



## Embedding Social Issues in Fishery Improvement Projects: SFP Guidance to Retailers and Suppliers



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## OVERVIEW

This guidance document seeks to provide interested stakeholders, including retailers and suppliers, with recommendations for addressing different aspects of social responsibility in seafood production, and to direct them to useful resources, projects, and initiatives that may support the embedding of social issues into fishery improvement projects (FIPs).

Sustainable Fisheries Partnership's (SFP) definition of social responsibility is informed by the [Framework for Social Responsibility in the Seafood Sector](#), developed by the [Certifications and Ratings Collaboration](#), whose membership includes SFP, the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Program, the Marine Stewardship Council, the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, and Fair Trade USA. The Framework uses the principles of the "Monterey Framework" presented in the paper [Kittinger et al., \(2017\), Committing to Socially Responsible Seafood. Science, Vol 356, Issue 6341:](#)

1. **Protect Human Rights, Dignity, and Access to Resources**
  - 1.1. Fundamental human rights are respected, labor rights are protected, and decent living and working conditions are provided, particularly for vulnerable and at-risk groups.
  - 1.2. Rights and access to resources are respected and fairly allocated and respectful of collective and indigenous rights.
2. **Ensure Equality and Equitable Opportunity to Benefit**
  - 2.1. Recognition (standing), voice, and respectful engagement for all groups, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, culture, political, or socioeconomic status.
  - 2.2. Equal opportunities to benefit are ensured to all, through the entire supply chain.
3. **Improve Food and Livelihood Security**
  - 3.1. Nutritional and sustenance needs of resource-dependent communities are maintained or improved.
  - 3.2. Livelihood opportunities are secured or improved, including fair access to markets and capabilities to maintain income generation.

This document considers the following social issues one-by-one: ethical treatment of workers, ethical treatment of vendors, gender in fisheries, respect for traditional rights, the empowerment of small-scale fishers in co-management situations, fisheries and food security, and the promotion of fisheries in poverty reduction. Most of these social issues relate to more than one of the principles above; for instance, gender in fisheries is relevant to all three principles. Some components of the principles are not explicitly covered by our recommendations, for example Component 3.1.2: Communities have improving healthcare, and Component 3.1.3: Communities have improving education. Meanwhile, the ethical treatment of vendors stands out as an issue that is not directly addressed by the Framework.

Tools and solutions exist for some of the issues listed. When that is the case, we recommend that retailers and suppliers use those existing solutions. Where tools do not yet exist, or work is in progress, we give recommendations on how retailers and suppliers can support their development. The information provided is not exhaustive, but rather is intended to act as a starting point for companies. Table 1 below summarizes our findings and recommendations.

**Table 1. Summary of social issues in fisheries and existing tools and recommendations to address them.**

ISSUE	EXISTING TOOLS	SFP RECOMMENDATION
<a href="#">Ethical treatment of workers</a>	Roadmap for Improving Seafood Ethics (RISE)	Utilize resources provided by existing tools to conduct supply chain mapping, risk assessment, and due diligence.
<a href="#">Ethical treatment of vendors</a>	Joint Ethical Trading Initiatives' Guide to Buying Responsibly	Review purchasing practices for social impacts and act to address them.
<a href="#">Social well-being in fisheries and fishing communities</a>	Fishery Performance Indicators  Socioeconomic performance measurement tool for fisheries  Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector  FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines)	Conduct a social assessment of the fishery.  Monitor performance against social indicators over time.
<a href="#">Gender in fisheries</a>	USAID's Gender mainstreaming in fisheries management: A training manual  Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF) information-sharing platform	Adopt a gender-mainstreaming approach:  Conduct a gender analysis of the fishery and fishing community.  Give a voice to women by enabling them to participate in decision-making processes.  Collate and publish gender disaggregated data to contribute to the global dataset for gender in fisheries.
<a href="#">Respect for traditional rights</a>	FAO's Open Tenure mapping tool software  FAO's Free, Prior, and Informed Consent Manual for Project Practitioners	Conduct a social impact assessment of FIP activities, with specific consideration of impacts on access to the fishery.  Utilize participatory approaches throughout the FIP to ensure all affected stakeholders can have their say.

