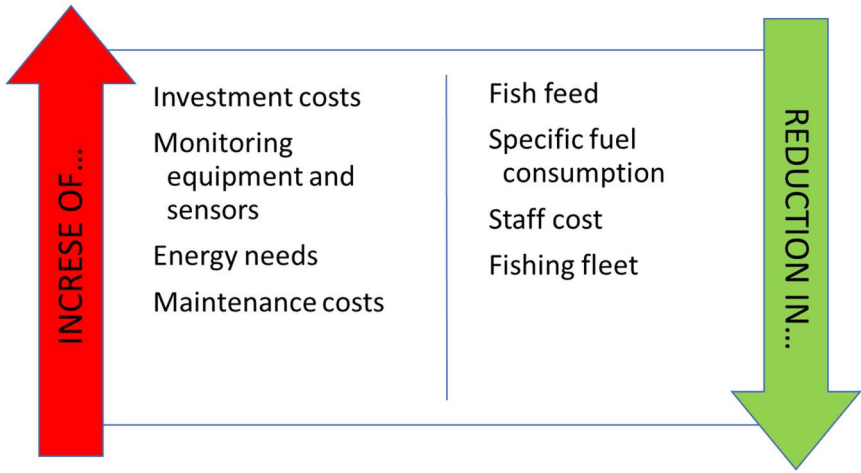
145 By 2007, the Mediterranean area had almost three times more countries that showed  
146 increasing aquaculture production (Ottolenghi, 2008). This growth entailed an increase in the  
147 number of vessels and equipment, and market competition forced investment in automated  
148 equipment which consequently caused an increase in the environmental impact of mariculture  
149 farms. Furthermore, the farms occupy a significant part of the sea near the coast and interfere  
150 with the maritime tourism of the country (European MSP Platform, 2021). This conflict is  
151 especially apparent in Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Italy, Croatia, etc., where high  
152 annual profits are made during the tourist season even though they have a growing  
153 aquaculture sector. Therefore, investing in the development of mariculture farms not only has  
154 an environmental impact, but also has a high economic one (European MSP Platform, 2021).

155 The capital cost includes fixed expenses such as property costs (purchase or lease), the  
156 building of an onshore facility and the installation of cages. Parameters that change  
157 depending on the level of automatization are the number of fishing vessels and staff costs.



158 The number of cages and their type depend on the type of fish being cultivated. The  
159 procurement of smolts, fingerling or other sizes of fish seed can be carried out in several  
160 ways. For instance, some aquaculture farms buy the fish seed from spawning companies,  
161 while others procure fry and fingerling by catching and then transferring them to cages. This  
162 has a high impact on the final market price of the product since spawning also requires the  
163 investment of resources and energy consumption (Azazy et al., 2012).

164 Fish feed is a parameter of significant economic and environmental importance. Depending  
165 on the type of cultivated fish, a certain amount of feed is needed to breed a high-quality  
166 product and depends on the model of feeding (Luna et al., 2019). Conventional aquaculture  
167 farms, especially smaller ones, do not invest in the modernization of the feeding system, and  
168 the process is usually performed manually. Such a method fails to control the amount of feed  
169 given, which is why more than necessary is consumed, thus creating unnecessary expense. By  
170 introducing new technologies, the cost of fish feed and other particulars may be reduced, but  
171 other costs increase, as presented in Figure 1.



172

173

174

Figure 1. The impact of mariculture modernization on total costs

## 175 **1.2 Research gap, aim and contribution of the paper**

176 After an extensive literature review (over 200 publications), Badiola et al. (2018)  
177 emphasized the significance of determining the environmental impact of mariculture  
178 production and the need for improvement. As they stated, previous works dealing with  
179 sustainable production often did not include energy use and the economic and environmental  
180 impacts of production, especially in the mariculture sector. The replacement of fossil fuels by  
181 RESs is currently a trending topic in other industries (e.g. land transport), but research on  
182 their integration in mariculture is underrepresented. This paper seeks to find suitable solutions  
183 to the above problems using the example of a water-based mariculture farming system.  
184 Recently, Le Féon et al. (2021) presented a multi-attribute model called DEXiAqua for the  
185 assessment of sustainability of aquaculture systems via several indicators from technical  
186 domains and reference methods, among which life-cycle emissions and life-cycle costs play  
187 an important role. The model was applied to a case study of salmon Farming in France.  
188 However, Le Féon et al. (2021) indicate that more studies related to other systems with  
189 different technical properties and put in different context are desirable for future refinements  
190 of the model. Assessment of environmental impact of aquaculture projects in Chile between  
191 1994 and 2019 presented by Rodríguez-Luna et al. (2021) belongs to this category of studies,  
192 where opportunities to improve environmental indicators of aquaculture systems are  
193 indicated.

194 Based on the above literature review, the following research gaps have been identified:

- 195 • There is a need for an accurate mathematical model to determine the environmental  
196 impact of mariculture farms;

- 197 • The integration of a higher share of renewables in the mariculture sector is desirable,  
198 but there is no clear insight into the viability of this process for randomly selected fish  
199 farms;
- 200 • References dealing with the fish farming sector regularly underestimate the problem of  
201 energy supply, and, to the best of the authors' knowledge, there is no reference  
202 simultaneously considering the life-cycle emissions and life-cycle costs of a fish farm  
203 and the corresponding workboats for its operation,
- 204 • Even though the Croatian mariculture sector is growing, to the best of the authors'  
205 knowledge there are no relevant studies examining its environmental impact and the  
206 appropriate measures to reduce it in a cost-effective way.

207 According to the Ministry of Agriculture (2020), while Croatian aquaculture takes 8th  
208 place in terms of quantity, in terms of value of production it is in 13th place in the EU.  
209 Croatia has the potential to develop a viable mariculture sector, but further investment is  
210 needed to ensure higher revenue and greater competitiveness (Eurofish, 2021). The process of  
211 optimization is already in progress (Kljaković, 2017 and Šteko, 2019), but mainly to ensure  
212 higher profits and less to improve environmental friendliness. Currently, there is an emphasis  
213 on increasing farm capacity and reducing fish feed.

214 This paper aims to tackle all the mentioned research gaps, by considering a mariculture  
215 farm powered by electricity generated by a higher share of renewables compared to  
216 conventional fossil-fuel powered configurations. The goal is to create an economically and  
217 environmentally sustainable solution with a higher share of RESs compared to existing ones  
218 and which can be applied to any aquaculture system, thus contributing directly to  
219 sustainability and cleaner production. The emission and costs of conventional mariculture  
220 systems and the proposed alternatives are evaluated by a Life-Cycle Assessment (LCA) and

221 Life-Cycle Cost Assessment (LCCA), respectively. Besides a lower environmental impact  
222 and financial savings over its lifetime, the alternative configuration allows for relocating the  
223 mariculture farm farther from the coast.

