

BUILDING EQUITY INTO SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD SOURCING: A TALE OF TWO TUNA FISHERIES

By Joseph Zelasney, Rui Bing Zheng, Zacari Edwards and Helen Packer

Despite their vital role in contribution to food security and nutrition, poverty eradication, equitable development and sustainable resource utilisation, small-scale fisheries continue to be marginalised. This imbalance is directly addressed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and particularly through Target 14.b (“provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets”). On their part, businesses and governments should support the sector and the benefits that can be derived from using the SDGs as a framework for a more holistic approach to ensure that small-scale fisheries, and the communities and seas that they are part of, thrive.



Fishers working onboard pole-and-line vessel in the Maldives

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Small-scale fisheries (SSFs), encompassing all activities along the value chain in both marine and inland waters, play an important role in food security and nutrition and also offer development pathways for poverty eradication and equitable development. According to estimations, SSFs contribute about half of global fish catches and employ more than 90% of the approximately 120 million people employed in fisheries. An estimated 97% of these fishworkers live in developing countries. Furthermore, about half of those working in the SSF sector are women, mostly engaged in post-harvest activities, including marketing and processing.

Despite their considerable economic and social contributions, SSFs are often overlooked, both in regard to resource management and from a broader social and economic

development perspective. Indeed, many small-scale fishing communities today experience high levels of poverty, with an estimated 5.8 million fishers earning less than US\$1 per day.

Crucially, there is an opportunity to give SSFs and the communities they support a much-needed voice. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. It provides a holistic framework, with the vision of eradicating poverty and deprivation, growing economies, protecting the environment, advancing peace and promoting good governance. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which in themselves are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership.

There is an evident connection between the challenges faced by SSF communities and the objectives of the SDGs. Indeed,

the importance of addressing the inherent challenges in these fisheries is explicitly recognised by SDG target 14.b – “provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets”.

Governments and seafood businesses have an essential role to play in ensuring equitable access to resources and markets for small-scale fishers and fishworkers. By adhering to the principles contained in the SDGs, responsible businesses have a platform to engage with the world’s traditional, small-scale fisheries and also a means to ensure that they remain part of the broader sustainability landscape. Doing so will contribute to efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and ensure that small-scale fisheries, and the communities and seas that they are part of, thrive.

The SSF Guidelines: empowering small-scale communities

The “Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication” (SSF Guidelines) constitute the first international instrument dedicated entirely to this immensely important sector. They complement the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and are the result of a bottom-up participatory development process, whereby the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) facilitated a global consultative process involving more than 4 000 participants from over 120 countries, including representatives of governments, small-scale fishers and fish workers and their organisations.

The SSF Guidelines promote the visibility, recognition and enhancement of the already important role of small-scale

fisheries. The SSF Guidelines support responsible fisheries and sustainable social and economic development for the benefit of current and future generations, with an emphasis on small-scale fishers and fish workers. They are to contribute to global and national efforts towards the eradication of hunger and poverty, and advocate for a human rights-based approach.

Hence, the objectives of the SSF Guidelines, and the manner in which they are to be achieved, are closely aligned with the overarching objectives and approach elucidated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Moreover, they are an important tool for achieving the 2030 Agenda in SSF communities, and they provide valuable guidance for achieving SDG target 14.b.