ISSUE	EXISTING TOOLS	SFP RECOMMENDATION
<a href="#">Empowerment of small-scale fishers in co-management</a>	Locally Managed Marine Area Network (LMMA)	Make use of participatory approaches to equip small-scale fishers with a voice.
<a href="#">Fisheries and food security</a>	SSF Guidelines  Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector	Encourage the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.  Assess the impacts of environmental strategies on fishers' access to food.  Seek out opportunities to reduce food losses and waste.
<a href="#">Promoting fisheries in poverty reduction</a>	SSF Guidelines  Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector  Fair Trade USA Capture Fisheries Standard (CFS)	Encourage the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.  Use the Fair Trade USA CFS to frame improvement objectives.  Assess and mitigate the impact of environmental strategies on fishers' livelihoods and the livelihoods of others in the fishing community.

Additional key organizations and resources identified during the development of this guidance document are summarized below:

- The [Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions \(CASS\)](#) provides a list of [Social Responsibility Resources](#) and has published an updated [FIP Guidelines](#) document (August 2019) that includes some guidance around social issues.
- [Conservation International \(CI\)](#) has developed a social responsibility assessment tool for the seafood sector, in collaboration with CASS and member organizations of the Coalition for Socially Responsible Seafood. The tool, which is based on the Framework for Social Responsibility in the Seafood Sector, among other resources, is now being pilot tested with several FIPs. More information about its development can be found here: [CI, 2018, Driving Commitments to Social Responsibility in the Seafood Sector](#).
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) [Committee on Fisheries \(COFI\)](#)'s Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI:FT) is developing guidance on social responsibility in fisheries value chains. The draft guidance document has been released for consultation and is scheduled to be finalized in 2019.
- The [Ethical Trading Initiative](#) (ETI) is an alliance of companies, trade unions, and NGOs that promotes respect for workers' rights. The ETI provides detailed guidance and training on due diligence, purchasing practices, and other ethical trading principles. Companies that hold an ETI membership have access to additional resources and support. For more information on membership, see the [ETI membership brochure](#).
- FIP progress tracking database, [FisheryProgress](#), now enables FIPs to report on social impacts, alongside reporting on environmental actions and improvements. One example where a FIP has utilized this reporting ability is [the Indonesia blue swimming crab – gillnet/trap FIP](#) (see “Additional Impacts”).
- Nonprofit organization [FishWise](#) has developed a free online tool called [RISE \(Roadmap for Improving Seafood Ethics\)](#) that provides producers, processors, brands, and retailers in the seafood industry with information to assess and improve the social responsibility of their supply chains. RISE compiles tools, guidance, and resources to help companies implement the roadmap components and track progress step-by-step. Other resources from FishWise can be found at: <https://fishwise.org/resources/social-responsibility/>.
- The [Responsible Sourcing Tool](#), which focuses on combatting human trafficking in supply chains, is the result of a collaboration among the US State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, Verité, Made in a Free World, and the Aspen Institute. It includes a set of [Seafood Compliance Tools](#) for the Seafood Industry.
- UK non-departmental public body [Seafish](#) provides tools and resources concerning social responsibility in seafood, including [Tools for Ethical Seafood Sourcing \(TESS\)](#) – an online tool that signposts users to resources and initiatives regarding social responsibility. The full list of resources provided by Seafish can be found here: [Ethics in seafood](#).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Ethical treatment of workers

Since 2011, investigative journalism and reporting has revealed high-profile cases of human trafficking and labor abuses in the global fishing industry. These reports detail the horrific conditions in which some fishers are forced to work and demonstrate the inherently risky nature of work in the fishing industry.

National-level efforts to tackle labor abuses have been implemented in response to some of these reports, with a notable example being the [Seafood Task Force](#) (formerly the Shrimp Sustainable Supply Chain Task Force), a multi-stakeholder initiative operating in Thailand that has adopted a [Code of Conduct and Vessel Auditable Standards](#).

