UPDATES FROM THE WATER

MARCH 2022

Stay up to date with the exciting progress WWF Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) are making!

Across the seafood supply chain, WWF is working with retailers, food service companies, manufacturers, and suppliers, to responsibly source seafood from fisheries that have met the standard requirements of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). By encouraging non-certified fisheries to improve their practices and ultimately meet the MSC standard, seafood buyers can help increase the performance of their source fisheries and decrease negative impacts on the water.

* Note: FIP stages and Progress Ratings are based on FisheryProgress.org.

FIP Social Policy

FisheryProgress launched a Human Rights and Social Responsibility Policy on May 12, 2021. The objective of the policy is to help FIPs reduce the risk of human and labor rights abuses and to provide a common framework for reporting on social performance in fisheries. All FIPs reporting on FisheryProgress.org are required to comply with the policy according to the phased implementation timeline outlined in the policy. You can learn more about the policy and supporting resources by visiting https://fisheryprogress.org/social-responsibility.

ECUADOR MAHI MAHI

Gear Type: Longline
Volume: 8,512 MT (average 2009-2019)
FIP Stage: Stage 5 (Improvements on the Water)
Progress Rating: A (Advanced Progress)
Status: January 2010 (reinitiated May 2021)

Ecuador's mahi mahi fishery is one of its most ecologically and economically valuable artisanal fisheries. The fishery supports 25,000 fishers and over half of its landings are exported, 95% of which go 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 mahi mahi exporters on a comprehensive FIP to move the fishery towards MSC certification. Over that time, incentivized by mahi mahi buyers and government commitments to the FIP, more than 10,000 fishers have been engaged in FIP efforts through training on fishing regulations and best fishing practices, adopting bycatch reduction tools, welcoming onboard observers, and piloting a digital traceability system to test electronic logbooks and cameras onboard their vessels.

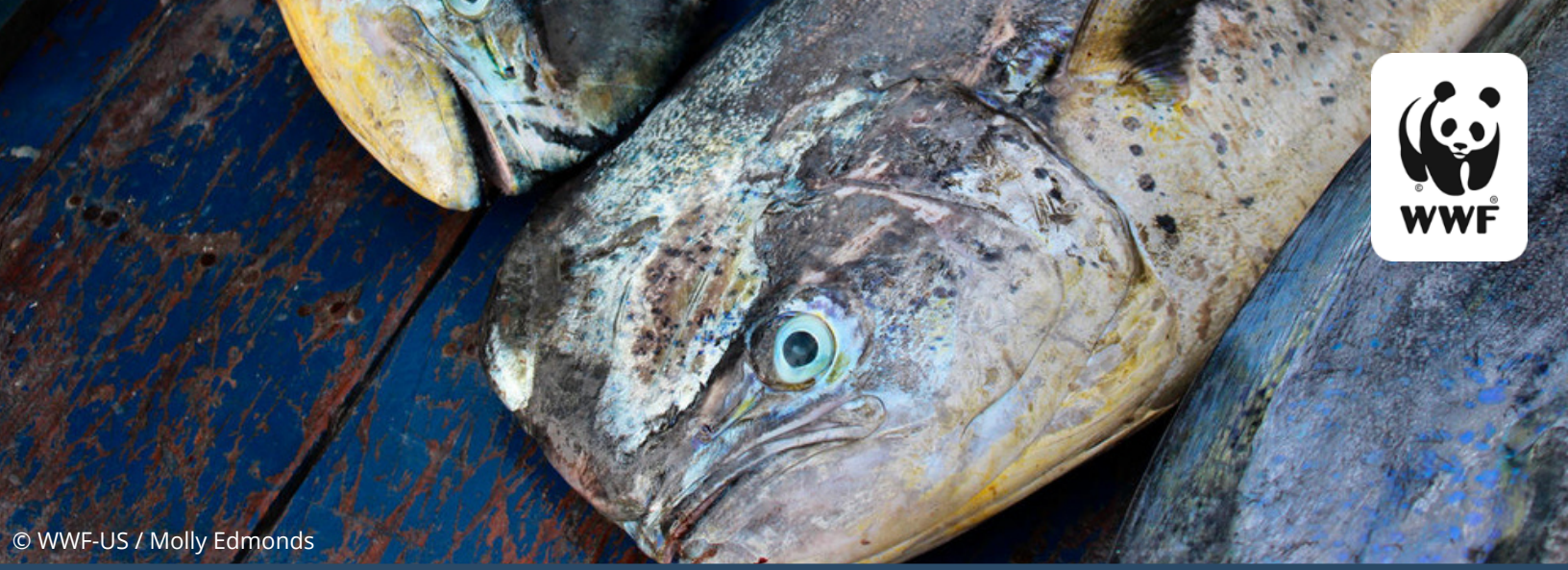
As the FIP lead, Conservation Mahi Mahi[1] has convened a technical team including a coordinator, communications specialist, an external advisor, and MSC expert to manage FIP implementation, and technical support from WWF. The Ecuadorian Fisheries authority has also convened an interinstitutional working group that includes Conservation Mahi Mahi and WWF to implement the Ecuadorian National Plans of Action for the Conservation of Mahi Mahi and Sharks in coordination with the mahi FIP Action Plan to ensure efforts are aligned.

