

UPDATES TO THE FIP EVALUATION TOOL: A STANDARDIZED METHOD FOR MEASURING FIP PROGRESS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	2
Summary of Changes to the FIP Evaluation Tool	4
Introduction	7
Definitions and Guidelines	7
FIP status	7
FIP type	8
Indicators of progress for Stages 1 through 5	9
Determining the “evaluation start date” of a FIP	12
A Tool for Evaluating FIP Progress	13
Methodology	13
FIP evaluation process	16
Annex 1. Glossary of terms	18
Annex 2. Stage 3 examples with supporting evidence	19
Annex 3. Stage 4 examples with supporting evidence	21
Annex 4. SFP-FP collaborative process on FIP progress tracking and evaluation	23

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Cover photo: ©Fbxx iStock

Description: Local woman, dressed in traditional attire, holding bunch of tropical colorful fishes for sell in the market of Donggala, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia

This revision to SFP's FIP Evaluation Tool was facilitated with the financial support of the Global Sustainable Supply Chains for Marine Commodities (GMC) project. GMC is an interregional initiative implemented by the Ministries and Bureaus of Fisheries and Planning of Costa Rica, Ecuador, Indonesia, and the Philippines, with the technical support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), facilitated by Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP), and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO THE FIP EVALUATION TOOL

The Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) Evaluation Tool is being updated this year, to clarify guidelines, address the need for improved accountability, and more explicitly identify the connections between FIP actions and fishery improvements. This refinement of the tool follows many months of thorough evaluation and analysis by Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) and FisheryProgress¹ (see Annex 4).

Some FIP ratings may be affected by these changes. Individual FIP leaders will be contacted by SFP to discuss any potential changes and what FIP stakeholders can do in response.

Scope and implications of changes

Details on the specific updates to the FIP Evaluation Tool are discussed in the next section. Many of the changes provide clarification of existing guidelines and better align the Tool's terminology with FisheryProgress. Several substantive changes came about in response to the desire of buyers and stakeholders to see improved accountability through increased verification and linking of FIP participant activity and impact. For example, in the updated methodology, FIPs are required to provide evidence of Stage 3 actions that they report. The revised Tool also pushes FIPs to more clearly demonstrate how their actions cause or connect to Stage 4 and 5 improvements.

The updated Tool also acknowledges more clearly that sometimes FIP participants are not actively working on a particular issue, because others are already making progress on it. For example, a government may commit to conduct the first stock assessment on a FIP fishery and go through the process of budgeting, forming a committee, doing the analysis, and publishing a report. In such cases, provided progress is sufficient, the FIP's role is to monitor the government's activities and simply report that it is tracking this work. If progress is insufficient, the FIP is expected to act to get the government back on track and to report on that action, as well as any response from the government².

The revised Tool will continue to focus on tracking rates of environmental³ improvements in FIPs at a high level. It is just one of many tools that FIP stakeholders can use to monitor and push for more improvements. FIP stakeholders have different needs and demands. For those that require accelerated progress, additional market pressure should be applied to complement FIP ratings. For stakeholders that require a higher level of performance, or assurance that a FIP is addressing critical issues, a deeper dive into the FIP workplan, activities, and progress will be required.

¹In order to increase efficiency in FIP reporting and standardize FIP reports, including activities and progress, FisheryProgress.org was launched in February 2016 as a repository for FIP information, including FIP progress ratings.

²At the end of the consultation process for updating this tool, SFP received feedback on a shortcoming of the methodology for FIPs that are near completion and are no longer actively working on improvements (e.g., cases where sufficient policies are in place and the FIP is waiting for the stock to recover). SFP is working on a solution for this issue and will address it in an interim update to the tool (expected later in 2021).

³This tool does not monitor or incorporate improvements related to social components of fisheries (e.g., fisher wages, worker voice, gender). It may expand to include this in the future. However, this will only be possible once social-related improvements are more systematically incorporated into FIPs and reported publicly.



SPECIFIC REVISIONS TO FIP STAGES 3-5 GUIDELINES

3

STAGE 3

- **Terminology alignment**
“Tasks and/or actions” replaces “activities,” in order to align with language used in FisheryProgress.
- **Verification of action**
A new requirement is added to the definition that requires FIPs to provide supporting evidence for “tasks and/or actions” reported in their progress updates. This is used as a means of verification that tasks or actions are actually underway or completed.
- **Annex 2** provides specific examples of Stage 3 evidence that can be provided.