Meanwhile, industry standards for fisheries are beginning to recognize labor risks. In 2018, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) extended the MSC fishery assessment process to include [provisions for labor requirements](#). Fisheries and offshore supply chains are now required to provide a self-disclosure document that reports on measures, policies, and practices in place to ensure the absence of forced and child labor. Furthermore, from 2020 the MSC plans to phase in requirements for high-risk certificate holders to undergo an audit against a third-party social standard, such as Social Accountability International (SAI)'s SA8000.

In August 2019, the FIP progress tracking database, [Fishery Progress](#), released an Interim Policy on Forced Labor, Child Labor, or Human Trafficking, in recognition of the risk of labor abuses being identified in FIP fisheries and to support improvements in FIP where evidence of serious human rights abuses are found. The Interim Policy is to be applied to all FIPs listed on Fishery Progress for whom reports of issues are made, while Fishery Progress works to develop a permanent policy for addressing reports of human rights abuses in FIPs.

The FAO released its draft Guidance on Social Responsibility in Fisheries and Aquaculture Value Chains for consultation in June 2019. The draft document focuses on workers' rights in the value chain and takes a risk-based approach to due diligence, like that recommended by SFP and other existing tools. This approach and the requirements for social responsibility identified by the document are practicably supported by a range of existing resources available to help businesses address labor risks in the seafood supply chain, including tools and resources for supply chain mapping, risk assessment, and due diligence.

The newly developed free online tool [RISE \(Roadmap for Improving Seafood Ethics\)](#), provided by nonprofit organization [FishWise](#), brings together many of these resources to provide step-by-step guidance to help companies evaluate, monitor, and improve labor conditions for workers in seafood supply chains. For each step, the tool identifies useful guidance and resources from other organizations and initiatives, including the Responsible Sourcing Tool's seafood compliance tools. In addition, the tool operates a referral hub that enables companies to identify organizations, third-party consultancies, and social experts in their relevant field of interest and region.

For additional information on human rights due diligence and resources on social auditing, see the [Ethical Trading Initiative \(ETI\)](#).

This guidance document recommends that seafood companies utilize resources provided by the existing tools described above to conduct supply chain mapping, risk assessment, and due diligence. For more information on steps recommended by SFP, please refer to the Annex.

## 2. Ethical treatment of vendors

Purchasing practices that prioritize low costs and short lead times over ethical criteria can hinder the ability of suppliers to meet contracts while maintaining good working conditions, or even incentivize them to treat workers poorly in order to cut production costs and meet deadlines. According to a [supplier survey](#) conducted by the Ethical Trading Initiatives of Denmark, Norway, and the UK and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2016, there is often a conflict between the social codes of conduct imposed on suppliers and the purchasing conditions to which they are subjected.

[Fair Trade USA's Capture Fisheries Standard](#) (CFS) may be a useful tool to empower fishers in the marketplace. *"The CFS supports fishermen to develop skills necessary to effectively negotiate with those who have an influence on the buying, processing, and marketing of their products. This is done through the process of organizing a Fishing Association, electing a Fair Trade Committee, creating a Fair Trade Premium Plan, and making decisions on how to spend the Fair Trade Premium."*

This guidance document recommends that seafood companies:

*Review purchasing practices for social impacts and act to address them.*

Seafood buyers should review their purchasing practices with a view to considering the ethical treatment of vendors and the resulting impact upon the workforce. Buyers should ask themselves, "Am I ordering responsibly?" and consider the impact of supplier contracts, including costs, order times, and product specifications. Where issues are identified, buyers should act to implement better sourcing strategies.

For further information and step-by-step guidance, see the [Joint Ethical Trading Initiatives' Guide to Buying Responsibly](#) and other ETI resources on [company purchasing practices](#).

### 3. Social well-being in fisheries and fishing communities

Positive social impacts that extend beyond labor conditions should be sought at the fishery and community level. These broader considerations are viewed through the lens of “social well-being,” as discussed in the paper [Van Holt, T.; Weisman, W.; Johnson, J.C.; Käll, S.; Whalen, J.; Spear, B.; Sousa, P. A Social Wellbeing in Fisheries Tool \(SWIFT\) to Help Improve Fisheries Performance. Sustainability 2016, 8, 667](#), and are discussed in the context of human rights, including economic, social, and cultural rights, in the paper [Teh, L.C.L.; Caddell, R.; Allison, E.H.; Finkbeiner, E.M.; Kittinger, J.N. et al. The role of human rights in implementing socially responsible seafood. PLOS ONE 2019, 14\(1\)](#).