[1] Conservation Mahi Mahi is a group of leading Ecuadorian mahi mahi exporters made up of the following companies: Propemar S.A., Frigolab San Mateo CIA. LTDA., Transmarina C.A., Fresh Fish del Ecuador CIA. LTDA., and Frigolandia S.A.

In September 2021, the Ecuadorian government issued a Ministerial Agreement requiring that the onboard observer program for mahi mahi longline vessels increase its coverage of the fleet from 10-20% over the next two years. This is an important step that will help to ensure improved collection of catch and bycatch data in the fishery. WWF is also working with the Peru Mahi Alliance and Sustainable Fisheries Partnership to plan a joint meeting between Peruvian and Ecuadorian exporters to promote a bi-national management plan for mahi mahi. In addition, now that the newly proposed participatory governance scheme has been socialized across different fisheries in Ecuador, WWF and Conservation Mahi Mahi are working to have it incorporated into the General Regulations for the application of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Law, which is currently being revised. If approved, fishers and the seafood industry will be more engaged in fishery decision-making processes, a requirement of the MSC standard.

Additionally, the pilot e-monitoring and traceability project being conducted on 15 artisanal “fibras” (skiffs) in the communities of Puerto Lopez and San Mateo continues. The project is helping to change the thinking of fishers regarding the use of technology for the better, as they see it as an opportunity to improve their practices and show the fishing authorities that they are complying with the laws and regulations. The implementation of electronic traceability systems is also opening the door for fishers to connect with local markets (mainly restaurants and hotels) who are looking to source more sustainable products.

Priority FIP activities over the next several months include: continuing to lobby the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) to mandate that regional mahi mahi scientific research, data collection, and stock assessments be incorporated into the Commission’s Research Master Plan; ensuring that the Ecuadorian government will adopt the proposed participatory governance scheme; expanding the onboard observer program and bycatch data collection program across the longline fleet; continuing to work towards the development of a Peru and Ecuador joint management plan for this highly migratory species; and to comply with the new FisheryProgress.org social policy, conducting the social risk self-evaluation for the Ecuador mahi mahi fishery by March 31.



PERU MAHI MAHI

Gear Type: Longline
Volume: 42, 868 MT (average 2015-2020)
FIP Stage: Stage 4 (Improvements in Fishing Practices or Fishery Management)
Progress Rating: A (Advanced Progress)
Start Date: November 2013

Peru's mahi mahi fishery supports over 10,000 fishers and serves as a key link in the marine food chain, providing sustenance for sharks, dolphins, and other ocean predators. Peru is also a leading source of the world's mahi mahi and, like Ecuador, a top exporter to the United States. In 2020, 61% of Peru's mahi mahi was exported to the U.S., generating over USD 52 million. Over 1,500 fishers have been engaged directly in FIP efforts, motivated by the support they're receiving to complete the formalization process and get fishing permits, increased market benefits such as preferential purchasing, and improved safety at sea through real-time vessel monitoring.