4

STAGE 4

- **Clarification of existing guidelines**
A minor edit was made to clarify that Stage 4 is EITHER a regulatory change in policy or action OR a change in fishing practice. Language was also included to reiterate that a voluntary change in fishing practice led by a FIP toward fishery improvement (e.g., a new hook design or a voluntary code of conduct) is considered a Stage 4 improvement, and not only legislative or government policy changes.
- **Transparency in linking actions to improvements**
New requirements have been added to better evaluate the link between FIP tasks and actions (Stage 3) and FIP results (Stage 4). This is intended to increase transparency in instances where FIPs play a specific role in generating Stage 4 achievements. The new requirements also encourage FIPs to report their monitoring of other entities that are directly working on and achieving Stage 4 improvements that benefit the FIP and fishery.
- **Clarification of improvements definition**
A new paragraph has been added to the definition to clarify that a Stage 4 assignment for a specific type of result that may be reported routinely thereafter (i.e., data collection) will only be given when the results are initially reported.

5

STAGE 5

- **Clarification of existing guidelines**
The language has been edited to clarify reference to stock assessments. In the past, the current text has been misinterpreted to imply that any new stock assessment published would result in a Stage 5 result, even if it showed a decrease in biomass, or that old data could be reanalyzed to produce a different result in favor of a score change and a Stage 5 result. The adjusted text specifies that only new data and new analyses would be considered in support of a Stage 5 result, in order to close any loopholes on old stock assessments.
- **Clarification of existing guidelines**
New text has been added in the second paragraph to highlight the fact that basic FIPs can refer to guidance on FisheryProgress.org, even though they are not reporting against all MSC PIs.
- **Transparency in linking actions to improvements**
New requirements have been added to link FIP tasks and actions (Stage 3) to FIP outcomes (Stage 5). Similar to the new requirements in Stage 4, this is intended to increase transparency on who (FIP participants or other entities) is actively working to generate Stage 5 improvements.

REVISIONS TO THE FIP RATINGS AND DECISION TREE

- A and B progress ratings are reserved only for FIPs that have reported Stage 4/5 results within the last 12 months. An A rating is for comprehensive FIPs, while a B rating is for basic FIPs. However, as noted above, FIPs will need to link their activities (Stage 3) to the reported results (Stages 4 and 5), as noted in the Stage 4 and 5 definitions.
- The decision tree and time benchmarks have been changed to encourage more regular reporting of FIP actions (Stage 3) and results (Stage 4/5). For C- and D-rated FIPs older than one year, Stage 3 results reported within six months are required to avoid dropping a rating, in addition to the revised Stage 4/5 time benchmark requirements. FIPs younger than one year that have yet to report a Stage 4 or 5 impact are required to report at least one Stage 3 action in their first year to maintain a C rating.
- Criteria for a FIP receiving an “inactive” rating or status based on time benchmarks were also added to the decision tree.

Finally, in this updated version of the FIP Evaluation Tool, technical terms and definitions have been aligned with those used on the FisheryProgress website, where appropriate, to reduce confusion and interpretation for stakeholders using FIP progress ratings. Two annexes (Annexes 2 and 3) were also added to the new version of the FIP Evaluation Tool to provide additional information and specific examples of Stage 3 and 4 results and supporting evidence that would be accepted. Annex 4 presents the collaborative process between SFP and FisheryProgress that is used for FIP review and evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the most recent revision of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership's tool for evaluating fishery improvement project (FIP) progress. This updated version of the FIP Evaluation Tool builds on three previous versions of the tool (2007, 2014, and 2017) and adds clarifications and specificity to the definitions of FIP progress and the evaluation methodology used to highlight FIP-specific progression over time. As confirmed during an initial review of the FIP Evaluation Tool in 2019-2020, the FIP progress ratings methodology laid out in this document is still the only one of its kind currently in the public domain. One feature that separates it from other tools is the application of time benchmarks to quickly understand the rate at which a fishery is improving, and the use of an alphabetic scale to rate progress. Generally, the more regularly and frequently improvements are being made, the better the progress rating.

The primary audiences for the FIP progress ratings are buyers and suppliers of FIP products, who use the ratings to help inform sourcing decisions and prioritize action on poorer-performing (i.e., lower-rated) FIPs. The ratings are not intended as a final determination of a FIP's or a fishery's performance, but rather provide a quick reference metric of improvement progress in a fishery, mainly by tracking the frequency of improvement actions, improvements in fishery policies/practices, and actual improvements "in the water." For some users of this tool, due diligence may still be required to understand details such as what type of improvements are (or are not) being made and possibly what activities have happened, have not happened, and are planned.