For companies seeking to understand and address the broad range of social issues affecting fisheries, the [FAO’s 2015 Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication \(SSF Guidelines\)](#) are especially relevant. While the SSF Guidelines are implemented by member states on a voluntary basis, FIPs may support the SSF Guidelines by encouraging implementation by government. Updates on projects and initiatives relating to the SSF guidelines can be found at <http://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries>.

Other relevant organizations working in the wider social space in fisheries include [the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers \(ICSF\)](#) and [WorldFish](#). In January 2019, nonprofit organizations [Conservation International](#) and [Ocean Outcomes \(O2\)](#) announced that they would be partnering in joint work on projects to address environmental, social, and economic issues in fisheries.

#### How do FIPs address the Sustainable Development Goals?

Efforts to address social well-being in fisheries and fishing communities may help achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) is directly relevant to the environmental aims of FIPs, other goals relevant to the social issues discussed in this guidance document include:

SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition.

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

SDG 8: Provide decent work and economic growth.

SDG 14.B: Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets.

This guidance document recommends that FIPs:

### *Conduct a social assessment of the fishery.*

A social assessment should be conducted during the early stages of a FIP to inform objectives and actions. This assessment may be conducted against an existing social standard such as Fair Trade USA's capture fisheries standard, similar to an MSC Pre-Assessment, or may use a socioeconomic evaluation methodology, such as those identified below:

- The [Fishery Performance Indicators](#) (FPIs), developed by Anderson *et al.* (2015), are designed to measure social, economic, and ecological performance in a fishery. These indicators comprise 68 output and 54 input measures covering fish stock performance, harvest sector performance, and post-harvest sector performance. Wider social issues, including gender and community, are considered within the indicators. The FPIs have been tested and applied by the World Bank to many fisheries globally, and a [map of FPI data](#) is available to view online.
- The [socioeconomic performance measurement tool for fisheries](#) developed by SFP (2016) enables FIPs to conduct a rapid assessment of socioeconomic performance in a fishery. The tool consists of 10 socioeconomic indicators that can be assessed through desk-based research. In 2018, SFP published socioeconomic evaluations for blue swimming crab fisheries in Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. These evaluations are available in draft form under Data Notes in the "Scores" section of the relevant FishSource profiles:  
[Blue swimming crab - Indonesia](#) , [Blue swimming crab – Philippines](#) , [Blue swimming crab – Thailand](#) , [Blue swimming crab – Sri Lanka](#) , [Blue swimming crab - Vietnam](#).
- The [Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector](#), developed by Conservation International, the Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions, and the Coalition for Socially Responsible Seafood (2019), provides a protocol for assessing social responsibility in a FIP. The tool comprises a set of Performance Indicators and Scoring Guideposts measured against the three principles and six components of the Monterey Framework. As of mid-2019, the tool is being pilot tested in small-scale FIPs.

### *Monitor performance against social indicators over time.*

Once a baseline has been established, performance against the fishery indicators should be tracked over time, so that fishery improvements may be measured. To help advance the global conversation on social responsibility, FIPs should publicize data on social performance. The [Information System on Small-Scale Fisheries \(ISSF\)](#) is a repository of small-scale fisheries data, where people can contribute data on small-scale fisheries. The ISSF is operated by the global research network [Too Big To Ignore \(TBTI\)](#), which is organized into 14 research clusters covering topics such as gender, food security, and small-scale fishers' rights.

Specific issues relating to social well-being that companies may seek to address, particularly with respect to small-scale fisheries, are outlined in the following pages. Although these issues are discussed separately, they are often inter-linked, and this should be reflected in the strategies used to address them.

## 3.1 Gender in fisheries

About 100 million women participate in the wider seafood industry. Yet, their needs are often not adequately addressed by improvement efforts in fisheries and fishing communities that typically perceive the fishing industry as a male-dominated sector.