The three-year external audit for the FIP was completed in October 2021 to evaluate the progress of the FIP against the MSC standard. Completed FIP actions increased from 43% to 56%, and two MSC performance indicator scores related to Principle 3- Management increased to a passing grade (>80), increasing the FisheryProgress FIP progress rating from C to A. The audit highlighted key areas of improvement that are needed in the fishery including developing an updated mahi mahi stock assessment; improving bycatch data collection and management; and strengthening monitoring, enforcement, and governance of the fishery.

Since 2019, WWF has partnered with the Peru Mahi Alliance (PMA)[2] to advance the FIP. Since October 2021, two more companies have joined the PMA, bringing the total number of companies to 13[3]. The PMA recently became an independent industry association in Peru, and together with WWF, Sustainable Fisheries Partnership, and PromPerú, held an official launch event at Seafood Expo North America on March 14, 2022.

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[2] The Peru Mahi Alliance (PMA) is a pre-competitive group of Peruvian mahi mahi processing and exporting companies, representing almost 80% of Peru's mahi mahi exports, that have committed to advance the Peru mahi FIP through activity implementation, political advocacy efforts, and funding.

[3] Current PMA companies: Altamar Foods, COINREFRI, DEXIM, Fernandez SRL, Fish Olg, Mai Shi Group, Oceano Seafood, Peruvian Seafood, Produmar, Produpesca, SEAFROST, Sercosta, and Spring Valley Fruit/Agropesca

Under its annual workplan developed with WWF, PMA members have contributed to several key FIP activities including donating 84 mahi mahi samples to the Peruvian Institute of the Sea (IMARPE) to use for biological research; training 141 artisanal fishers across 64 vessels on best practices for handling and release of sea turtles and distributing bycatch reduction toolkits[4] to 57 vessels; and supporting a pilot e-monitoring project where 5 cameras were installed on vessels to improve the collection of catch and bycatch data. In addition, 7 companies participated in a pilot to identify the minimum requirements that a plant needs for products registered through TrazApp, WWF's mobile electronic catch documentation and traceability system, and two companies are working to ensure the interoperability of TrazApp with their Trace Register systems. Later in 2022, the second phase of the TrazApp pilot project will be launched, when PMA companies will collect fishery catch data through TrazApp and transfer it to US importing companies, ensuring that it complies with Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP) and Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability (GDST) interoperability standards. WWF also trained 100 fishers in two fishing cooperatives on the new mahi mahi fishery management regulation (ROP) established in July and is developing a practical guide to explain the ROP in simple terms to fishers. WWF is also working with the Peru Mahi Alliance and SFP to plan a joint meeting between Peruvian and Ecuadorian exporters to promote a bi-national management plan for mahi mahi, which is required for the Ecuador and Peru FIPs to meet the MSC standard.

Priority activities expected to occur over the next several months include: hiring a consultant to review conflict resolution mechanisms and recommend ways to strengthen governance and management of the fishery; working with PRODUCE to improve the formalization process for artisanal fishers; developing a proposal for how to monitor the implementation of the recently adopted mahi mahi ROP; continuing to train fishers in sea turtle handling and release practices; continuing the mahi mahi sample collection program between the PMA and IMARPE; continuing to work towards the development of a Peru and Ecuador joint management plan for this highly migratory species; and to comply with the new FisheryProgress.org social policy, conducting the social risk self-evaluation for the Peru mahi mahi fishery by March 31.

[4] The bycatch reduction toolkits include tools fishers can use to help release entangled and hooked sea turtles safely, including: dehookers, safe handling nets, and line cutters.

