

Protecting fisheries, improving livelihoods

MSC Developing World Fisheries Programme



MSC – the best environmental choice in seafood www.msc.org



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Food security and livelihoods at risk

Towards sustainable fisheries

The fisheries sector is critically important in the developing world. Millions of people depend on fish for their livelihoods, particularly in the small-scale fisheries sector. In addition fish is a very important source of food and in some communities more than half of animal protein is derived from fish. It is important that this vital resource is protected to meet food requirements and sustain fishers' livelihoods into the future.

Globally, a highly significant number of fish stocks are now in decline or fast approaching their natural limits. Overfishing and indiscriminate fishing practices are an ongoing threat to continued viability of fish stocks and supporting ecosystems. This development poses serious social, environmental and economic consequences for communities in developing countries, where large populations are dependent on fisheries for their day-to-day living.

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is a global, non-profit and independent organisation working to reverse the decline in global fish stocks through the use of market incentives. The MSC's fishery eco-labelling and certification programme allows consumers to identify and support environmentally responsible fishing practices through purchasing decisions. Consumer support for sustainable fishing in the market place leads to economic benefits for well-managed fisheries and long-term sustainability of fisheries, ensuring secure livelihoods and continuous availability of fish for food. Through its Developing World Fisheries Programme, the MSC is engaging more developing country fisheries in its programme and ensuring developing country fisheries also enjoy the conservation and economic benefits that certification and eco-labelling offer.

The MSC's approach to sustainable fisheries is a unique, win-win concept which offers an innovative means to help government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the fishing industry, seafood businesses and the general public to work together to meet national and international targets for sustainable fisheries. The need for this type of multi-stakeholder approach to sustainable fisheries is particularly relevant in the developing world, which produces about two-thirds of global fish production and which originates about fifty per cent of fish traded internationally.

How the MSC works

Fisheries simply apply on a voluntary basis to be assessed against the MSC Standard by independent certification bodies. The MSC Standard, which is called the Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing, is based on the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and was developed through extensive international consultation. The Standard consists of three principles:

1 The state of the target stocks

2 The impact of the fishery on the environment

3 The management system

The assessment is a robust and transparent process, conducted by independent certification bodies who appoint scientific experts to analyse each fishery. It is open to review and comment by all stakeholders with an interest in the fishery being assessed.

If a fishery is successfully certified against the MSC Standard, products from the fishery can be sold with the MSC's unique ecolabel, which identifies seafood as coming from a well-managed fishery. The MSC's blue fish tick label appears on hundreds of products sold by retailers and restaurants and is becoming increasingly familiar to consumers in Europe, North America, South Africa and Australasia.



This lobster fishery in Chile is an example of a fishery that could benefit from the MSC's work to make the certification programme more accessible to small-scale and data-deficient fisheries.

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Working in developing countries

“In the first formal agreement between the MSC and a nation state, the MSC joined the government of Vietnam in a joint commitment to promote sustainable fishing practices. The Memorandum of Understanding states the shared intention to explore and encourage MSC certification in Vietnam.”

MSC Fish4Thought, June 2005

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Benefits of certification include potential for premium prices, access to new markets, preferred supplier status, potential to attract ethical investment in the fishery or funding for local community social and economic infrastructure, improvements in management of fisheries and public recognition of fishery conservation efforts.

The MSC programme is open to all fisheries regardless of size, scale, location and intensity. In order to promote equal accessibility to its eco-labelling programme, the MSC works with stakeholders and fisheries from all over the world. Through the MSC's Developing World Fisheries Programme, the MSC seeks to promote increased participation of developing country fisheries in certification.

The Developing World Fisheries Programme has two main objectives:

- Increase developing country stakeholder awareness and involvement in the MSC.
- Ensure continued relevance and application of the MSC Standard to developing world fisheries.

The MSC employs several means to meet these objectives.

Outreach

The MSC reaches out to developing country fisheries and stakeholders through its global outreach programme. Dedicated developing world outreach operates from the MSC's headquarter and regional offices. An Africa and Middle East outreach programme operates from the MSC's international headquarters in the United Kingdom. A South East Asia and Pacific Island area outreach programme operates from the regional office in Australia and a Central and South America outreach programme operates from the MSC regional office in the USA.

The MSC works to create awareness about fisheries eco-labelling and the role of the MSC in the global efforts to stem dwindling fishery resources, through workshops, participation in formal and informal local meetings and development of communication materials. Training to improve capacity of stakeholders to engage in certification and working with developing country partners to develop strategies to engage in the MSC programme also forms part of the MSC's outreach in the developing world. Some of the countries where recent outreach activities have been conducted include the Gambia, Tanzania, India, Ecuador, Venezuela, Vietnam, Argentina, China, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand and Mexico. With increased capacity and support, the MSC will be able to expand its outreach to even more developing countries in the future.

Governance

In order to ensure that developing country issues are integrated into the programme the MSC's governance structure includes representation from developing country stakeholders. The MSC Stakeholder Council has one component specifically created for developing country and community interest. The MSC Technical Advisory Board includes developing world expertise and the last few years have seen increased representation of developing country representatives on the MSC Board of Trustees.

“With trade in fishery products at an all-time high and concern over the status of wild marine stocks growing, eco-labelling offers a way to promote responsible fish trade – crucial for many developing countries – while preserving natural resources for future generations.”