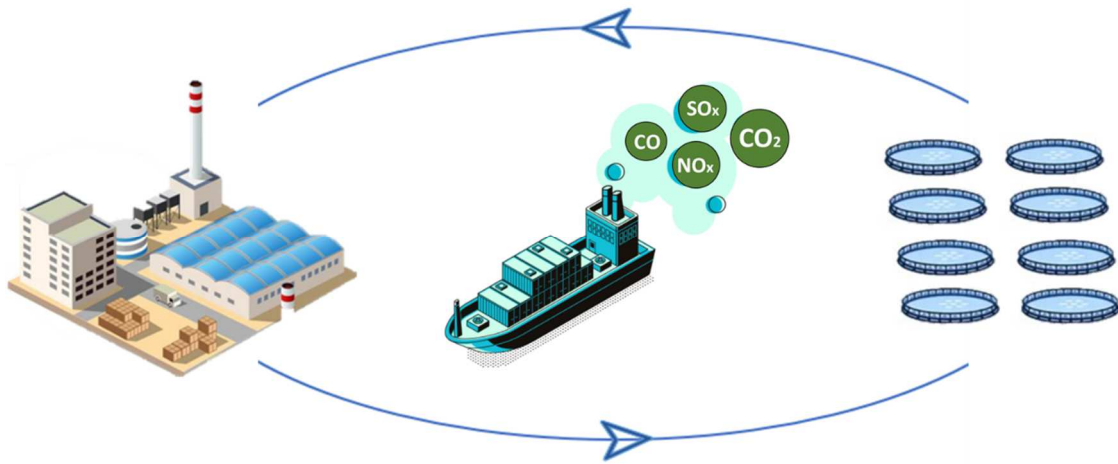
224 The original contribution of this paper includes:

- 225 • A model for the assessment of lifetime emissions and lifetime costs of mariculture  
226 systems;
- 227 • An insight into the viability of reducing the environmental impact of these systems  
228 through the integration of RESs;
- 229 • An alternative design of a mariculture system to reduce the environmental impact and  
230 the total costs of fish farming in Croatia.

231 The study deals with a mariculture system in Croatia with a high share of RESs, where  
232 different types of RESs are analysed and the most important issues inherent in these  
233 technologies are discussed. The methodology is applicable more generally if a set of input  
234 data relevant for some other location is known.

## 235 **2 METHODOLOGY**

236 The basic design of a mariculture system consists of cages and working/fishing vessels  
237 with various equipment, Figure 2. To make the farm operable, vessels and onshore facilities  
238 that consume a certain amount of energy, and thus release GHG emissions, are required. The  
239 vessels are used for fish feeding, cage maintenance, harvesting fish, and cooling and storing  
240 it.



241

242

Figure 2. Model of a conventional mariculture system

243

244 By modernizing the farms, i.e. installing automated feeders and monitoring systems, the

245 need for vessels declines as equipment is relocated onto a mariculture barge, Figure 3. The

246 idea is to fully electrify the workboats and power the barge by using solar and wind energy,

247 integrated with diesel generators.



248

249

Figure 3. Model of an electrified mariculture system

250

251 Since many power system configurations can meet the required energy needs, an analysis  
252 of several options is performed. The suitability of a power system configuration is determined  
253 not only by its lifetime economic performance but also by its environmental acceptability.

254

## 255 **2.1 LCA**

256 An LCA investigates the environmental impact of a system. In this paper, by using the  
257 LCA software GREET (2020), a comparative analysis is conducted with the focus on the  
258 CO<sub>2</sub>-eq emissions released throughout life cycle of the system. The focus is on the emissions  
259 related to the power system, where they are analysed in the following phases:

- 260 I. The Well-to-Pump (WTP) phase – an analysis of a fuel cycle (from the extraction  
261 of raw materials to the production of fuel and its transportation to the refuelling  
262 station);
- 263 II. The Pump-to-Wake (PTW) phase – an analysis of fuel usage in a power system  
264 which causes tailpipe emissions;
- 265 III. The Manufacturing (ME) phase – an analysis of the manufacturing process of the  
266 main elements of a power system and their related released emissions.

267 In order to determine which power system is the most suitable, the following configurations  
268 are considered: (1) a diesel-powered system; (2) a battery-powered system; (3) a combination  
269 of wind and solar-powered system.

270 The first step in the LCA is to calculate the daily energy consumption,  $EC_{daily}$  (kWh), of  
271 the workboat. The value is calculated by dividing the daily fuel consumption,  $FC_{daily}$  (kg),  
272 with the specific fuel consumption,  $SFC$  (kg/kWh), which depends on the type of power  
273 system used.

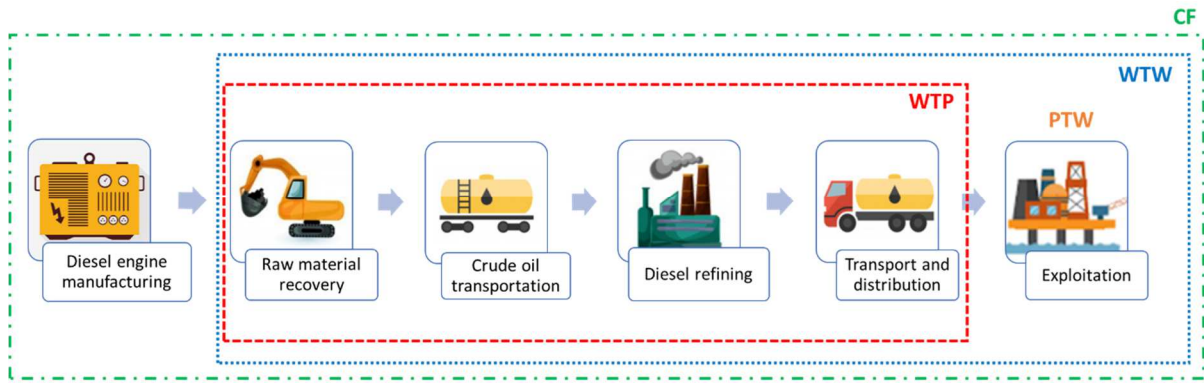
274 Diesel-powered systems include processes from diesel-engine manufacturing to diesel  
275 combustion in the engine. The process can be divided into phases, as presented in Figure 4.  
276 The Well-to-Wake (WTW) phase relates to emissions released from the processes in the WTP  
277 phase and the process of product use, i.e. the PTW phase. The WTP phase refers to the  
278 production and distribution of diesel. The processes of raw material recovery, refining and  
279 distribution are described by using the parameters for diesel. To give a true representation of  
280 the environmental impact of a diesel system, the manufacturing process of a diesel engine is  
281 determined by the weight of the engine materials (Jeong et al., 2018). PTW emissions, also  
282 referred to as tailpipe emissions,  $TE$  (kg/h), are released due to the combustion of diesel in the  
283 engines and are calculated by the following Eq. (1) (IPCC, 2006):

$$TE = FC \cdot EF, \quad (1)$$

284 where  $FC$  represents the fuel consumption in kg/h and  $EF$  denotes the emission factor in kg  
285 gas/kg fuel. The GHG emissions factors for diesel are obtained from (IMO, 2014). For this  
286 calculation, the  $SFC$  of a diesel-powered vessel is assumed to be 0.215 kg/kWh (Perčić et al.,  
287 2020a). GHGs released during the combustion of diesel can be quantified as presented in the  
288 following Eq. (2) (Perčić et al., 2020b):

$$CF = GWP_{CO_2} \cdot TE_{CO_2} + GWP_{CH_4} \cdot TE_{CH_4} + GWP_{N_2O} \cdot TE_{N_2O}, \quad (2)$$

289 where  $GWP$  ( $CO_2$ -eq) denotes the Global Warming Potential, a measure of how much energy  
290 the emission of one tonne of gas will absorb over a given period, relative to the emission of  
291 one tonne of  $CO_2$  (Perčić et al., 2020b). This equation is used for the quantification of GHGs  
292 released also from the WTP and ME phases. The  $GWP$  data for  $CO_2$ ,  $CH_4$  and  $N_2O$  are  
293 obtained from (EPA, 2021).