NICARAGUA SPINY LOBSTER - TRAP FISHERY

Gear Type: Traps
Volume: 1,740 MT (2020 Whole Weight - Trap Only)
FIP Stage: Stage 5 (Improvements on the Water)
Progress Rating: A (Advanced Progress)
Start Date: January 2012

Nicaragua is the eighth largest lobster producer in the world and the largest in Central America, with an average production of over 4,800 tons (whole weight) per year for the trap and dive fisheries, 1,700 tons of which comes from the industrial trap fishery which is involved in this FIP. The spiny lobster fishery in Nicaragua generated $65.8 million from exports in 2019, making it one of the country's most important fisheries. More than 95% of Nicaragua's lobster is exported, mostly to the US (51%) and EU (36%). The industrial trap fleet is made up of 64 vessels that employ 767 fishers. As the FIP is led at the national level by Nicaragua's Fisheries Institute (INPESCA), fishers are mostly engaged via meetings to update them on management regulations and FIP progress. Since the start of the FIP in 2012, fishers and fishing communities have benefited from stable catches and increasing lobster prices locally and internationally. The FIP has helped generate new information about the impact of the fishery on the lobster population, the habitat, and ecosystem, which has helped the Nicaraguan government to improve its management measures to ensure the long-term sustainability of the fishery and minimize its impact on the environment.

The three-year external audit for the FIP was conducted in December 2021 to evaluate the progress of the FIP against the MSC standard. Thanks to the development of the first-ever binational stock assessment completed in August 2021 as well as improvements in management and collection of new bycatch and ecosystem impact data, 10 MSC performance indicator scores increased to a passing grade (>80), increasing the FIP progress rating to A. Three MSC scores decreased due to new information collected regarding bycatch and related to the new stock assessment model used, but all remaining MSC indicators are expected to be addressed by June 2022, after which FIP will be ready to move into the MSC full assessment process. Once the FIP is ready to enter the MSC process, local supplier funding support will be needed to help pay for MSC certification so a key task over the next few months is to better engage local suppliers in this effort.

Several key FIP actions are being conducted to ensure the fishery can meet the MSC standard by June:

- WWF is working with INPESCA to achieve official government approval of the Nicaraguan lobster fishery management plan, which includes a complete description of harvest control rules and tools for the Nicaraguan lobster fishery including measures to put a cap on fishing licenses, establish a lobster catch quota, and improve the monitoring and control of the artisanal fleet.

- A peer review of the binational stock assessment will be completed by early March to identify sources of uncertainty in the stock assessment model and ensure they are considered in the established harvest control rules.

- INPESCA scientists will be working to collect improved data for the bycatch of king crab to better evaluate the impact of the fishery on the king crab population.

- Another study will be carried out to evaluate the impact of the fishery on the broader ecosystem, and based on the results, management measures to mitigate impacts on the ecosystem may be implemented.

- The Nicaraguan government is updating their Permanent Plan to Control and Prevent IUU fishing of spiny lobster to strengthen their monitoring, control, and surveillance of the fishery.

- Finally, to comply with the new FisheryProgress.org social policy, an independent consultant has been hired to conduct the social risk self-evaluation for the Nicaragua lobster fishery, which will be completed by March 31.

HONDURAS SPINY LOBSTER - TRAP FISHERY

Gear Type: Traps
Volume: 2,561 MT (2020 Whole Weight - Trap Only)
FIP Stage: Stage 5 (Improvements on the Water)
Progress Rating: A (Advanced Progress)
Start Date: July 2012

Honduras is the second-largest lobster producer in Central America after Nicaragua with an average production of over 3,700 tons (whole weight) per year for the trap and dive fisheries, 2,765 tons of which come from the industrial trap fishery involved in this FIP. In 2019, Honduras spiny lobster generated $46.7 million in exports. Approximately 90% of the catch is exported to the United States, so the leverage that buyers have upon the fishery is significant. The industrial trap fleet is made up of 91 vessels that employ approximately 1,500 fishers. Fishers are engaged in the trap FIP mainly through the industrial fishing associations APESCA and APICAH, where representatives attend FIP meetings to get updated on the latest management regulations and FIP actions. The FIP has helped fishers to better understand the fishery management regulations and improve their catch data collection efforts by learning what information is required to inform the stock assessment. Under the FIP, studies have been conducted to evaluate the impact of the fishery on the habitat. The studies found that there is a risk that the fishery is negatively impacting deep coral reefs (deeper than 25 m) and in response, the government is considering new measures such as improving the monitoring of coral reef distribution and prohibiting discards of lobster traps to reduce the fishery's impact on vulnerable marine habitats.