While there is a plethora of social science studies on women in fisheries, gender as a topic has been less prevalent in fisheries research. But gender equality is now being recognized as a key objective by a range of existing fisheries-related initiatives, spanning international agreements and research programs. For example:

- [The Santiago de Compostela declaration for Equal Opportunities in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sectors.](#)
- [SSF Guidelines](#) section 8 on gender equality, and the supporting handbook “[Towards gender-equitable small-scale fisheries governance and development.](#)”
- FAO’s “[Good practice policies to eliminate gender inequalities in fish value chains.](#)”
- FAO’s ‘[Promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment in fisheries and aquaculture.](#)”
- FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Circular No. 1159 “[Women’s participation and leadership in fisherfolk organizations and collective action in fisheries: a review of evidence on enablers, drivers and barriers.](#)”
- The [Women in Fisheries](#) research project, currently underway in the UK and the Netherlands and running until the end of 2020, seeks to explore the role of women in fishing families.
- Nonprofit research organization [WorldFish](#) recognizes gender as a cross-cutting research theme and aims to [contribute to gender equality](#) through its work.

Gender cuts across all issues of social well-being and hence is first discussed here, then mentioned throughout the rest of the document. The [International Association for Women in the Seafood Industry \(WSI\)](#)’s [Gender on the Agenda Survey 2018](#) is a useful starting reference for understanding the role of women in seafood, describing the views and experiences of men and women in the global seafood industry and identifying steps to tackle gender inequality.

The topics of gender equity and gender equality should always be considered when designing and implementing development interventions. This approach, known among the international development community as “gender mainstreaming,” is reinforced for fisheries by the SSF Guidelines, which state that “gender mainstreaming should be an integral part of all small-scale fisheries development strategies.”

Gender mainstreaming is an often poorly applied concept. Thus, the input of social experts should be used to support this approach. Existing guidance on gender mainstreaming in fisheries includes:

- [USAID’s Gender mainstreaming in fisheries management: A training manual](#)
- [Regional Fisheries Livelihood Programme for South and Southeast Asia \(RFLP\)’s Lessons learned notes: Gender mainstreaming in small-scale fisheries](#)

Other gender-focused organizations and resources are listed on the [Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries \(GAF\) Networks and Resources](#) page.

To adopt a gender-mainstreaming approach, this guidance document recommends that FIPs:

*Conduct a gender analysis of the fishery and fishing community.*

Seafood companies should identify and address the needs of both men and women through FIPs. To inform this approach, a gender analysis should be conducted. This may comprise part of the broader social impact assessment. A recent example of gender analysis in fisheries is available from the

Environmental Justice Foundation's ongoing project on securing sustainable fisheries in Ghana: [Gender Analysis: Ghana's artisanal fisheries 2019](#).

Gendered impacts should be monitored and evaluated throughout the FIP, with thought given to any adverse gendered consequences that improvement efforts might have. For instance, the modernization of marketplaces has predominantly benefited larger, usually male-led businesses and squeezed out small-scale, typically female, traders. The consideration of gender and impacts on women from FIP activities should extend beyond the obvious roles of women in work such as seafood processing to consider the invisible and often unpaid roles that women perform in the seafood industry.

*Give a voice to women.*

[Oxfam's Conceptual Framework on Women's Economic Empowerment](#) (WEE) states that to realize effective economic empowerment for women, women must be able to influence decision making. Of the seven principles within Oxfam's framework, the first is to: "Increase the voice of women in the household, in communities, in economic institutions and in political spaces." Barriers to women's participation in decision-making processes, whether formed by cultural influences or working and home life, should be identified and remediated to the extent possible. Women should be given access to information necessary for decision making and, if needed, education and training to support decision making. Furthermore, they should be given space for their voices to be heard.