294

295

Figure 4. Processes included in the LCA of a diesel-power system

296

297 A battery-powered system configuration is investigated as an option for the electrification  
 298 of a workboat in a mariculture farm. As concluded by Perčić et al. (2020b), a fully electrified  
 299 vessel powered by a battery results in a major reduction of emissions. There are many types  
 300 of batteries, but a Lithium-ion (Li-ion) battery is selected since it is the most suitable for  
 301 maritime purposes Perčić et al. (2020b). The battery capacity,  $BC$  (kWh), sufficient to meet  
 302 the required energy needs, is calculated as follows, Eq. (3):

$$BC = 1.5 \cdot EC_{daily}. \quad (3)$$

303 When the battery degradation and safety requirements are calculated in, the required  
 304 capacities are increased by 50%.

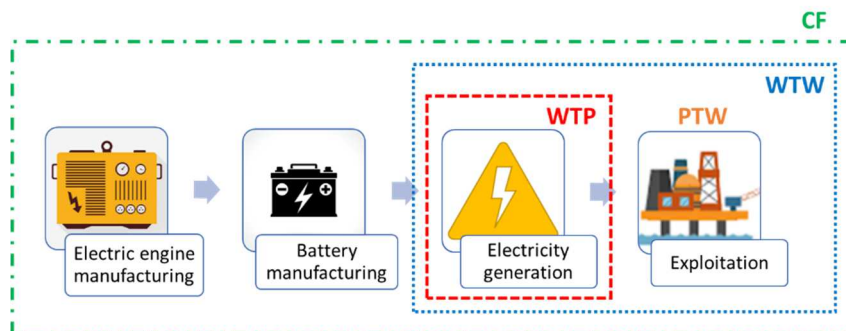
305 The LCA of a battery-powered system configuration includes the manufacturing processes  
 306 of an electric engine and the battery and the electricity generation process, presented in Figure  
 307 5. The energy density of a Li-ion battery with nickel manganese cobalt oxide (NMC) is 0.15-  
 308 0.22 kWh/kg (Perčić et al., 2020b). To analyse the environmental impact of the battery, the  
 309 weight of the battery,  $BW$  (kg), is calculated as in Eq. (4):

$$BW = \frac{BC}{BSE'} \quad (4)$$



310 where *BSE* presents the battery's specific energy, which equals 0.25 kWh/kg.

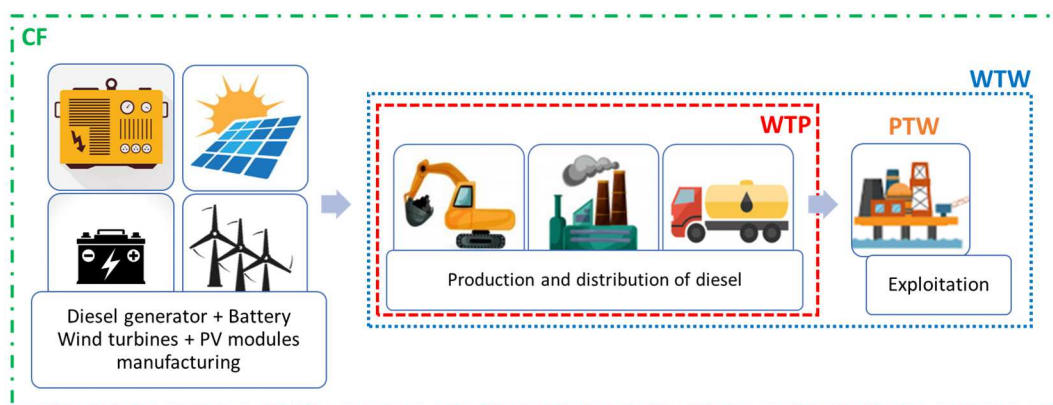
311 Another significant input is the replacement of the battery, which is assumed to be every  
312 10 years. The environmental footprint of an electric engine is assumed to be equal to the  
313 environmental footprint of a diesel engine. The electricity generation process is affected by  
314 the national electricity mix of the country for which it is being investigated.



315  
316 Figure 5. Processes included in the LCA of a battery-powered system

317

318 For the mariculture barge, the integration of RESs is considered, so that a part of the  
319 energy will be supplied by RESs and part by diesel generator. The higher the share of RESs,  
320 the lower the emissions are expected to be. Figure 6 presents the processes in the LCA of a  
321 combined wind and PV-cells-powered system.



322  
323 Figure 6. Processes included in the LCA of a wind-PV cells powered system

324

325 The PV-cells-power system configuration significantly depends on the weather conditions  
326 and the available installation area. Ančić et al. (2020) calculated the total annual energy  
327 production,  $E_{PV}$  (MJ), according to the following Eq. (5):

$$E_{PV} = \eta_{PV} \cdot E_{rad} \cdot A, \quad (5)$$

328 where  $\eta_{PV}$  represents the efficiency of the PV system,  $E_{rad}$  (MJ/m<sup>2</sup>) denotes the average solar  
329 irradiance, and  $A$  (m<sup>2</sup>) denotes the area covered by the PV cells. By dividing the calculated  
330  $E_{PV}$  with the number of daily sun hours  $t_s$  (h), the power output of a PV system  $P_{PV}$  (kWh) is  
331 determined.

332 One of the processes includes manufacturing the PV modules, i.e. the weight of the  
333 materials from which these elements are constituted (Perčić et al., 2020a). The manufacturing  
334 process parameters are obtained from the GREET 2020 database.

335 The wind-power system configuration depends on the wind power density and the swept  
336 area of the turbine (Ghenai, 2012). The location of installation and the main particulars of the  
337 wind turbines have a significant role in determining the average wind potential. The wind  
338 power can be calculated according to Eq. (6):

$$P_W = \frac{1}{2} \cdot \rho \cdot A_w \cdot v^3, \quad (6)$$

339 where  $\rho$  (kg/m<sup>3</sup>) denotes the air density,  $A_w$  (m<sup>2</sup>) denotes the swept area, i.e. the area of a  
340 wind turbine, and  $v$  denotes (m/s) the wind speed. The area of a wind turbine can also be  
341 calculated as in Eq. (7):

$$A_w = \frac{D^2 \cdot \pi}{4}, \quad (7)$$

342 where  $D$  (m) denotes the diameter of a wind turbine.

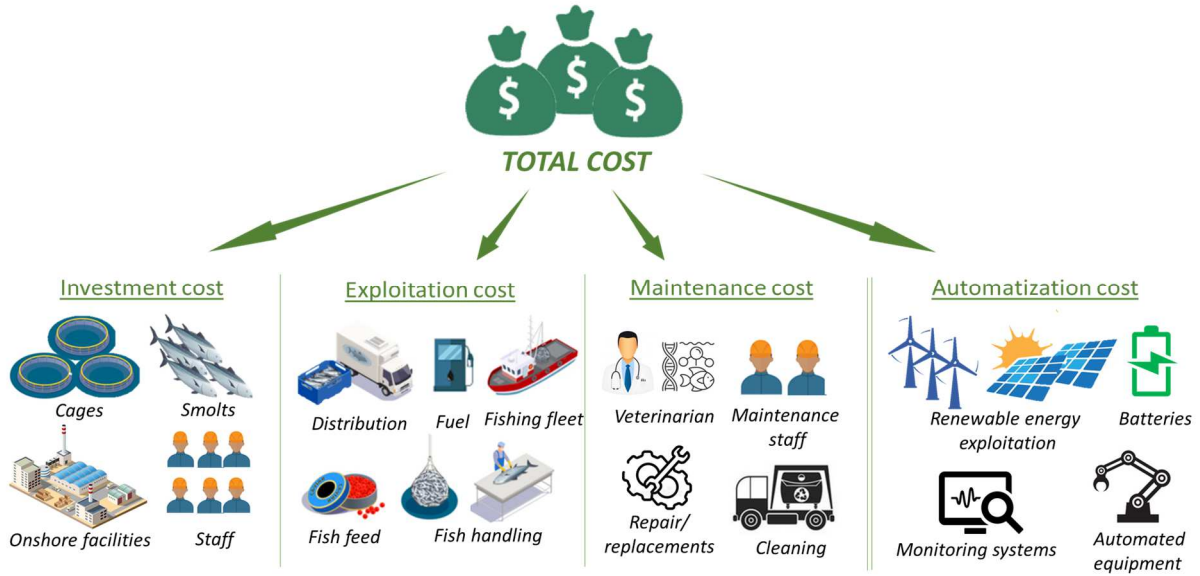
343 The manufacturing process of wind turbines includes the weight of the materials from  
344 which they are constituted (Wang et al., 2017).