The three-year external audit for the Honduras lobster FIP was conducted in July 2021 to evaluate the progress of the FIP against the MSC standard. Because it was conducted before the first-ever Honduras-Nicaragua binational stock assessment was finalized in August 2021, there was no change in MSC performance indicator scores for Principle 1- health of the stock. However, based on the increases in MSC scores for the Nicaraguan lobster fishery after its 3-year audit in December, which did consider the new stock assessment, it is likely that some of the Honduras lobster Principle 1 scores have since increased as well. A Honduras spiny lobster fishery management plan is being developed and socialized with key stakeholders which, when finalized and approved later this year, is expected to also help increase MSC scores. Additionally, one Principle 3 MSC performance indicator related to the management of the fishery increased from fail to a conditional pass, increasing the FisheryProgress FIP Progress Rating from C to A.

In January, Honduras' first female President, Xiomara Castro, was sworn into office. As the government transitions to the new administration, there will likely be delays with some FIP actions as WWF works to build relationships with the newly appointed officials and engage them in the FIP. Priority activities expected to occur over the next several months include: Completing the peer review of the binational stock assessment to identify sources of uncertainty by March; socializing and finalizing the Honduras lobster fishery management plan; implementing updated logbooks to improve the collection of bycatch data in the trap fishery; and to comply with the new FisheryProgress.org social policy, conducting the social risk self-evaluation for the Honduras lobster fishery by March 31.

PERU JUMBO SQUID

Gear Type: Squid Jig
Volume: 441, 749 MT (2020)
FIP Stage: Stage 4 (FIP Implementation)
Progress Rating: A (Advanced Progress)
Start Date: February 2018

The jumbo squid fishery is one of Peru's most important artisanal fisheries, employing more than 11,000 fishers and 105,000 Peruvians across the industry and providing low-cost, high-quality protein to much of the population. It is also one of the largest squid export fisheries globally and generated $614 million in exports in 2020.

The Peruvian jumbo squid FIP is the first comprehensive squid FIP in the world. In October 2021, the Peruvian National Chamber for Giant Squid (CAPECAL)[5] signed an MOU with WWF to co-lead the Peruvian squid FIP and launched the partnership at the Conxemar exhibition in Vigo, Spain in coordination with WWF and Sustainable Fisheries Partnership. As CAPECAL is new to FIPs and the MSC, efforts are focused on building capacity of CAPECAL members so that they fully understand the process. An MSC training is planned with CAPECAL in late February, and WWF's online FIP training program has been shared with them as well. The independent industry association is working with WWF to develop an annual workplan to advance the FIP, focusing on improved electronic monitoring and traceability of the fishery.

Approximately 1,500 fishers across three cooperatives have engaged directly in FIP efforts, mainly through piloting WWF's mobile electronic catch documentation and traceability system, TrazApp, to improve the collection and transparency of catch data, make it easier to receive fishing permits, and improve safety at sea by allowing vessels to be monitored in real-time. In this first phase of the TrazApp pilot, efforts are focused on improving the collection of fisheries data and its transfer down

[5] CAPECAL is a group of 17 Peruvian squid processing and exporting companies representing over 60% of total squid exports. Current companies include: Pacific Freezing Company, Sabanamar Pacífico, Océano Seafood, Peruvian Sea Food, Transmarina del Perú, Refrigerados Fisholg e Hijos, Marfrío Perú, COINREFRI, Produmar, Perupez, Seafrost, Fernández, Altamar foods, Dexim, Sakana, Peru Frost and PROANCO.