*Contribute to the global dataset for gender in fisheries.*

A dearth of gender-disaggregated data in the seafood industry hinders research and makes it harder to understand how fishery improvement efforts may impact marine resource use by men and women differently. Thus, numerous calls have been made for greater collection and publication of disaggregated data. Seafood companies should collect gender-disaggregated data by default and report on FIP actions and outcomes for gender-related issues. Additionally, FIPs should encourage national and regional reporting of gender-disaggregated data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors of countries where it is not yet undertaken. Notably, the [Illuminating Hidden Harvests research project](#) led by WorldFish will use sex-disaggregated data in its global study on small-scale fisheries. The [Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries \(GAF\)](#) website serves as an information-sharing platform for gender research. GAF aims to promote the development of local networks of people and organizations involved in work that addresses gender in seafood.

### 3.2 Respect for traditional rights

Traditional fishing rights refer to rights granted to fishers with a historical context of fishing in an area. Rights may be considered within a local, national, or international context, for example indigenous peoples rights or rights of one state to fish in another's waters.

Changes in fishery regulations can restrict the exercise of traditional fishing rights and impact fair access to resources, with resulting implications for food security and livelihoods, especially for small-scale fishers. Regulations that restrict access may discriminate against certain groups. Those groups that traditionally have less power or voice in the community, for example women, indigenous groups, and ethnic minorities, are more likely to be disadvantaged by changes.

Businesses should go further to consider their role in supporting the rights of fishers through FIPs. Teh *et al.* (2019) ask “Are seafood companies prepared to not only respect but also champion fishers’ rights?”

Existing recommendations regarding respect for traditional rights in fisheries include:

- [Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure \(VGGT\)](#)
- [SSF Guidelines](#) section 2 part 5.
- [Framework for Social Responsibility in the Seafood Sector component 1.2.1](#)
- [Fair Trade USA CFS](#) criteria no. RMGOV 2.3, stakeholders are required to consider risks to the fishery including access issues (p. 95), and RMGOV 3.1, a written procedure for conflict resolution regarding shared resources is required to be in place (p. 96).

Relevant organizations working in this space include the [International Collective in Support of Fishworkers \(ICSF\)](#), [WorldFish](#), and the [Environmental Justice Foundation](#).

This guidance document recommends that FIPs:

#### *Conduct a social impact assessment.*

When proposing changes to fishery regulation, FIPs should conduct a social impact assessment. The impact assessment should first define who traditional fishers are and identify other peoples in the local community that may be affected by the changes. This may be done using a range of consultation methods. For example, the FAO has developed open source software called [Open Tenure](#) that enables communities to collect and record information on tenure rights using a crowdsourced approach. The FIP should then use the information collected to assess potential impacts upon fair access to resources, with special consideration for vulnerable groups such as artisanal fishers and women. Where impacts are likely, alternative approaches or compensatory methods should be considered.

#### *Utilize participatory approaches throughout.*

Participatory methods should be applied throughout the project to ensure that all affected resource users can contribute to stakeholder consultations and fishery management decision-making processes. The fundamental principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), as recognized in the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), should be applied when addressing matters of traditional rights to ensure that indigenous peoples and local communities can exercise their right to give or withhold consent to activities that may affect them. The FAO has developed a [Free, Prior, and Informed Consent Manual for Project Practitioners](#) that provides information about FPIC and gives guidance on how to incorporate it into the design and implementation of a project. For fisheries, a co-management approach (discussed in Section 3.3) may be especially useful. FIP coordinators should be aware of factors such as accessibility, local power dynamics, local languages, and literacy levels. Additional support should be given to commonly socially excluded groups such as women and ethnic minorities, whose voices may not typically be heard.

### 3.3 The empowerment of small-scale fishers in co-management

Co-management involves the sharing of responsibility and authority for decision making on fishery management between government, fishers, and fishing community members, for example vessel owners and fish traders, and other stakeholders, including nongovernmental organizations and research institutions. Active participation by fishers and the fishing community in decision making theoretically reduces the risk of adverse effects upon livelihoods and food security and increases the likelihood of fishers' compliance with new regulations.

Co-management is regarded as especially critical for good management of small-scale fisheries, where there may be many fishers operating across a wide area. Top-down governance of small-scale fisheries is challenging and is often hindered by insufficient capacity to monitor and enforce regulations. If properly implemented, co-management can help to ensure that management measures are both feasible and have the intended outcomes for the fishery.