This version of the FIP Evaluation Tool will replace the previous guidance document and is available on [SFP's website](#). The tool is free for anyone to use. Actual progress ratings of public FIPs are shown on [FisheryProgress](#). For questions or comments, please contact Indrani Lutchman at fipevaluation@sustainablefish.org.

DEFINITIONS AND GUIDELINES

To evaluate progress of a FIP, at least four key components need to be understood: 1) the status of the FIP; 2) the phase of the FIP, i.e., whether a FIP is basic or comprehensive, as defined below; 3) which indicators are used to measure achievements and to determine whether a particular FIP stage has been triggered; and 4) the FIP evaluation start date, which is necessary for determining a FIP's rate of progress against time.

FIP status

FIP status is a key component in evaluating FIP progress, specifically whether the FIP is a prospective or an active FIP.

Prospective FIPs

Prospective FIP projects that have not yet completed Stage 1 and 2 are not eligible to be run through the FIP Evaluation Tool's decision tree. Those types of projects can and should continue to work toward transitioning to active FIP status, and to meeting the minimum requirements of a basic or comprehensive FIP. Prospective FIPs are encouraged to report publicly as much as they can and to continue communicating progress with stakeholders on [FisheryProgress.org](https://fisheryprogress.org), eventually transitioning to active FIPs eligible for evaluation. SFP will monitor all prospective FIPs emerging via SFP Supply Chain Roundtables (SRs) and other NGO partners. These FIPs usually transition to active FIPs.

Active FIPs

Active FIPs are those that meet the definition of a fishery improvement project according to the Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions, have met the all the specified criteria for Stages 1 and 2 (development and launch), and are actively reporting Stage 3, 4, or 5 progress (implementation and results) on a public website such as [FisheryProgress.org](https://fisheryprogress.org) or an independent website with a functional URL. All active FIPs will be regularly evaluated by SFP, and their progress ratings will be published on SFP's [FishSource](https://fishsource.org) website and on [FisheryProgress.org](https://fisheryprogress.org) for FIPs reporting there. Note: FIPs not meeting the reporting frequency requirements of [FisheryProgress.org](https://fisheryprogress.org) may be designated as inactive. These FIPs will remain under active status on [FishSource](https://fishsource.org), but will not be rated, due to a lack of publicly reported information.

FIP type

There are two types of FIP: basic and comprehensive. Both fall along a continuum to achieve the end goal of reaching a level of performance to unconditionally pass the MSC standard (actual MSC certification is a market-based choice). Generally speaking, comprehensive FIPs are in a position to reach this goal sooner than basic FIPs. Basic FIPs often have more challenges to overcome before they are in a position to become comprehensive and/or reach the end goal. Differentiating FIPs by phase is an important reflection of the range of buyer commitments throughout the world. Some buyers have aggressive commitments to source only MSC-certified or "green" products and will tend to support FIPs in the comprehensive phase. Other buyers may have longer-term commitments to first improve source fisheries that are in the worst condition, and FIPs in the basic phase are a key tool to meet that objective.

This methodology considers the two FIP phases, consistent with the Conservation Alliance guidelines,⁴ as a key starting point for evaluating and rating FIPs:

⁴<http://www.solutionsforseafood.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Alliance-FIP-Guidelines-3.7.15.pdf>

• A basic FIP meets all of the following requirements:

- A public evaluation of the fishery/fisheries that covers stock status, management quality, and environmental impacts, or a summary scoping document is available (e.g., Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) pre-assessment, FishSource evaluation, Seafood Watch report, IFFO assessment).
- The FIP has been publicly announced with a list of participants (including at least one seafood company).
- Time-bound objectives of the FIP have been made public.
- There is a public workplan describing planned activities on one or more sustainability issues, including expected timelines.
- The FIP regularly and publicly reports its activities and improvement progress against the workplan (see [FisheryProgress.org](https://fisheryprogress.org) for tools and guidance, or [SFP's template and guidance](#)).

• A comprehensive FIP meets all of the following requirements:

- An MSC pre-assessment or summary scoping document has been made public.
- The FIP has been publicly announced with a list of participants (including at least one seafood company).
- Time-bound objectives of the FIP for the fishery to reach a level consistent with an unconditional pass of the MSC standard have been made public.
- There is a public workplan describing planned activities for all outstanding sustainability issues identified in the pre-assessment, including expected timelines.
- The FIP regularly and publicly reports its activities and improvement progress against the workplan (see [FisheryProgress.org](https://fisheryprogress.org) for tools and guidance, or [SFP's template and guidance](#)).
- Every three years, the FIP makes public an audit of activity and performance conducted by a third party experienced with the MSC standard.