345 The system includes a diesel generator and a battery for energy storage. The battery  
346 capacity is calculated as 50% of daily energy needs since the RES system produces a small  
347 amount of energy that needs to be stored.

348

## 349 **2.2 LCCA**

350 An LCCA includes the total life-cycle costs of a system, e.g. the investment cost, the cost  
351 of fuel, maintenance costs, and other costs. Due to the expected introduction of carbon  
352 allowance in the future, i.e. the cost of a permit to emit CO<sub>2</sub>, it is useful to calculate the cost-  
353 effectiveness of a different power system (Perčić et al., 2020b). The total costs of a  
354 mariculture system design are presented in Figure 7. The investment cost includes the capital  
355 costs of mariculture cages and the establishment of onshore facilities. The costs also include  
356 the price of fingerlings or smolts and staff wages. Exploitation costs include the costs of fuel  
357 consumed in the power system (transportation, distribution, fish handling), staff wages and  
358 the equipment needed for fish handling, and the cost of fish feed. Maintenance costs include  
359 different repairs, equipment replacement costs, veterinarians, maintenance staff, and similar.  
360 The last group covers the costs of farm automatization. These costs include the price of the  
361 installation of renewables, batteries and their replacement, and automated equipment.



362

363

Figure 7. Total costs of a mariculture farming system

364

365 The LCCA of a diesel-powered system configuration contains information on the costs of a  
 366 new diesel engine and its installation. The cost of a new diesel engine is calculated by  
 367 multiplying the average power of the ship with the unit price of €250/kW (Perčić et al.,  
 368 2020b). The life-cycle fuel cost ( $LCFC_D$ ) is calculated according to Eq. (8):

$$LCFC_D = FC \cdot DP, \quad (8)$$

369 where  $FC$  denotes the lifetime fuel consumption in kg and  $DP$  denotes diesel fuel price in  
 370 €/kg. The maintenance cost is assumed to be €0.014/kWh (Perčić et al., 2020b), and by  
 371 multiplying it with the energy consumption of the ship the life-cycle maintenance cost is  
 372 calculated ( $LCMC_D$ ).

373 The capital cost has the greatest impact on the LCCA of a battery-powered system  
 374 configuration. According to Perčić et al. (2020b), 45% of investment costs are the battery  
 375 price, and the rest represents installation, the electric engine and additional equipment costs.

376 The battery price is assumed to be €200/kWh, Perčić et al. (2020b). The investment cost of a  
377 power system for a battery-powered vessel can be calculated as in Eq. (9):

$$IC_B = \frac{BC \cdot BP}{0.45}, \quad (9)$$

378 where  $BC$  denotes the battery capacity calculated according to eq. (3) and  $BP$  denotes the  
379 battery price. The  $LCFC_B$  is determined by the energy consumption of a battery-powered  
380 vessel and the electricity cost (€/kWh), while the  $LCMC_B$  depends on the battery capacity and  
381 the battery price anticipated after 10 years, which is assumed to be €169/kWh, Perčić et al.  
382 (2020b).

383 The LCCA of a wind-PV-cells-powered system configuration includes the investment  
384 costs of the PV system, which is calculated by multiplying the investment cost of PV cells  
385 (€/kW) with the total power of the PV system (kW), and the cost of a wind turbine. The  
386 investment cost of the wind turbine is assumed to be €3,000/kW (Hadžić et al., 2014) and of  
387 the PV system €1,116/kW (Perčić et al., 2020c). The maintenance cost of a PV system is  
388 assumed to be 20% of its investment cost, whereas the maintenance cost of a wind turbine is  
389 assumed to be 10% of the investment cost. Since the power system includes a diesel generator  
390 and a battery for energy storage, the investment and maintenance costs of each are also  
391 included in the LCCA.

392

### 393 **2.3 Assessment of project profitability**

394 To gain a complete insight into the system of RESs and its possible modifications, a  
395 technical and economic analysis of the system was conducted. By changing the technical  
396 characteristics of the system, such as wind speed, number of sunny hours, but also economic

397 features such as the price of electricity, the net present value (*NPV*) changes. The *NPV* is  
398 calculated by the following Eq. (10) (Di Trapani et al., 2014):

$$NPV = \sum_{i=0}^n \frac{C_t}{(1+r)^i}, \quad (10)$$

399 where  $C_t$  denotes the discounted annual cashflows,  $i$  denotes the time of the cash flow,  $n$   
400 represents the lifetime of the investment, and  $r$  denotes the discount rate.

401 The *NPV* is the main economic indicator for assessing the suitability of an investment  
402 programme. The greater the value, the sounder the investment is. If the *NPV* has a negative  
403 value, the investment programme is unacceptable. If the *NPV* is zero, it means that the  
404 income is enough to cover the costs of production, but there is no added profit.

405

### 406 **3 CASE STUDY**

407 Croatian mariculture consists mainly of the cultivation of finfish (fennel and seabass) and  
408 tuna. In this paper, a tuna farm near Zadar is investigated (Šteko, 2019). The Zadar region is  
409 known for the largest number of farms for white fish and tuna fish (Eurofish, 2020). With the  
410 growth of the Croatian mariculture sector, energy needs are increasing and thus the problem  
411 arises of environmental acceptability. The greatest environmental problem is created by the  
412 obsolete fishing fleet. One way to deal with this is to use RESs and to ensure the  
413 electrification of the mariculture systems, including the vessels.

414 The investigated location, presented in Figure 8, shows favourable energy characteristics  
415 for the use of RESs. Zadar is known for a large number of sunny hours  $t_s$  (h) throughout the  
416 year, and the horizontal irradiation is determined at 5,471 MJ/m<sup>2</sup>/year (Global Solar Atlas,  
417 2021). The wind velocity is the highest during the night, while during the day it may achieve

418 minimal values, especially during the summer. Farkas et al. (2019) indicated the “Jugo” and  
419 “Bora” as the most significant winds that can affect the annual amount of energy produced in  
420 Croatia. The mountainous area in the Croatian Littoral also has a great influence: it  
421 accelerates the winds which slow down as they approach the coast. For the purpose of this  
422 paper, the average velocity of 6.5 m/s is used in the calculation according to Hadžić et al.  
423 (2014). The wind density at an ambient temperature of 20°C is 1.2 kg/m<sup>3</sup>.