There is little guidance around the empowerment of small-scale fishers in co-management. The [SSF Guidelines](#) make reference to co-management in Section 5, and the [Fair Trade USA CFS](#) encourages the use of fisheries co-management, requiring fishery stakeholders to develop a written co-management commitment in the sixth year of audits (see criteria no. RMGOV 2.2).

Other organizations that provide information and resources on local and community-based marine management include non-profit [Blue Ventures](#) and the [Locally Managed Marine Area Network \(LMMA\)](#). Blue Ventures focuses on locally led marine conservation and has published an introductory guide on the process of establishing co-management of fisheries and coastal environments by local communities and government: [Local Management of Marine Resources: A guide for communities in Kenya and mainland Tanzania](#).

The LMMA is an international network of practitioners involved in community-based marine conservation projects, primarily in the Indo-Pacific. The LMMA uses a learning framework to standardize the sharing of information and lessons learned across all projects using a local or community-based approach and aims to ensure that information is as accessible to local community groups and leaders as it is to government organizations, professional organizations, and universities.

Further to the resources mentioned above, FIPs may draw on lessons learned from individual examples of efforts to empower small-scale fishers through co-management, for example, [WWF's Fish Forward case studies on co-management in octopus and green lobster fisheries](#) and [Blue Venture's short-term octopus fishery closure model](#), and the FAO's 2019 collection of case studies: [Securing sustainable small-scale fisheries: sharing good practices from around the world](#).

This guidance document recommends that FIPs:

*Make use of participatory approaches to equip small-scale fishers with a voice.*

While co-management is a participatory approach, supporting approaches should be used to enable small-scale fishers to contribute to the design and implementation of new management measures. The Marine Stewardship Council provides guidance on stakeholder engagement for risk-based fishery assessments that is equally relevant for FIPs: [Marine Stewardship Council Toolbox for stakeholder participation in RBF assessments 2013](#). Additionally, the FAO provides an overview of

[consultation tools](#). If necessary, FIPs should implement training and education sessions to offer fishers and fishing community members the greatest opportunity to contribute to decision-making processes.

### 3.4 Fisheries and food security

Food security is defined by the FAO as a state when all people have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

The right to food is recognized by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and food security sits at the top of the global development agenda. Yet according to the [UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018](#), about 815 million people remained undernourished globally in 2016. Sustainable fisheries play a critical role in supporting efforts to achieve food security and improved nutrition. Seafood is an essential nutrient source for many and has the potential to contribute to future food security. In some countries, fish provides more than 50 percent of people's protein intake. The importance of fisheries and aquaculture in food, nutrition, and livelihoods is further highlighted by the FAO's [State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture \(SOFIA\) 2018](#) report.

The [SSF Guidelines](#) are intended to help the fishing sector realize its full contribution to food security and poverty eradication. They serve as a primary source of guidance to states, complementing [the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security](#), and their implementation by government should be encouraged by seafood companies.

In addition, this guidance document recommends that FIPs:

#### *Assess the impacts of environmental strategies on fishers' access to food.*

Some fishers rely on fishing as a direct source of food and as a source of income to access other food and resources. Environmental strategies led by FIPs may contribute to improved food availability by maximizing sustainable production, but proposed changes should be reviewed to ensure that any changes in access to the fishery do not have negative implications for food security. Changes in fishery regulations may affect access to food and income for fishers and fishing community members, decreasing local food security. Often marginalized, artisanal fishers are likely to be especially affected. An assessment of impacts on fishers' access to food may form part of a broader social impact assessment. Component 3.1 of the [Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector](#) explicitly covers food and nutrition in resource-dependent communities. The tool suggests country-level, community-level, and gender-specific food and nutrition insecurity indicators that may be used to complete an assessment.

