



## How do I implement a Fishery Improvement Project (FIP)?

Once a FIP is structured with its fishery evaluation and improvement needs, participants list and signed agreement, and workplan, the FIP is about to enter the implementation phase and has reached Stage 3. At this point, the FIP is required to make its workplan available publicly. This can be done by posting the workplan on the FIP participant's websites or on a centralized website for the FIP. Participants are responsible for carrying out the activities in the workplan themselves or ensuring others are carrying them out on the FIP's behalf. Each activity should be undertaken to address a particular improvement need (or needs) identified in the fishery evaluation conducted.

As FIP activities are carried out against the public workplan, it is critical to report progress on each activity to keep suppliers, retailers, NGOs, and any other interested parties up to date. These progress reports and evidence to support claims of progress must be made public to keep buyers and suppliers sourcing from the fishery up to date. Please see FIP Public Report for guidance and a template for reporting your FIP publicly (e.g., on a website).

### *Tracking Progress*

FIP progress can be tracked and reported in terms of the type of improvements they have demonstrated. SFP classifies the type of progress made in FIPs as follows:

- Participants are encouraging improvements and carrying out the workplan – SFP designates such FIPs as reaching Stage 3.
- Participants are improving regulatory policies, management, and/or fishing practices – SFP designates such FIPs as reaching Stage 4.
- Participants are delivering improvements in the water (e.g., increased biomass, decreased fishing mortality) – SFP designates such FIPs as reaching Stage 5.

It is possible for a FIP to reach a certain stage without having gone sequentially through all preceding stages. For example, procurement conditions can be applied early in the process (Stage 4) before a public workplan is fully developed (Stage 2). However, this does not eliminate the need to complete requirements of earlier stages.

The rationale for identifying stages is the need of major buyers to base sourcing decisions on whether or not a fishery is actually making improvement; thus seafood buyers and other stakeholders must be able to have confidence in the actions and validity of the FIP. In SFP's experience, there is no reliable way to evaluate whether a FIP activity is "good" or "bad" other than by the impacts and outcomes it delivers. A seafood buyer can have more confidence sourcing from a depleted fishery if the FIP can demonstrate clear outcomes in the water (Stage 5) or that it has improved management practices (Stage 4). The

seafood buyer and other stakeholders should be less confident in the FIP if it can only point to activities such as efforts to engage regulators (Stage 3), and even less confident if the FIP has only formed but not yet completed a workplan (Stage 2).

Stage 5 does not indicate environmental status or that a FIP is completed, but only that an improvement has been made in the water (e.g., increased biomass, decreased fishing mortality/bycatch/habitat impact). Stage 5 does not require a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) criteria score or FishSource score above any particular level, simply that the score increase (i.e., it does not make a difference if the FishSource score increases from 0 to 4, or 4 to 6, or 8 to 10). Similarly, to be defined as a Stage 4 FIP, a FIP would need to demonstrate some improvement in fishery policy/management or fishing practice that links to a minimum of one improvement need identified in the MSC pre-assessment (MSC-PA) or other assessment.

FIPs with more than one improvement need will likely maintain an iterative process, where individual issues identified in the fishery assessment are addressed through a series of actions (Stage 3), impacts (Stage 4), and outcomes (Stage 5). For example, FIP participants meet to discuss potential solutions to a bycatch issue (action, Stage 3). Fishermen in the fishery agree to modify their gear and practices (impact, Stage 4). And finally, a study demonstrates that bycatch has decreased (outcome, Stage 5). This fishery has reached Stage 5, but an issue of stock status (e.g., low biomass) remains. FIP participants will have to address the stock status issue in a timely manner (in parallel or in succession). It will be incumbent upon parties observing the FIP (suppliers, retailers, NGOs, etc.) to continue to hold the FIP participants accountable for addressing all issues and, ultimately, getting the fishery in a position where it could score an 80 or above on all three MSC principle areas if a full assessment was conducted.