424

425 Figure 8. The location of the investigated tuna farm, Zadar, Croatia

426

427 The investigated mariculture system consists of 22 cages with a diameter of 50 metres. The  
428 cage cost is set according to Rubino (2008), who determined a value of \$30 per m<sup>3</sup> (approx.  
429 €25/m<sup>3</sup>). The volume of the investigated farm is around 25,000 m<sup>3</sup> per cage. Therefore, the  
430 price is assumed to be €625,000 per cage. Maintenance of the cages is performed twice a  
431 year, using a net cleaner whose rental cost is estimated at around €25,000, including fuel  
432 consumption (Osterbo Gruppa, 2021). The staff is estimated to amount to six persons per

433 cage, according to FAO (2020). The average monthly gross earning in Croatia is approx.  
434 €1,100 (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2021), which is adopted as the monthly payment cost  
435 per person in this paper. Veterinarians are also a necessary part of the staff and their monthly  
436 payment is estimated at €1,700/month.

437 The main particulars of a conventional mariculture vessel are presented in Table 1 (Atlantic  
438 Shipping Shipbrokers, 2021). The Croatian shipping sector uses “Eurodiesel Blue” as a fuel  
439 which is diesel with up to 0.5% sulphur. The raw material for diesel production in Croatia is  
440 crude oil, which is primarily transported from the Middle East and transported by tank trucks  
441 from the exploitation site to the port (500 km). From the port, the crude oil is loaded onto a  
442 tanker and shipped to Omišalj, Croatia (4,000 km), from where it is transported by pipeline to  
443 the Rijeka refinery (7 km). The fuel cost depends on the diesel cost and, in Croatia, its  
444 average price is €0.78/kg (Perčić et al., 2020b). In conventional mariculture farms, a reefer or  
445 wellboat type of vessel is needed for cooling and storage. Consequently, the energy  
446 consumption of vessels is higher, but this eliminates the feeding barge. According to available  
447 data (Basurko et al. (2016), Parker et al. (2014), FAO (2020)), the estimated fuel consumption  
448 of this type of vessel is 400 kg/t of the carried weight (fish, feed, ice etc.).

449 The investment cost of establishing a fish farm can be quite high (Šteko, 2019). Firstly,  
450 30,000 fingerlings are procured. According to the data available on Eurofish (2021),  
451 procurement is usually performed by catching specimens (8-10 kg per fish) which requires a  
452 weekly cost of vessels and staff (estimated at €400). It is assumed that spawn procurement is  
453 performed twice a year, with an average duration of four weeks. According to FAO (2020),  
454 fish feed accounts for almost 50% of the total production cost. The cultivation of tuna  
455 requires 17 kg of feed per kg of fish a day. The fish are fed for 20-25 days monthly. By  
456 multiplying the required quantity with the number of specimens in a farm and the average fish  
457 weight, the amount of feed needed in a month can be calculated. After a market analysis, the



458 cost is assumed to be €1.05/kg of feed. The cost per kg is assumed to be relatively low  
 459 because, to the best of the authors' knowledge, the Croatian market is saturated with small  
 460 finfish which is why it achieves a low wholesale price. The price of full-grown specimens  
 461 (around 40 kg) is estimated at €30/kg (Sea Food Source, 2020). The annual overall  
 462 production is approx. 1,300 tonnes of tuna.

463 By introducing RESs into mariculture farms, the conventional vessel can be replaced by a  
 464 mariculture barge and workboat. The equipment from the conventional vessel, such as  
 465 cooling and feeding systems, storage, kitchen appliances etc., can be relocated on the barge.  
 466 Therefore, the vessel is needed only for transportation which reduces its energy needs and  
 467 enables it to be powered by batteries. The energy characteristics of the farm after  
 468 electrification are presented in Table 1.

469 Table 1. Comparison of the main particulars of a conventional and alternative mariculture system

	Conventional mariculture system	Alternative mariculture system	
		Workboat	Feeding barge
$EC_{daily}$ , kWh	1,162.79	1,302.33	420
Power system	Diesel engine	Battery	RESs + diesel generator
$FC$ , kg/d	250	0	41.28

470

471 In this paper, the workboat has a battery-powered-system configuration. The battery is  
 472 charged from the national grid, assuming the electricity mix presented in Figure 9, which is  
 473 directly available in the GREET 2020 database. According to Eurostat (2020), the average  
 474 electricity price for non-household consumers is €0.13/kWh.

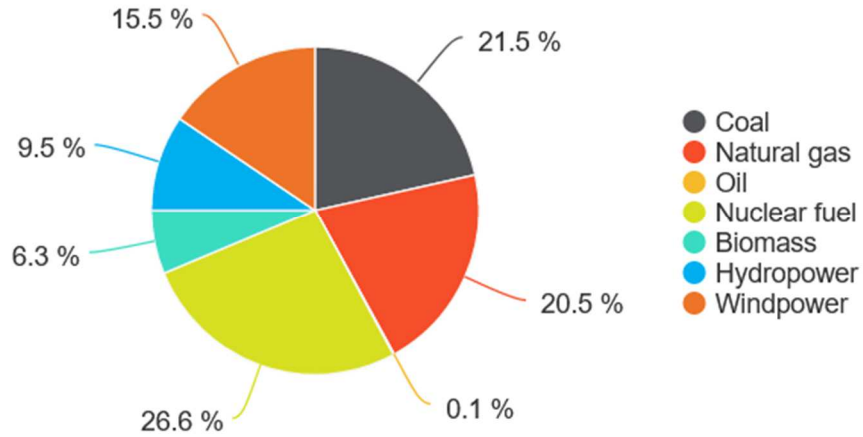


Figure 9. European electricity mix, GREET (2020)

475

476

477

478 Both the wind turbine and PV cells are placed on the barge. A 10-kW-powered turbine is  
 479 chosen (Bergey Windpower, 2021). The PV cells cover most of the free surface of the barge,  
 480 leaving space for the installation of the turbine. After calculating the power outputs of each  
 481 system, it is concluded that it will not be possible to power the barge completely from RESs.  
 482 Therefore, a diesel generator is installed, and a battery is added to store energy. The technical  
 483 characteristics of the RES systems are presented in Table 2.

484

Table 2. Technical characteristics of RES systems

Wind Turbine		PV system	
Rated capacity (kW)	10	$A$ (m <sup>2</sup> )	700
$D$ (m)	7	$\eta$ (%)	17
Swept area (m <sup>2</sup> )	38.47	$t_s$ (h)	7
Total mass (kg)	475	$E_{rad}$ (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> ) per day	5,824
Power output - daily (kWh)	152.65	Power output - daily (kWh)	75.35
<b>Total power output = 228 kWh/d</b>			

485

## 486 4 RESULTS

487 The results of the LCA and LCCA, performed for a conventional and an alternative  
 488 mariculture farm design, are presented in Figures 10 and 11. The LCA of a conventional  
 489 mariculture farm shows a high CF. When compared to the LCA results of an alternative

490 mariculture farm, a CF reduction of 19.62% is achieved by electrification. The majority of  
 491 emissions in the alternative design is related to electricity production and the calculated  
 492 amounts are directly dependent on the electricity mix used, i.e. by raising the share of RES in  
 493 the electricity mix, a positive impact on emission reduction would be achieved. In the  
 494 alternative mariculture system, 21.9% of the total CF is generated by the barge, while the  
 495 remaining 78.1% is generated by the workboat, Figure 10 – right-hand graph.

