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UPDATES FROM THE WATER

MARCH 2021

ECUADOR MAHI MAHI

Gear Type: Longline

Volume: 10,319 MT (average 2009-2018)

FIP Stage: N/A

Progress Rating: Not Yet Available

Status: Comprehensive FIP (expected)

Ecuador's mahi mahi fishery is one of its most ecologically and economically valuable artisanal fisheries. Since the start of the FIP in 2010, more than 10,000 fishers have been engaged in FIP efforts through training 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 fishery is a top exporter to the U.S., so the leverage that buyers have upon the fishery is significant. 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 2010, WWF has worked closely with the Ecuadorian government and main mahi mahi exporters on a comprehensive FIP to move the fishery towards the MSC standard.

In February 2019, the fishery entered the MSC full assessment process but unfortunately had to withdraw in December 2020 due to administrative reasons. One of the main reasons the fishery could not meet the MSC standard during the full assessment period was a lack of an agreement between Ecuador and Peru to jointly manage the shared mahi mahi stock. The MSC standard requires that the countries come together and agree on joint management since Ecuador and Peru are the largest producers of mahi mahi in the eastern Pacific Ocean. Despite many efforts over the past several years by the Ecuadorian government to negotiate a binational management agreement with the Peruvian authorities, one does not yet exist.

The Ecuadorian government and exporters have informed WWF that they are committed to continuing to improve the sustainability of the mahi mahi fishery and to work with Peruvian authorities to come to an agreement on a binational Action Plan. Ecuador's Vice Minister of Aquaculture and Fisheries recently sent a letter to Peru's new Vice Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture to propose a meeting to discuss and agree upon a binational Action Plan for mahi mahi. The fishery is expected to revert to a comprehensive FIP led by the Ecuador mahi mahi Exporters Consortium¹, which was the client for the MSC full assessment, with technical support from WWF.

Ecuador has made great progress in improving the mahi mahi fishery at the national level, including adopting a new Fisheries and Aquaculture Law in April 2020. WWF is now working closely with Ecuadorian authorities to develop a Fisheries Regulation to implement the Law, which is expected to be finalized and adopted in March 2021. As part of that work, participatory management of fisheries through the development of management committees and scientific advisory committees will be established for the first time to advise the government and monitor the progress of the updated National Action Plan for the Conservation and Management of Mahi Mahi 2019-2024 (PAN Dorado).

WWF will continue to provide technical support and guidance to the fishery as it re-launches a comprehensive FIP. Priority activities over the next several months will include implementing the PAN Dorado, continuing a pilot digital traceability project with the government and fishers that use cameras, e-logbooks, and QR codes to track products along the supply chain and connect them to markets, and finding new strategies to get the authorities in Peru to commit to working with Ecuador on a joint management plan for this highly migratory species.

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 of millions of people who depend on them.

WWF recognizes FIP participants on the industry website, 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 or contact us at info@seafoodsustainability.org

¹ The Ecuador Mahi Mahi Exporters Consortium is made up of the following companies: Propemar S.A., Mardex Mariscos de Exportación S.A., Frigorífico y Laboratorio San Mateo, Frigolab San Mateo CIA. LTDA., Ocean Fish, Transmarina C.A., Fresh Fish del Ecuador CIA. LTDA., and Frigolandia S.A.