



World Wildlife Fund's Community-Based Certification Program:

Engaging Small-scale Fishers in the MSC Eco-label Process

WWF is working hand-in-hand with fishing communities to develop well-managed fisheries and create new economic incentives for a sustainable future.



***In 1997, WWF and Unilever co-founded the Marine**

Stewardship Council (MSC). This global, independent, nonprofit organization works with retailers, governments, NGOs, conservationists, the fishing industry and other stakeholders, to promote well-managed fisheries by encouraging responsible, environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable fishing practices. Fisheries apply to be assessed against the MSC Standard. This assessment is carried out by independent certification bodies who, after comprehensive analysis, then determine whether or not certification is merited. The MSC eco-label is then awarded to the fishery, sometimes with conditions. More than 270 MSC-certified seafood products are in the global marketplace today.

Preserving healthy fish populations is essential to protecting the web of life in our oceans. Fish are a vital food source, especially in developing countries where they are often the major source of protein in coastal communities. There is an economic benefit as well: nearly 200 million people depend on the fishing industry for their livelihood.

To guarantee that our children inherit a living planet abundant with fish and other marine wildlife, WWF partners with governments, businesses, local communities, fishers and conservation organizations to protect and restore fisheries. WWF's Community-Based Certification (CBC) Program helps small-scale fisheries through the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification process.* Through

the development of an environmental standard for sustainable and well-managed fisheries, the MSC seeks to harness consumer purchasing power to generate change and promote environmentally responsible stewardship of the world's fisheries.

WHY COMMUNITY FISHERIES?

Small-scale fishers comprise approximately 94% of the world's fishers and produce nearly half of the global fish supply for human consumption and yet most local fishing communities are struggling to keep their small industries afloat. From fisheries along the central Baja California Peninsula in Mexico to those along key coastal areas of India, WWF and the MSC are working together to create economic incentives for sustainable fishing in coastal areas known for their rich biological diversity.

WWF's Community Fisheries Program is currently working on more than 15 community projects worldwide, successfully emphasizing the participation of local fishers and the recognition of traditional knowledge in the certification process. By ensuring that these fisheries have the same opportunities to participate in the MSC global eco-label certification program as large-scale fishing interests we can make the market work for conservation and help turn the tide on overfishing and destructive fishing.



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WWF IN ACTION

With WWF's global network and our numerous partnerships with other NGOs, we are well equipped to facilitate MSC certification of community-scale fisheries in both developing and developed countries. Here are some of the places we work:

BAJA CALIFORNIA SPINY LOBSTER FISHERY, MÉXICO

The Baja fishery made history as the first small-scale community fishery from a developing country to be certified to the MSC Standard. The fishery is comprised of nine fishing cooperatives representing 10 villages, working together as a federation (FEDE-COOP) to manage and market their lobster products. The fishers use wire traps in an area covering some 2000 square miles, and catch roughly 1500 tons a year—more than half of Mexico's lobster production. The Baja fishermen are involved in the management and enforcement of the fishery, participating with local researchers in data collection and analysis every year. WWF has been intimately involved with this fishery throughout the MSC certification process. By providing funding and expertise we have demonstrated that certification can work in small-scale fisheries and we are currently working to develop new niche markets for the certified lobster product.

LAKES AND COORONG MIXED FISHERY, AUSTRALIA

In Southern Australia, an information gap identified during preliminary analysis spurred a new collaboration between fishing families and scientists. This exciting new partnership, fostered by WWF, is collecting data on the incidental capture of migratory birds, which will then be used to determine whether action is needed to minimize fishing impacts on the ecosystem.

CEARÁ LOBSTER FISHERY, BRAZIL

In Northeastern Brazil, a community is using the results of its preliminary certification analysis to lobby the Brazilian government for implementation of a national lobster management plan and is encouraging other communities to join the MSC program by promoting certification at an annual regatta.

WESTERN VISAYAS BLUE CRAB FISHERY, THE PHILIPPINES

In the Philippines, WWF's work to introduce the concept of MSC certification has resulted in fishing communities working closely together with local governments to develop management and enforcement plans to safeguard an important crab fishery.

CALIFORNIA SALMON FISHERY, USA

The California Salmon Council is the only commodity marketing program representing the approximately 1,700 commercially licensed fishermen in California. In 2002 the Council decided to pursue MSC certification as a way to open new markets in the United States and internationally. The Council was successful in obtaining a grant from the California Department of Food & Agriculture to help underwrite the cost of the assessment process. WWF provided early seed money that was crucial for demonstrating widespread support for the project.



David Goldenberg

Consumers now have a choice, in the grocery store and seafood restaurants. By supporting the MSC eco-label, everyone can directly contribute to the conservation of the seas while protecting and restoring well-managed fisheries in the process.

For more information, please contact Meredith Lopuch at Meredith.Lopuch@wwfus.org.



Incorporating technology to save the seas

WWF is developing new software so that, one day, WWF field staff can systematically gather data on fisheries in their region and using that data apply the appropriate tools that will bring about conservation successes. The method was originally developed in Mexico with WWF funding and expertise. This pilot project led to the successful certification of the Baja California Spiny Lobster fishery and is now being implemented in Russia and India.