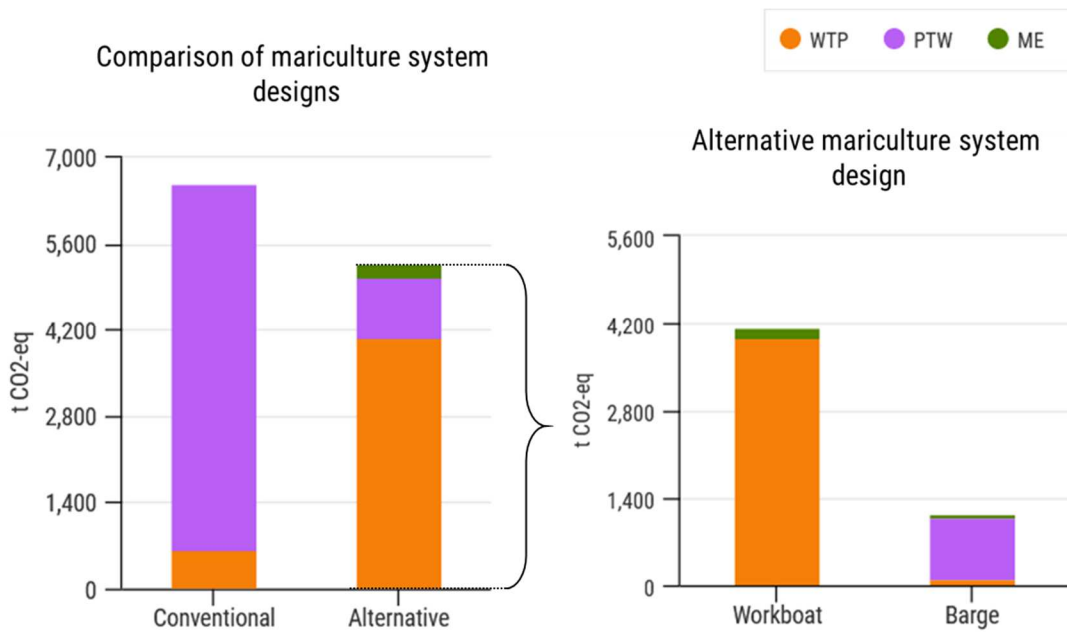


Figure 10. The LCA results

496  
 497  
 498

499 The LCCA results indicate that the costs of the alternative design are 3.23% lower than  
 500 those of the conventional one. The alternative design entails slightly higher capital,  
 501 maintenance and energy costs, but the operating costs are 42.80% lower, which is a  
 502 significant reduction.

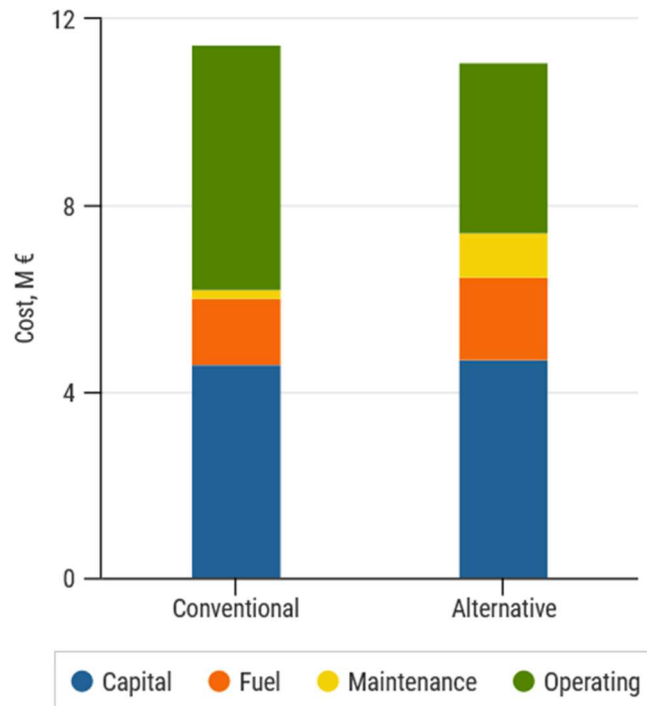


Figure 11. The LCCA results

503  
504  
505

506 The economic analysis shows that conventional farms require slightly less investment than  
507 alternative designs, Table 3. The greatest impact is seen in the operating costs where a  
508 reduction in the number of employees, and thus a reduction in staff costs, is calculated.

509

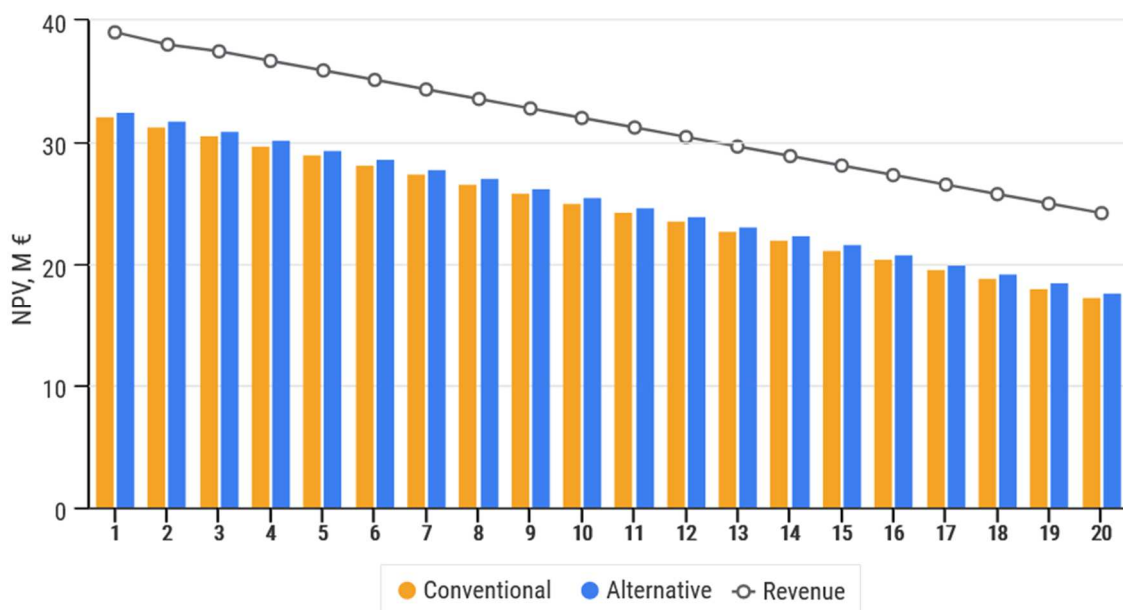
Table 3. Financial plan of a mariculture farm (after 1 year)

	<b>CONVENTIONAL</b>	<b>ALTERNATIVE</b>
Capital cost (M €)	17.91	18.02
Fuel cost (M €)	1.43	1.64
Operating cost (M €)	5.23	3.66
Maintenance cost (M €)	0.21	0.99
Revenue (M €)	39.00	39.00
<b>PROFIT (after 1 year, M €)</b>	<b>14.22</b>	<b>14.69</b>

510

511 The energy cost is higher in the alternative design, but it should be taken into account that  
512 electricity is consumed, which is more environmentally friendly than diesel. Maintenance  
513 costs are significantly higher in the alternative design due to the cost of battery replacement  
514 and the maintenance of RES technologies. Capital costs are higher in the alternative design

515 because of the additional investment in RESs. The costs for property lease, insurance,  
 516 licensing fee, etc., calculated in the capital costs, are estimated to be 30% of production costs  
 517 (Quagraine, 2020). Due to increasing competitiveness in the market, it is assumed that the  
 518 price of fish will fall by 2% per year. When all revenues and expenses, with a discount rate of  
 519 8%, in 20 years of production are calculated, the *NPV* is obtained. From the positive value of  
 520 the *NPV*, it can be concluded that revenue is high enough to cover the production costs and to  
 521 achieve a profit, Figure 12.