Access to resources

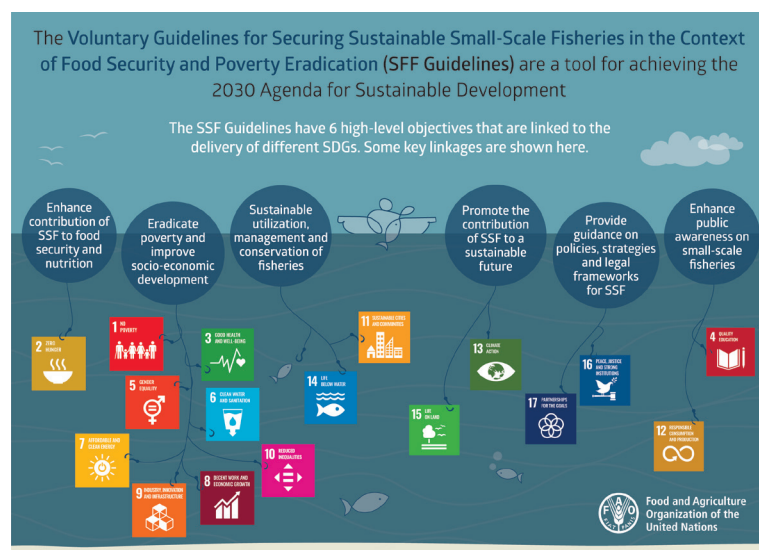
It is widely accepted that environmental sustainability is intrinsically linked to, and dependent on, social and economic sustainability in the long-term. Appropriate access to resources and secure tenure or user rights are fundamental elements of sustainable fisheries. Tenure and user rights refer to the way in which people, individually or collectively, hold rights and responsibilities to access land and resources. Tenure is an essential element of sustainable management, good governance and empowerment of the rural poor. Ineffective governance of tenure or user rights therefore constitutes a major obstacle to the sustainable use of natural resources.

The SSF Guidelines contain recommendations for enabling secure access to resources for SSF actors, and recognise that responsible governance of user and access rights is central for the realisation of human rights, food security, poverty eradication, sustainable livelihoods, social stability, as well as economic growth and social development.

Governance of access rights affects whether, and how, people are able to acquire rights and to protect pre-existing rights to use and benefit from fishery resources. Many issues with user and access rights arise because of weak governance, and perversely, the capacity of governance affects the attempts to address these problems. At the same time, inadequate and insecure tenure rights to natural resources often coincide with extreme poverty and hunger.

Access to markets

Fish and fishery products are the world’s most traded animal protein in value terms. Trade in fishery products can have a positive effect on food security, both through higher availability of fish for human consumption and through higher income generated through trade, though it is important to note that sustainable resource management practices, including secure user and access rights, are a necessary pre-condition for sustainable



SSF Guidelines are a tool for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and they provide valuable guidance for governments and seafood business for ensuring small-scale fishers and fishworkers have equitable access to resources and markets.

trade. SSF actors engage in many different markets, from informal local markets to high-value export markets, but face similar challenges in eliciting benefits to support sustainable livelihoods.

The SSF Guidelines contain recommendations for enabling equitable market access for actors, and recognise the right of fishers and fishworkers, acting both individually and collectively, to improve their livelihoods through trade at global, regional and national levels, and by enhancing value chains and post-harvest operations.

Challenges regarding market access include insufficient market information, knowledge and capacity constraints of individuals and organisations, high incidence of post-harvest losses and a lack of access to financial services. Unequal power relations often exist between different actors along the value chain, and as a result, SSF actors can be vulnerable to disadvantageous contracts, and unfair conditions and practices. Nevertheless, training and capacity development of individuals and organisations on market functions, literacy and numeracy can facilitate and better prepare SSF actors to engage with, and compete in formal markets.

SSF tuna case studies

Hugely popular with consumers across diverse markets, tuna is one of the world's most important seafood resources. It accounts for around 4.8 million tonnes of the approximately 91 million tonnes of capture fisheries products harvested annually.

Tuna fisheries are a crucial source of income and livelihood for hundreds of thousands of people. This is especially the case among poor and vulnerable coastal populations, where a significant volume of tuna is caught one-by-one through traditional methods like pole-and-line, handline and troll fishing. These SSFs typically target skipjack, yellowfin and albacore and produce around 10% of the world's tuna. They provide an essential source of food for these local communities as well as for overseas markets.

Typically located in vulnerable, developing regions of the world, they are highly selective fisheries, meaning that compared to many industrial fishing methods, they have minimal impact on habitats and vulnerable marine species. They are also labour intensive, providing jobs in coastal communities, and contributing to poverty reduction and building economic, social and cultural resilience. Furthermore, many women working in the one-by-one sector occupy important roles throughout the supply chain. Indeed, while one-by-one fishing supplies just one-tenth of the world's tuna, the sector employs the largest share of the overall workforce.

While one-by-one, small-scale, and coastal tuna fisheries struggle to compete with the political and the financial might of the large-scale fishing groups, growing consumer

awareness of sustainability issues has increased the demand for these tuna products all over the world. Therefore, there is an opportunity for socially conscious and responsible businesses to tap into these market forces and capitalise on the huge international demand for sustainable tuna, while at the same time helping to grow and develop domestic tuna fisheries and safeguard the future of coastal communities.

