

SFP E-News

April 2020

Dear Readers,

As the world continues to grapple with the impacts and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, we at Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) are focused on protecting the health and safety of fishers and seafood industry workers, ensuring that seafood sustainability efforts continue, and supporting our producer and supplier partners as they work to address supply chain disruptions and ensure the availability of product in changing markets.

In response to the crisis, we have developed a [resource page for the seafood supply chain](#) to help fishers and workers stay healthy and are working with colleagues to ensure that international aid supports the most vulnerable and impacted fishers and fish farmers. We have also adapted our on-the-ground activities to the [new virtual reality in Indonesia](#) and convened a group of leading seafood retailers and suppliers to call for expanding electronic monitoring on tuna vessels where human observer coverage has been suspended. Read on for more on these activities and initiatives.

Thank you for continuing to follow these important issues. We always value your [feedback](#) and hope you are safe and in good health, wherever you are.

*Sincerely,
Jim Cannon*

Helping fishers and seafood workers stay healthy and feel safe

SFP has developed an [online resource page](#) to provide information on how to protect fishers and seafood workers during the COVID-19 crisis. This idea came about as we began to hear stories about the impacts of the pandemic from our network of partners and colleagues around the world. In particular, small-scale fishers are being negatively affected by lost markets, falling prices, missed fishing seasons, and the inability of many to access government aid programs, because they are informal workers. Additionally, reports of disease outbreaks in US meat packing plants have raised concerns about keeping workers in seafood processing facilities safe.

SFP's Director for Aquaculture and Reduction Fisheries Dave Martin has been leading the development of the resource page. "We recognized that we're not health experts ourselves, so we set out to gather and share the guidance we found from all the resources we could tap into," he said. This included research on recommendations from international institutions and national governments, as well as extensive networking and outreach to our partners, Supply Chain Roundtable (SR) participants, fishery and aquaculture improvement project (FIP and AIP) leaders, NGO colleagues in the sustainable seafood and community development spaces, trade associations, and others. "As we've shared these resources, other groups have picked them up and shared information back to us, and connected us with other groups," Martin said.

So far the response has been good, and the resource page has been widely shared. "We've gotten lots of positive feedback from groups we've shared it with," Martin said, noting that the Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions featured the page in its "Tweet of the Week." Martin was also invited to pen a [guest blog](#) for the Ethical Trading Initiative.

CALAMASUR (The Committee for the Sustainable Management of the Southern Pacific Jumbo Flying Squid), a squid producers' group in Latin America, used the information from the resource page as the basis for a series of [infographics and handouts](#) for fishers to help them stay safe. This guidance has already been seen by more than 155,000 people through CALAMASUR's Facebook page, fishers' WhatsApp groups, and sharing by other associations. SFP has worked with our partners to translate and distribute the materials in English, French, Arabic, and Bahasa, and Chinese and Japanese versions are in the works. We are also working on spreading the guidance to more small-scale fishers in remote and underserved communities, and working with fishers to adapt the information for their specific needs.



"Our main goal now is to make sure people have access to the information," Martin said. "Eventually, the acute need to get this information out will drop off, and we will transition more into the longer-term sharing of lessons learned and supporting co-management and economic recovery in fishing communities."

Ensuring vulnerable fisheries and fish farming regions benefit from COVID-19 relief funding

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, there are already and will continue to be massive financial flows from international institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to help the poorest and worst-affected countries reconstruct their economies. SFP is working with our partners and colleagues to help ensure that the seafood sector is

included in these global rebuilding efforts and that these efforts benefit those that are most impacted.

Small-scale fishers and fish farmers are particularly vulnerable. They are also often unorganized and invisible in their countries and political systems, and unable to access assistance and aid programs. SFP is reaching out to our industry partners, colleagues in development banks and agencies, and other NGOs to help us implement a three-pronged approach to supporting these communities.



First, we need a general fisheries roadmap, so that ground-up efforts involving fishing communities and national governments align with top-down efforts by the World Bank, IMF, and similar organizations. The world has already agreed to the basics of fisheries and aquaculture in commitments coordinated by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and many countries have national strategies and action plans based on these documents. SFP is creating “cheat sheets” for central bank economists and specialists who may have little experience with fisheries or aquaculture, to inform their top-down actions. Rather than add fishing capacity to already over-exploited fisheries, fisheries assistance needs to strengthen the policy framework through reform measures that can be quickly and easily enacted, such as formal recognition of artisanal fishers, maintaining vessel registries, requiring effort monitoring, and programs to reduce post-harvest fish waste.

