



WWF-US / Molly Edmonds

# UPDATES FROM THE WATER

OCTOBER 2020

## ECUADOR MAHI MAHI

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**Gear Type:** Longline

**Volume:** 9,672 MT

**FIP Stage:** 5 (Improvements on the Water)

**Progress Rating:** Not Yet Available

**Entered MSC Full Assessment February 2019**

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Ecuador's mahi mahi fishery is one of its most ecologically and economically valuable artisanal fisheries. The fishery is a top exporter to the U.S. In addition to providing nutrition for people, mahi mahi is an important part of the marine ecosystem, providing food for many top marine predators such as sharks and dolphins. Since the start of the FIP in 2010, more than 10,000 fishers have been engaged in FIP efforts through trainings on fishing regulations and best fishing practices, conducting gear exchanges to replace traditional J hooks with circle hooks to reduce sea turtle by-catch, welcoming on-board observers, and most recently, piloting a digital traceability system to test electronic logbooks and cameras on-board their vessels.

The FIP has helped to change fishers' attitudes for the better: fishers understand the importance of improving the fishery not only to keep their markets open but also to ensure they can continue to rely on fishing for their livelihood. Also, by learning how to better handle sea turtle by-catch they have improved their efficiency, and they are more open to adopting management measures because they participate in developing them.

Unfortunately, in the first few months of the coronavirus pandemic, many artisanal fishers were negatively affected: the fleet was reduced by almost 80% as fishers refrained from fishing due to health risks and government-mandated travel restrictions. Almost 150 artisanal fishers have died from COVID-19, and many isolated communities suffered due to food insecurity for the first few months of the pandemic; recently, however, the government has improved its response, communities have begun to recover, and fishers have been able to resume their activities. The mahi mahi season is expected to open on time in October.

The fishery is currently in the MSC full assessment process and was given a 6-month extension to complete it by February 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. One key action that the fishery must take to get MSC certified is develop a bi-national action plan with Peru for the joint management of this highly migratory species. The Ecuadorian government has reached out to its counterparts in Peru to agree on a plan, however the Peruvian authorities have been slow to respond. Thanks to a letter sent from US buyer FIP participants to the Peruvian government in June reiterating the importance of this Bi-national Action Plan, the issue has been elevated once again in Peru. The letter was shared widely with fishers, exporters, the regional government in Piura, and other key stakeholders who are working together with WWF and the Ecuadorian government to pressure the Peruvian national government to agree to a plan. Since a bi-national Action Plan is key to the fishery achieving MSC certification, this is the main activity that the FIP will be focusing on, and hopes to achieve, over the next several months.

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**Become a WWF FIP participant today by visiting:**

<https://seafoodsustainability.org/fisheries/fishery-improvement-projects-signup>

Being a WWF FIP Participant provides a pre-competitive space for companies to engage with fisheries in their supply chains and leverage power across multiple companies to drive fishery improvements forward. By signing on to support a FIP, you are joining forces with other leaders in the industry that seek to help conserve marine ecosystems and advance the livelihoods for millions of people who depend on them.

WWF recognizes FIP participants on the industry website, [SeafoodSustainability.org](https://SeafoodSustainability.org). WWF also works with FIP participants to communicate the benefits of FIPs among key buyers, sustainable business leaders, employees, environmental activists, and other key constituencies.

**Together we can protect oceans and the food and livelihoods they can sustainably provide.**

For more information or to partner with WWF, please visit [SeafoodSustainability.org](https://SeafoodSustainability.org) or contact us at [info@seafoodsustainability.org](mailto:info@seafoodsustainability.org)

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