the supply chain from the point of landing to the processing plants, while identifying critical issues and adapting TrazApp as needed. Ten percent of Peru's squid catch is currently being registered by fishers using TrazApp, and WWF is continuing to train more fishers, middlemen, and suppliers on the use of TrazApp to increase uptake across the squid and mahi mahi fisheries. In addition, to comply with the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO) Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) for jumbo flying squid which requires that vessels report their catches, the Peruvian Institute of the Sea (IMARPE) has proposed to the SPRFMO that TrazApp be used to collect the required catch data. The proposal was well received, and WWF will continue to work with fishers and IMARPE to expand the use of TrazApp across the squid fleet. WWF has also signed an MOU with DICAPI, the Peruvian General Directorate of Captaincies and Coast Guards, to connect the TrazApp database with DICAPI's database so that they can issue digital set sail permits requested through TrazApp to fishers within 24 hours. This system will be up and running by March, will be used for all fisheries nationally, and will reduce corruption and bribery in the set sail permitting process. WWF is also working with several other government agencies including the Ministry of Production (PRODUCE), the National Fisheries Health Agency (SANIPES), and the Regional Directorates of Production (DIREPROs) to improve the interoperability of TrazApp with other systems and expand the use of TrazApp at landing ports. Four Peruvian ports have already adopted the use of TrazApp to record landings, and two more ports are interested in adopting it as well.

To comply with the FisheryProgress Social Policy, a self-evaluation against the FisheryProgress criteria for increased risk of forced labor and human trafficking was conducted by an external consultant in February. The evaluation deemed that the fishery is not considered high risk. Activities expected to occur over the next several months include building capacity of CAPECAL member companies on the FIP and MSC process; developing an annual FIP workplan for CAPECAL that includes funding support; working with authorities and key stakeholders to update the squid fishery management regulation; continuing to scale up the use of TrazApp with fishers, landing sites, government, processors, and importers; and developing a Human Rights Code of Conduct, establishing a grievance mechanism, and compiling a vessel list by May 2022 to comply with the FisheryProgress Social Policy.

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VIETNAM YELLOWFIN TUNA

Gear Type: Handline
Volume: 14,018 MT (2020)
FIP Stage: Stage 5 (Improvements on the Water)
Progress Rating: B (Good Progress)
Start Date: April 2014

Yellowfin tuna is Vietnam's most valuable marine export making it a critical source of jobs and income with over 2500 vessels and 9000 fishers engaged in the fishery. The Vietnam yellowfin tuna handline FIP is focused on reducing bycatch, improving stock management, and increasing traceability through engagement with fishers, government officials, and the private sector.

During the past six months, progress in the FIP has been slowed due to Covid-19 associated lockdowns in Vietnam. Despite this, the FIP undertook two important consultancy reviews. From December to January 2022, the FIP conducted a third-party environmental review and a full social self-assessment against the Fishery Progress social criteria.

In December, FIP stakeholders completed a partial independent assessment of the environmental performance of the fishery. During the review, the consultant rescored the fishery against the MSC standard and recalibrated the Action Plan to focus on the most pressing issues. The FIP improved from 14 to 20 MSC performance indicators likely to receive a full pass if the fishery entered certification. The FIP continues to receive a failing grade on only 2 MSC performance indicators, both of which are linked to a need for there to be a harvest strategy and harvest control rules for yellowfin tuna to be implemented at the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. In January 2022, FIP stakeholders finalized the social self-assessment for the project and submitted it to Fishery Progress for consideration. The FIP is not considered high-risk and will not need to undertake a full social responsibility assessment.

Sign up to become a FIP Participant today by visiting:
https://seafoodsustainability.org/fisheries/fishery-improvement-projects-signup

Help conserve marine ecosystems, protect livelihoods, and increase the number of sustainable fisheries and the overall supply of sustainable seafood.

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, please visit seafoodsustainability.org