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# COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

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**SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF BYCATCH IN LATIN AMERICA  
AND CARIBBEAN (REBYC-II LAC) AND BEYOND**

## REBYC-II LAC AND BEYOND

1. The current project on sustainable management of bycatch in Latin America and Caribbean bottom trawl fisheries (REBYC-II LAC) is due for completion in May 2021. The project is part of FAO's programmatic approach to implement the International Guidelines on Bycatch Management and Reduction of Discards. The project, which focuses on Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, follows previous projects (REBYC and REBYC II CTI) improving responsible bottom trawl fisheries<sup>1</sup>.
2. The REBYC-II LAC pursues four main components: i) Improving institutional and regulatory frameworks for shrimp/bottom trawl fisheries and co-management, ii) Strengthening bycatch management and responsible trawling practices within an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) framework; iii) Promoting sustainable and equitable livelihoods through enhancement and diversification and; iv) Project progress monitoring, evaluation and information dissemination and communication.
3. REBYC-II LAC has supported a range of measures and behavioural changes that promote biodiversity conservation in the project countries.
4. Regionally, project countries endorsed a draft Regional Strategy on management of bycatch and discards in bottom trawl fisheries. Stakeholders are reviewing the strategy that will be presented to the Scientific Advisory Group of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) for advice in early 2021 and then to the 18th Session of WECAFC for formal endorsement.
5. Brazil is undergoing its most ambitious and participatory fishery management plan development process. Over 100 communities representing 90 percent of shrimp catches participated in the development process of the new National Shrimp Fishery Management plan. The plan, endorsed by two regional management committees and their two scientific sub-committees (all created under FAO), includes measures to protect and manage ecosystems surrounding shrimp fisheries while enhancing the fishery's socio economic impacts. The measures reduced bycatch between 24 percent and 45 percent in Brazilian shrimp bottom-trawl fisheries.
6. Colombia established a National Bycatch Committee to examine bycatch issues in order to recommend regulatory measures for all types of fishing gears in the country. The National Bycatch Committee also updated the Shrimp Fishing management plan to introduce bycatch reduction devices and establish spatio-temporal management measures in order to reduce current conflicts amongst stakeholders and protect marine biodiversity. The new trawl nets introduced in the fishery reduced bycatch by around 30 percent and fuel consumption around 15 percent. The fuel reduction led to reduced CO2 emissions, which were added to Colombia's natural emission reduction commitments.
7. In 2013, the Constitutional Court of Costa Rica suspended the issuance of new bottom trawl fishing licenses and prohibited the renewal of existing licenses once they expired. Nevertheless, the country updated its fisheries regulations to require bycatch reduction devices and other measures that mitigate environmental impacts, established a draft document on principles and criteria for sustainability and agreed to a national zonification map to reduce conflict amongst stakeholders. The map delineates areas where trawling is permitted. Under pressure from stakeholders and with support from REBYC-II LAC and other projects, the Supreme Court has allowed the legislature to draft and discuss an amendment to re-establish bottom-trawling in the country. This draft legislation establishes strict measures to reduce the impacts of trawling on biodiversity via enhanced management and the use of improved gear technology.
8. In Mexico, REBYC-II LAC, government researchers and the private sector adapted existing bottom trawl nets in the State of Campeche, leading to an almost 30 percent bycatch reduction. Private sector operators are currently discussing regulatory changes with the national fisheries agency to include this adaptation into the legal framework. Mexico also calculated the impact of industrial shrimp fishing bycatch on small-scale producers, providing critical information to reduce conflict in

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on REBYC-II LAC visit <http://www.fao.org/in-action/rebyc-2/en/>

the sector. A pilot project on utilization of bycatch is currently operational, which may provide an added source of revenue to the sector in exchange for increased compliance with new gear regulations.

9. Suriname developed a new turtle excluder device for its finfish bottom trawl fisheries. The device excludes up to 60 percent of bycatch, including large numbers of vulnerable rays. The device received significant support from fishers since it reduces damage to catch from large rays and reduces the threat to crew from handling dangerous stingrays on-board, all while limiting losses of target species. Similarly, work to reduce bycatch and discards in the seabob fishery contributed to its re-certification under a prominent international eco-labelling scheme.

10. In Trinidad and Tobago, measures to manage bycatch and discards were included into a new Fisheries Bill introduced to the country's Parliament. If the bill passes, a draft management plan is awaiting government approval. It mandates the use of Bycatch reduction devices and spatial and temporal measures to reduce the impact of bottom trawlers and ensure sustainability. New devices tested developed with the project reduced bycatch (most of which included juveniles) by almost 40 percent.

11. Across all countries, the project ensured that efforts to manage bycatch and discards did not hamper access to food and nutrition. To ensure this, the project achieved outputs that enhanced data collection systems, evaluated value chains and their actors and encouraged collaboration amongst fishers, researchers and governments. The project results reflected a commitment to co-management and collaborative effort.

### **Next stage**

12. With REBYC-II LAC ending in early 2021, FAO and its partners, including Members of COFI, are currently pursuing funding for a follow-up project. While previous REBYC-II LAC efforts focused on trawl fisheries and bycatch of unwanted species, the new proposal aims to address the human impacts on marine biodiversity of other fisheries (including non-trawl gears) to reduce both unwanted and incidental bycatch in Caribbean and the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (referred to as CLME+). The initiative (REBYC III CLME+) seeks to improve fisheries management, reduce unsustainable bycatch and discards across different fisheries by following the successful technology and management model of the previous REBYC initiatives and complementing it with measures to address losses caused by "ghost fishing"<sup>2</sup> of Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gears (ALDFG). Applying a participatory and transparent process, the idea is to work alongside Members and fishers to develop smart and innovative technologies, which will reduce negative impacts on biodiversity and also improve fuel efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while providing the means to support economic gains for fishers and fisheries dependent coastal communities. Marine spatial planning successes in Costa Rica, Brazil and Colombia through REBYC-II LAC interventions provide models that can be adapted to other contexts through South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC). Expanding on the successes of REBYC-II LAC, the new REBYC III CLME+ will enhance policy frameworks, introduce co-management and self-governance systems developed for target fisher groups to encourage greater awareness of, and local responsibility for, sustainable fishing practices, particularly in relation to unwanted bycatch mitigation and need for long-term preservation of vulnerable marine habitats and species.

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<sup>2</sup> The ability of ALDFG to continue to fish, resulting in detrimental impacts on fish stocks and potential impacts on endangered species and benthic environments. The ability of ALDFG to continue to fish, resulting in detrimental impacts on fish stocks and potential impacts on endangered species and benthic environments.