522  
 523 Figure 12. The *NPV* of conventional and alternative mariculture systems  
 524

525 Since many parameters have an impact on costs and, therefore, on profitability, a  
 526 sensitivity analysis of the *NPV* was performed, Figure 13, where a change in the *NPV*  
 527 depending on the capital cost, the price of fish feed, and the price of electricity is presented.  
 528 The values show that the *NPV* remains positive for both conventional and alternative  
 529 mariculture systems, regardless of the variable changes.

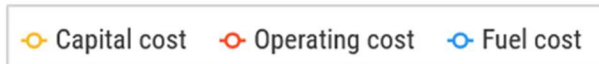
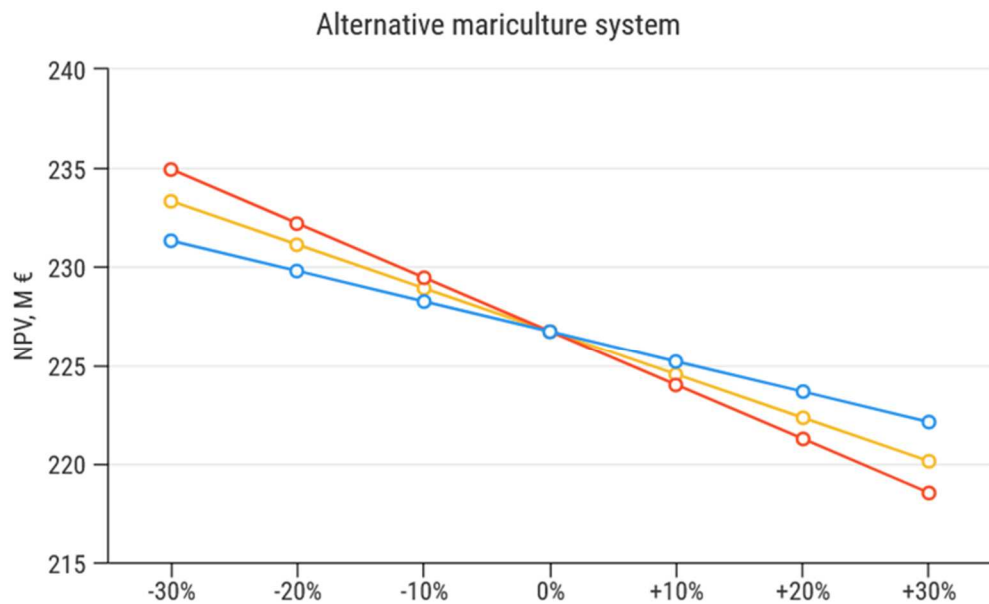
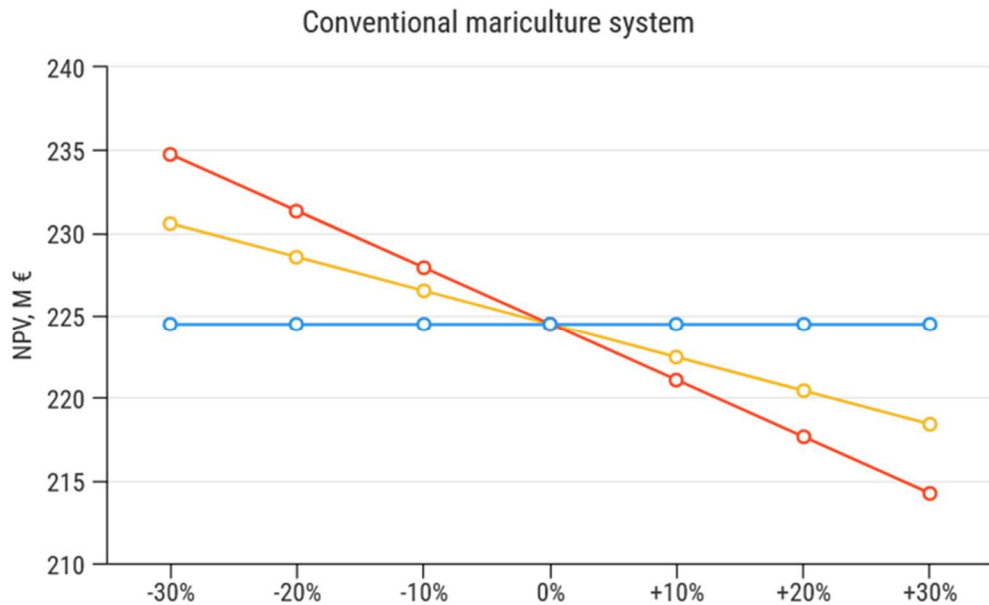


Figure 13. The sensitivity of the *NPV* with respect to different costs

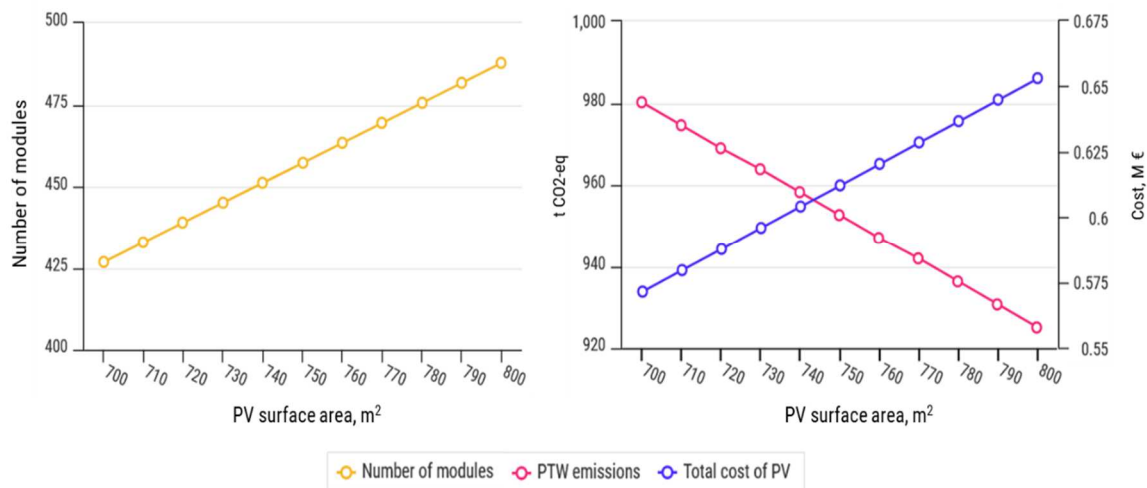
530  
531  
532

533 The main difference between conventional and alternative mariculture systems is seen in  
534 the fuel cost. The conventional use of diesel seeks to be replaced by electricity, so the change  
535 in the price of diesel was not taken into account. If the electricity price decreases by 30%, the  
536 *NPV* of the electrified system could rise by 3%, but if the price increases by 20%, the

537 profitability of the alternative farm design is 0.37% lower than in the case of the conventional  
 538 farm.

## 539 5 DISCUSSION

540 The LCA indicates that a CF reduction is possible in the case of electrification and that  
 541 there are several ways to achieve a further reduction. Analysis of the mariculture barge shows  
 542 low values of CF, but there is the possibility of a greater reduction if more wind or solar  
 543 technologies are installed. For example, if 10 m<sup>2</sup> of surface area for the installation of PV  
 544 modules is added, the PTW emissions would decline by an additional 0.58% and,  
 545 simultaneously, the cost of investment and maintenance of the PV modules would rise by  
 546 1.41% with a sharper growth, Figure 14. If the surface increases by 100 m<sup>2</sup>, the PTW  
 547 emissions would fall by 5.96% but the cost of the PV system would increase by 12.50%.  
 548 Since the NPV analysis shows that the difference in profitability between conventional and  
 549 alternative farms is only 4%, a larger investment in RESs could cause unprofitability.