The clear message for stakeholders everywhere is to include small-scale operators when making sourcing commitments. Such a procurement strategy reflects a commitment to the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The following two case studies illustrate different initiatives, where public and private sector stakeholders are engaging with, and supporting traditional SSFs in ways that demonstrate a commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda, and in particular SDG 14.b.

Case Study 1 (public sector): Enhancing equity in the Maldives' pole-and-line fishery

As an island nation, the Maldives is heavily reliant on its marine resources, none more so than the skipjack tuna caught by its pole-and-line fishery. Fishing for tuna by pole-and-line is an intrinsic part of the Maldives' history and culture. The government of the Maldives has been extremely proactive in supporting and promoting the pole-and-line tuna fishery; investing in national fisheries infrastructure and creating a policy environment whereby Maldivian citizens are able to maximise benefits from the fishery, and contributing to food security and poverty eradication.



Workers at Harta Samudra's plant process Fair Trade tuna loins. The processing facility is also covered by the Fair Trade Capture Fisheries Standard.

Today, as a result, the pole-and-line skipjack tuna fishery is a pillar of the Maldives economy, generating significant foreign exchange earnings, and providing employment and livelihoods throughout the country.

Landing more than 68 000 tonnes of skipjack annually, the Maldives is the third largest producer of pole-and-line tuna in the world behind Japan and Indonesia. The fishery provides over one-fifth of the total global supply of pole-and-line caught tuna and accounts for 18-20% of the Indian Ocean's



Dahlan Tomia and Hayunan Wangse, two registered Fair Trade fishers, discuss their most recent trips in Waepure Village on Buru Island in Indonesia.

total skipjack catch. The fishery employs around 30 000 Maldivian people, nearly half of them in the harvesting sector and the remainder in various activities of the post-harvest sector, equal to 8-10% of the country's working population.

To ensure that the country has sustainable and equitable fisheries that can support many future generations of Maldivians while also supplying important world markets, the Maldives developed a robust user rights system, and only licenses national one-by-one tuna fishing vessels and crew to operate in its waters. The Maldives government has further supported development across the value chain, including in harvesting, processing, export, ancillary activities and quality control.

Maldivian tuna products compete with products caught by industrial fisheries, often connected to vertically integrated companies that can produce the same product for less. In addition, new market-based private sustainability and traceability requirements, have threatened to undermine the competitiveness of Maldivian tuna in the global marketplace.

To address this, the government has supported the introduction of local data collection initiatives such as the on-board observer programme, helped initiate the implementation of a national digital transparency system - the Fisheries Information System (FIS) - and participated in the successful effort to obtain MSC certification for the national pole-and-line skipjack tuna fishery. By driving forward such market-oriented sustainability innovations, the government created an enabling environment where the Maldives and its businesses are well placed to compete in global seafood markets.

Finally, the Maldives has been a leader in regional fisheries management at the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

(IOTC), influencing issues that affect the Maldives tuna fishing industry and its capacity to thrive domestically and internationally. Maldives has worked with like-minded coastal states to secure the adoption of policies that protect skipjack and yellowfin tuna stocks, as well as for the fair and equitable allocation of tuna resources throughout the region.

These collective efforts to support the national pole-and-line fishery have prioritised benefits from the skipjack resource for Maldivians, and allowed businesses in the Maldives to derive more value from the products that are exported, and fishers to receive a higher price for the fish that they land.

Case Study 2 (private sector): Anova/FTUSA

Anova Food, LLC is a leading importer of sushi-quality frozen tuna products in North America and has been sourcing from, and working with Indonesian handline tuna fisheries for more than 15 years. Social responsibility and environmental sustainability, including equity, have always been key pillars to Anova's business strategy and sourcing policy, embodied through its Fishing & Living initiative.

Since 2010, Anova has supported a number of social and environmental initiatives related to the sustainability of tuna handline fisheries and the livelihoods of the people and communities that depend on them. These undertakings have included Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs), community development activities and traceability initiatives. In 2013, the opportunity to partner with Fair Trade USA to implement the first Fair Trade standard for wild-capture fisheries was a natural next step in this support.