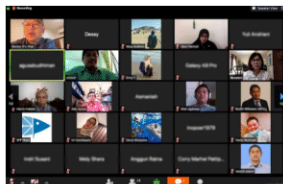
Second, we need to persuade international agencies and recipient governments to require best practices in the projects that are funded, including ensuring that necessary reforms are conditions of central budget funding. We are working to build political will in as many recipient countries as we can.

Finally, international agencies are highly influenced by their richer “donor” countries. To create political will for action, SFP is mobilizing NGOs, experts, and other opinion leaders for political advocacy in the United States, European Commission and member states, Japan, and other key countries.

SFP’s network can reach critical decision makers in dozens of countries that produce more than 75 percent of seafood globally. To speed the adoption of our approach, we are asking our colleagues in the scientific and NGO communities to help us in communicating existing plans, creating these policy “cheat sheets,” and getting them into the hands of key staff at international institutions and political decision makers. Together and collectively, we can make a difference.

Navigating the “new normal” in Indonesia

A key part of SFP’s work has always been our strong presence on the ground in the countries where our seafood sustainability work is focused. This is particularly true in our Indonesian Program, where our work on government engagement, policy development, industry collaboration, and data collection and analysis involves significant stakeholder coordination, in-person meetings, and face-to-face communication – all activities that have come to an abrupt halt with the COVID-19 pandemic.



As a virtual organization since our inception, SFP was ready to quickly assist our stakeholders and partners in addressing the immediate impacts of the crisis and adapting their work to continue sustainability efforts. In Indonesia, our field team has used Zoom and WhatsApp technology to shift from the “old norm” of face-to-face meetings and pivot to the “new norm” of convening and conducting virtual meetings with government officials, industry groups, and fisher groups.

Recently, the SFP team hosted a virtual meeting with the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) to review and discuss improvements to the electronic logbooks submitted by vessels participating in the newly formed [National Longline Tuna FIP](#). “We were surprised by the enthusiasm of the MMAF staff to attend,” said Dessy Anggraeni, SFP’s Indonesia FIP director, noting the attendance of two heads of sub-directorates under the Director General of Capture Fisheries. “These high-level officials provided valuable input to the discussions, and we established new connections within these offices for future work.”

The Indonesia team has also held virtual meetings with MMAF and fisher representatives from the newly established Indonesian Blue Swimming Crab Fishers Network, the newly formed Indonesian Demersal Association (ADI), and the Steering Committee of Indonesian Fishmeal. In addition, catch data collection efforts by enumerators in the field have shifted from face-to-face meetings with fishers at the landing sites to collecting data virtually using phone interviews and video calls.

For more on this “new normal,” please see this [blog](#) by SFP’s Amber Von Harten.

Preserving sustainability monitoring in tuna fisheries during the pandemic

Despite the current challenges of COVID-19, progress on conservation and sustainable practices remains our focus, and we can’t let decades of progress slide backwards. If business as usual is not feasible, then we must find ways to adapt to the current situation and keep our forward momentum. To this end, SFP and more than 50 leading seafood retailers and suppliers have called on the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) to implement electronic monitoring in tuna fisheries, in order to protect workers and ensure continued sustainability.

Due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19, at-sea observer programs in tuna fisheries were suspended in April by the RFMOs, the international governmental bodies responsible for their management. Observers document activities and collect data essential to conservation.



In a May 7 [letter](#), the companies urged the RFMOs to move rapidly and urgently to make electronic monitoring an accepted alternative to human observer coverage in tuna fisheries. This technology already exists, but governments and RFMOs have been slow to adopt its use. The letter also calls for transparent, frequent, and regular reviews of the developing situation and the evolving risks of COVID-19, to ensure that the observer program is restored at the earliest safe and practical date.

The letter sends the message that major buyers of tuna are monitoring the situation to ensure that the fisheries continue to be managed sustainably. “We are key stakeholders in these fisheries and strongly wish to see the environmental impact of these fisheries managed in a manner consistent with our procurement specifications for sustainable sourcing,” the companies wrote.

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