550  
 551 Figure 14. Impact of an increase of PV surface area on emissions and total cost of PV installation  
 552

553 Besides the forms of renewables considered above, sea energy technologies offer energy  
 554 from waves and tidal currents. As mentioned by Hadžić et al. (2018), tidal converters can be

555 sited near the coastline or on the open sea, which makes them convenient for integration in  
556 mariculture. Sea currents are highly predictable, which simplifies their design, but there are  
557 several drawbacks, such as the corrosive sea environment, sea fouling and underwater noise,  
558 which need to be properly dealt with (Hadžić et al., 2014). Moreover, investigation of the  
559 potential of RESs in the Adriatic Sea for use in shipyard processes as presented in (Hadžić et  
560 al., 2014) indicates that investment costs in tidal turbines range from €3,825/kW to  
561 €12,155/kW, and investment costs in oscillating energy systems range from €5,270/kW to  
562 €13,685/kW. Comparisons with the claimed investment costs in solar energy of €2,125/kW  
563 and wind energy ranging from €1,700/kW to €4,250/kW associated with small current  
564 velocities in the Adriatic Sea (Hadžić et al., 2018), leading to the low efficiency of tidal  
565 devices, indicate the low potential of ocean energy in Croatia. For instance, Hadžić et al.  
566 (2018) estimated that for an annual production of 20 GWh, approximately 4,450 tidal turbines  
567 need to be installed while the same energy can be produced using only five wind turbines of  
568 an installed power of 5 MW. The low potential of sea current energy, as well as wave energy  
569 in the Mediterranean Sea, is also confirmed by Soukissian et al. (2017), and therefore their  
570 use in the mariculture sector in Croatia does not seem viable.

571 In the alternative mariculture system design, energy costs are 12.81% higher than in the  
572 conventional design. Capital costs are also 0.61% higher and include fixed costs that do not  
573 depend on the alternation of different economic inputs, such as energy prices, operating costs,  
574 salaries, etc. Therefore, the capital cost is affected by possible changes in the price of cages  
575 and vessels. By optimizing the mariculture system, the fishing fleet may be further reduced,  
576 perhaps even by 50%, which could reduce the total costs. Management expenditures  
577 mentioned previously could be reduced, e.g. if state incentives are available, or expenditures  
578 could increase if insurance or licensing rates rise. Maintenance costs are approximately four  
579 times higher in the alternative design, because of the need for battery replacement and the



580 maintenance of RES technologies. The most significant expenditure in the mariculture system  
581 is the price of fish feed. Handfeeding is often performed by an inexperienced worker who  
582 lacks technical knowledge. By implementing an automated feeder and monitoring system into  
583 a mariculture farm, the feed consumption is controlled and reduces the annual operating costs  
584 by about 20% (Shipton and Hasan, 2013). Despite the demands from aquaculture farmers for  
585 lower feed prices, further increases are expected and therefore an increase in operating costs  
586 can be foreseen (FAO, 2020). This is one of the main reasons why monitoring and automation  
587 are introduced into the feeding system. Alternative farm designs achieve higher profit due to  
588 the reduction in food consumption.

589 A comparison of the analysed alternative model with an existing aquaculture system, such  
590 as land-based freshwater aquaculture, is also interesting. Roque d'Orbcastel et al. (2009)  
591 evaluated a trout production system from a farm that uses a flow-through system (also known  
592 as raceway system). In comparison to the presented mariculture farm in this paper, the  
593 raceway system does not require vessels for fish handling or feeding, but needs equipment  
594 such as mechanical filters and an aeration system which creates an environmental impact.  
595 Even though land-based systems eliminate vessels as a significant source of pollution, the  
596 infrastructure and high energy needs result in emissions, and the additional demand for water  
597 creates an environmental problem that does not appear in mariculture (Roque d'Orbcastel et  
598 al., 2009).

599 The assumptions and limitations of the study, which could be further discussed in order to  
600 achieve even more precise results, are the following:

- 601 • In the LCA and LCCA, the final disposal stage of the product is not considered,  
602 assuming that its contribution on a global scale is not only small, but also similar for  
603 both conventional and alternative systems.

- 604 • In the LCA, a simplified diesel pathway in the WTP is taken into account, and the  
605 results rely on the European energy mix (as usual in an analysis of this type). Somewhat  
606 different results can be achieved if a local energy mix is used, but this is slightly  
607 impractical because of its relatively high variations compared to the used option.
- 608 • In the modelling of economic and environmental performance, it is assumed that carbon  
609 tax, which is already an important issue in a number of industries, will not be  
610 introduced in the mariculture sector in the near future. If it is introduced, the alternative  
611 solutions proposed by the authors will be even more favourable and should be  
612 investigated on a scenario-based approach. Such additional expenses can be easily  
613 integrated in the proposed LCCA model.

614

## 615 **6 CONCLUSION**

616 In this paper, the integral model for the assessment of lifetime emissions and costs for  
617 mariculture systems is presented with the aim to contribute economically, ecologically and  
618 sustainably to the mariculture sector. The model considers a mariculture barge powered by  
619 RESs and a battery-powered workboat. The proposed modifications reduce the CF of  
620 mariculture farms in Croatia, entailing a relatively small increase in the investment costs, but  
621 leading to higher profitability. Therefore, the integration of RESs in the Croatian mariculture  
622 sector is encouraged. Wind and solar power provide many benefits for mariculture, primarily  
623 because they do not have the strong impact on the fish farming process itself that sea-power  
624 technologies would have.

625 The main findings obtained by the performed LCA and LCCA can be summarized as  
626 follows:

- 627 • a total CF reduction of 19.61% for the considered case of a mariculture farm in Croatia;

- 628 • an even higher reduction can be achieved if the investigated workboat is replaced with  
629 a similar vessel with lower energy consumption;
- 630 • the mariculture barge shows a very low amount of CF (21.9% of the total CF of the  
631 alternative mariculture system);
- 632 • the results of the LCCA show that the alternative design requires only 0.61% greater  
633 capital costs than the conventional one;
- 634 • with the associated reductions in staff costs and a significant reduction in feed  
635 consumption, the profitability of an alternative farm would be 4% higher than that of a  
636 conventional farm;
- 637 • mariculture farms do not emit high levels of GHGs, but the obtained reduction,  
638 although low, would have a positive impact on the environment.

639 Further research could be related to the application of optimization techniques to  
640 determine the proper share of different energy sources related to the mariculture barge for  
641 different locations. Alternative solutions could also be considered in the case of inland  
642 aquaculture farms to check the viability of the further use of RESs for powering aeration and  
643 recirculating systems.

644 Besides the analysed tuna farm, many fishing and aquaculture companies in the Croatian  
645 fishing sector work with an obsolete fishing fleet. Therefore, special attention should be paid  
646 to modernizing the power system of ships to achieve further financial savings and  
647 environmental benefits. Mariculture and fish catches are closely linked and are often  
648 intertwined, which is why this research should be extended to the entire fishing fleet. These  
649 results can be further used to optimize the aquaculture sector and greatly reduce GHG  
650 emissions.

651

652 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

653 This investigation has been funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund of the  
654 European Union within the project “Integration of a high share of renewables into aquaculture  
655 systems – IN AQUA”, granted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Directorate of Fisheries,  
656 Republic of Croatia (Award No. 324-01/19-01/1178). In this paper, the LCAs were performed  
657 by means of GREET 2020 software developed by UChicago Argonne, LLC under Contract  
658 No. DE-AC02-06CH11357 with the Department of Energy.

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