The programme began by field-testing Fair Trade's Capture Fisheries Standard (CFS) with 100 fishermen in the Ambon and Buru Islands. These fishers had successfully achieved certification in 2014. Since then, the programme has experienced tremendous growth, largely thanks to a strong

partnership with local Indonesian NGO and the programme's implementing partner, Masyarakat Dan Perikanan Indonesia (MDPI).

Today, the programme is in place in 31 fishing communities across Eastern Indonesia, with over 800 small-scale fishers in 38 Associations registered as Fair Trade certified. For every kilogram of product sold on Fair Trade terms, Anova pays an additional premium back to the fishing community. As of December 2018, sales of the product had enabled fishers to earn US\$418 000 in cumulative premium on top of the price paid for their catch.

These funds have been applied at a community level for a variety of social and environmental projects such as:

- Children's education
- Illness and bereavement funds
- Donations to community centres
- Education on endangered, threatened, and protected species
- Improvements to landing sites and gear
- Trainings on topics such as post-harvest handling to improve product quality

Also, according to the programme, at least 30% of the Fair Trade Premium must be used toward environmental projects that contribute to the sustainability of the fishery and marine ecosystem such as developing or improving waste management systems and facilities, creating or enforcing a marine or terrestrial protected area, developing an environmental education programme, or fisher training and data collection efforts.

Premium funds enhance fishers' income and livelihood security and increase their status as contributors to society. The model also enables more equitable distribution of the

benefits throughout the supply chain and rewards small-scale fishers for better management practices.

Essentially, on the one hand, the Fair Trade programme supports equitable access to resources by empowering fishermen and giving them a voice to engage with government, communicate their interests and work to ensure that they are included in fisheries management decisions. And on the other hand, it supports equitable access to markets, where the demand for responsibly sourced seafood is increasing.

While it can be challenging for fishermen to put in place the assurance systems to demonstrate their responsible practices, Fair Trade's certification model verifies that fishermen show improvement over time and provides this assurance to the market. This in turn supports these fisheries in maintaining access to export markets. Last but not least, Fair Trade certification provides an opportunity to showcase SSFs to the world and communicate about the challenges as well as opportunities that they face.

For Anova, supporting the Fair Trade certification in the Indonesian handline tuna fisheries was motivated by its internal commitment to environmental and social responsibility and to help ensure equitable access of SSFs and their products to markets, as well as the opportunity to maintain its position as market leader by forging new ground in defining social responsibility in the seafood sector.

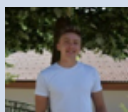
Despite the high costs associated with working in distant and remote Indonesian islands, Anova maintains that investing in the programme has been worthwhile with Fair Trade certified tuna products having had great success in the US retail market and sales volumes increasing 280% between 2015 and 2016. Moreover, its participation has enabled it to differentiate itself as a "first-mover" in ethical production and fulfilling its social and environmental improvements. 🌱



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Rui Bing Zheng is Fair Trade USA's Seafood Supply Chain Manager. She partners with fishery groups and suppliers globally to achieve and maintain certification, and to maximise the benefits of the Fair Trade program. Prior to joining Fair Trade USA in 2013, Rui Bing spent a decade in advocacy and community development. She worked at the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy, which brought together labour groups, faith networks and low-income workers to advance progressive policies for working families, such as securing community benefits agreements for large-scale development projects and increasing the City of Oakland's minimum wage. Rui Bing holds a BA from Middlebury College and is passionate about worker dignity and sustainable and ethically sourced seafood.



Zacari Edwards is the Socio-Economic Manager at the International Pole & Line Foundation (IPNLF). He leads IPNLF's work in understanding, enhancing and evidencing the social benefits of one-by-one fisheries, and is also responsible for driving its work on traceability, transparency and verification of supply chains.



Helen Packer is Sustainability Manager at Anova Food USA, a US-based importer of frozen tuna products, which has taken a proactive approach to work on a range of social and environmental improvement through its Fishing & Living initiative. At the same time, Helen is a PhD candidate with Dr. Megan Bailey at Dalhousie University (Canada) looking at Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and governance in global seafood supply chains with a specific focus on the role of mid-chain actors.