#### *Seek out opportunities to reduce food losses and waste.*

Post-harvest losses of fish represent a challenge in less-developed economies, where access to infrastructure like cold storage may not be in place. An estimated 27 percent of landed fish is lost or wasted before it can be consumed (FAO, [SOFIA 2018](#)). Seafood companies should seek out opportunities to reduce food losses and waste in the supply chain. An example can be found in efforts underway by US-based seafood supplier North Atlantic Inc. in Southeast Asia, where the

company is investing in local ice and processing facilities:

<http://www.northatlanticseafood.com/social-impact/fishery-community-center/>

### 3.5 The promotion of fisheries in poverty reduction

Globally, fisheries are a significant provider of employment and revenue. According to official statistics cited by the FAO [SOFIA 2018](#) report, 40.3 million people were engaged in capture fisheries in 2016. Thus, fishing and associated activities provide an important livelihood for many people around the world and are especially vital for small-scale fishers in less-developed countries. According to FAO [SOFIA 2018](#), about 80 percent of the global population engaged in fisheries in 2016 were found in Asia, with a further 13 percent in Africa, and 5 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The promotion of fisheries in poverty reduction is addressed by key organizations involved in fisheries social issues, including the FAO, ICSF, WorldFish, and Fair Trade. The [SSF Guidelines](#) serve as a primary source of guidance to states. The SSF Guidelines have a specific focus on securing the contribution of small-scale fisheries to poverty eradication, and their implementation should be encouraged at a national level.

Crona *et al.* (2015) discuss the impact of seafood trade upon small-scale fisheries: [Crona, B.I.; Van Holt, T.; Petersson, M.; Daw, T.M.; Buchary, E. Using social-ecological syndromes to understand impacts of international seafood trade on small-scale fisheries. \*Global Environmental Change\* 2015, 35, 162–175.](#) They note that when small-scale fisheries are integrated into global markets, the resulting changes in local social-ecological systems can have both positive and negative impacts on fisher livelihoods. The export of fish has the potential to negatively impact food security and local livelihood options if economic gains from the fish trade are not fairly distributed among fishers and the wider fishing community. The study finds that the connection of local systems to international markets can lead to socially and ecologically unsustainable situations if accompanying strategies such as organizations for empowerment of small-scale producers are not implemented.

This discussion is expanded upon in: [Purcell, S.W.; Crona, B.I.; Lalavanua, W.; Eriksson, H. Distribution of economic returns in small-scale fisheries for international markets: A value-chain analysis. \*Marine Policy\* 2017, 86, 9-16,](#) which states that pricing transparency and fisher co-operatives can empower fishers and improve fisher incomes. This approach is directly supported by the Fair Trade program, discussed below.

The [Fair Trade USA CFS](#) is the primary tool for seafood companies seeking to address poverty reduction in fisheries. Seafood companies can help fishers and fishing communities secure local socioeconomic benefits from the fish trade by supporting them to participate in the Fair Trade program. As an organization, Fair Trade aims to empower fishers to fight poverty. More specifically, the Fair Trade USA CFS aims to improve income stability, increase wages for workers, and provide for sustainable livelihoods through the long-term environmental sustainability of the fishery. Seafood companies may conduct a formal or informal pre-assessment of the fishery against the Fair Trade USA CFS and use the criteria within the standard to frame improvement strategies. Where appropriate, FIPs may implement an objective to attain Fair Trade certification.

Additionally, this guidance document recommends that FIPs:

*Assess and mitigate the impact of environmental strategies on fishers' livelihoods and the livelihoods of others in the fishing community.*

Improvements in the environmental sustainability of fisheries may contribute to local economies and to poverty alleviation among fishing-dependent households and communities in the long term. However, environmental strategies may have a negative impact on fishers' livelihoods and the livelihoods of others in the fishing community in the short-to-medium term. This cost should be assessed and mitigated where possible. Special consideration should be given to the capability of vulnerable groups, including women, to maintain income generation. Component 3.2 of the [Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector](#) suggests several indicators that may be used to assess livelihood opportunities.

In the long term, FIPs should aim to secure or improve livelihood opportunities for fishers and fishing communities. Approaches to improving livelihoods may include improvements in access to markets or the promotion of alternative livelihoods to diversify the local economy. In looking to implement these approaches, FIPs may benefit from collaborating with local organizations that are working to alleviate poverty.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

[www.sustainablefish.org](http://www.sustainablefish.org)