FAO news release, 23 March 2005



Above: The South African hake fishery was the first African fishery to achieve MSC certification. Its fish is now sold bearing the MSC's blue eco-label through retailers in South Africa and Europe.

© Sea Harvest



Above: Fish is the third major export product of Vietnam. Thousands of individual fishermen rely on fishing for their main source of income.

© Colin Forbdike

Working with partners

The development of partnerships with local and international governmental and non-governmental organisations is crucial to the MSC's work in developing countries. Collaborative efforts between the MSC and grassroots NGOs have been instrumental to successful outreach efforts, increased awareness of the MSC process, partnering with fisheries to use certification to work towards sustainable fisheries management and providing funding and institutional support for developing country fisheries to participate in the MSC.

Assessment of small-scale and data-deficient fisheries

Many developing country fisheries do not possess the type of detailed and comprehensive scientific information that may be required by certification bodies for assessments. In order to address this potential constraint on eco-labelling, the MSC has embarked on a project to develop guidelines for the assessment of small-scale and data-deficient fisheries.

The project aims to develop guidance for certifiers on the use of the type of information that may be available to such fisheries, including the use of traditional ecological knowledge and traditional management systems. The MSC is also developing guidance around the use of risk based approach to assessment which will enable the use of qualitative

information and reduce as appropriate the requirement for complex scientific data when evaluating fishery performance.

Funding support for fisheries assessment

There are a number of organisations that are supportive of the MSC's vision for sustainable seafood and, on a case-by-case basis, are able to provide grants to support the process leading to certification for some economically challenged fisheries. One funding initiative of particular relevance to developing countries is the Sustainable Fisheries Fund administered by the Resources Legacy Fund, an independent entity which makes loans or grants available to contribute to the costs of assessment.

Making progress

In 2004, the first two developing countries to undergo full assessment against the MSC Standard, the South African hake fishery and the Mexican Baja California spiny lobster fishery, became certified. The successful certification of these fisheries demonstrates the feasibility and potential value that certification holds for developing country fisheries.

There is now growing interest in the MSC process from fisheries in Africa, Asia and South and Central America, and more fisheries are now participating in pre-assessments and full assessments against the MSC Standard. The reality

of the conservation and economic benefits of certification and eco-labelling is also demonstrated by the growing interest in the MSC from both the supply and demand sectors in the global fishing industry. This level of interest holds promise for MSC efforts towards sustainability in both developed and developing country fisheries and is also a demonstration of the contribution that eco-labelling can make towards the protection of fisheries resources and securing livelihoods both now and in the future.



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How to get involved

The Marine Stewardship Council provides a unique opportunity for individuals, national and international government organisations, development agencies, the academic and research community, non-governmental organisations, fishing communities, the fishing industry, wholesalers, processors and retailers to become directly involved in promoting sustainable fisheries in the developing world.

- Government, industry and fishing communities or other organisations can apply to a third party certification body (list of accredited certification bodies available on MSC website at www.msc.org) for their fisheries to be certified to the MSC Standard.
- Seafood wholesalers, processors, retailers and vendors can encourage the fisheries from which they source fish to become certified.
- Non-governmental and development organisations can provide capacity and financial support to fisheries to enable them to participate in the MSC process.

- Non-governmental organisations, fishing communities and the research and academic community can participate in the MSC and help ensure that fishery assessments are robust and credible.
- Organisations can support the MSC's work in the developing world by providing financial and in kind support to help increase the MSC's capacity to work with more developing countries.

Further information

Marine Stewardship Council

www.msc.org
info@msc.org

Sustainable Fisheries Fund

www.resourceslegacyfund.org/programs/prg_sff.html



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Certification of the Mexican Baja California Red Rock Lobster Fishery

The Mexican Baja California red rock lobster fishery was the first developing country, small-scale, community based fishery to become certified to the MSC Standard.

The fishery is managed using a community based system that involves cooperative management between fishers and the government. Lobsters are caught with rectangular traps covered with galvanised, plastic-sheathed wire mesh. The traps have panels, which allow undersize lobsters to escape. The fishing cooperatives rigorously control fishing effort and enforcement against poachers within their respective zones.

Nine fishing cooperatives belonging to the Federación Regional de Sociedades Cooperativas de la Industria Pesquera

Baja California F.C.L (Baja California Regional Federation of the Fishing Cooperative Societies) (FEDECOOP), collectively applied as the client for the assessment of the fishery in partnership with WWF and with logistical support provided by Comunidad y Biodiversidad (COBi).

A team of specialists, which included scientists from Centro Interdisciplinario de Ciencias Marinas del IPN and from Centro de Investigaciones Biologicas del Noroeste, was pulled together by an accredited certification body. Following a period of comprehensive assessment, which involved input from several stakeholders and stakeholder groups, the fishery became certified in 2004. The certification of the fishery led

to international acknowledgement of management efforts within the fishery and to several social and environmental benefits for the community. The enhanced image and reputation of the fishery resulted in empowerment of the community and access to resources for research. In addition, certification also attracted support for provision of some social amenities in the community and opportunities to develop markets for certified seafood products.

Certification is already proving to bring significant benefits to this fishery and plans are ongoing within the fishery to build on current achievements. The opportunities provided by certification continue to be an incentive to maintain good management practices in the fishery.

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