It is critical to regularly review FIP phases every six months, in line with Conservation Alliance guidelines, and publicly report on a FIP's progress against its workplan, to demonstrate effort and outcome to interested parties. FIPs are encouraged to use the [FisheryProgress.org](https://fisheryprogress.org) website for public reporting, using the FIP reporting guidelines⁵ specified.

INDICATORS OF PROGRESS FOR STAGES 1 THROUGH 5

Below are the minimum requirements that should be completed in order to achieve each stage.



STAGE 1 (FIP DEVELOPMENT)

Assessment of a fishery's environmental performance (e.g., MSC pre-assessment, FishSource evaluation, IFFO assessment, Seafood Watch report) or third-party scoping document, with recommendations, made public.

⁵<https://fisheryprogress.org/how-use-site/fip-review-guidelines>



2

STAGE 2 (FIP LAUNCH)

Two components are required for this stage: 1) confirmation of FIP participants (including at least one seafood company), as evidenced by a memorandum of understanding (MOU), press release, or copy of an email; and 2) a public FIP workplan (with activities and anticipated timelines).

3

STAGE 3 (FIP IMPLEMENTATION)

FIP tasks and/or actions contained in the workplan are implemented and reported with supporting evidence, e.g., a report of a committee meeting, a letter to a government agency requesting action, draft proposals for improvements, submission of documents to an RFMO, or a narrative that the FIP is actively monitoring improvement activities/progress by another entity. (See Annex 2 for specific examples of acceptable Stage 3 evidence.) These tasks and actions can be ongoing and do not have to be completed at the time of reporting.

4

STAGE 4 (IMPROVEMENTS IN FISHING PRACTICES OR FISHERY MANAGEMENT)

Regulatory policy change or regulatory action to improve the fishery (e.g., a new bycatch provision) OR a fishing practice change (e.g., a change in fishing gear developed voluntarily and implemented by the FIP) to improve the fishery. Improvement must be reported publicly, along with evidence that includes public documentation (e.g., a government report, an audit report, a scientific journal article); a correlating increase in FishSource Scores 1, 2, and 3; and/or an increase in score (BMT scores) in the following MSC criteria for management and information. Stage 4 may be assigned, depending on the rationale for the score increase:

- 1.2.1 • 2.2.2 • 2.4.3 • 3.1.3
- 1.2.2 • 2.2.3 • 2.5.2 • 3.2.1
- 1.2.3 • 2.3.2 • 2.5.3 • 3.2.2
- 1.2.4 • 2.3.3 • 3.1.1 • 3.2.3
- 2.1.2 • 2.4.2 • 3.1.2 • 3.2.4
- 2.1.3

In order for a Stage 4 result to be considered in a FIP evaluation and rating, it must be linked to one or more Stage 3 tasks and actions.⁶ Where a FIP directly worked on or contributed to the improvement, the Stage 4 narrative should describe how the FIP's work played a role in delivering the reported result. Where a FIP was monitoring another entity's progress, the Stage 4 narrative should describe the result and who generated it.

⁶Evidence for action and task progress will vary depending on the action/task, but can include signed agreements with consultants or government for research; meeting agendas, notes, and/or participant lists; letters sent to governments, suppliers, or others; media articles; blog posts; and/or statements posted on a website.



Stage 4 results will only be considered when first reported. For example, a new data collection protocol reported in year 1 will be considered a Stage 4 result, but subsequent reports of the data collected under the data collection protocol (i.e., ongoing data collection under the new protocol in year 2 and beyond) will be noted as ongoing tasks or actions and will be recorded as Stage 3. This reported action will only be considered as a subsequent Stage 4 result if there are substantive changes made to improve the protocols supporting a change in MSC information scores. Annex 3 provides a list of specific examples of Stage 4 results.

For the purposes of the FIP progress evaluation, Stage 4 results will be recognized on the date when the policy change or regulator action is codified, or when the improved fishing practice first occurred.



STAGE 5 (IMPROVEMENTS ON THE WATER)

A publicly verifiable positive change in the water (e.g., an increase in biomass of target stock, an increase in population of impacted protected species, a decrease in habitat or ecosystem impacted). A Stage 5 result regarding the status of the target stock can be reflected by a significant increase in FishSource Scores 4 and 5, which FIPs can use as evidence for reporting improvement progress. A Stage 5 result may also be assigned when a FIP reports an increase in any MSC outcome score (criteria listed below). MSC outcome scores will increase if there is a positive change in the water, or if the precision or confidence limits around estimates of stock size or environmental impacts improve and the status of the issue is shown to be in a favorable condition. FIPs may present a new assessment, an improved assessment, or a new disclosure of an old assessment. However, Stage 5 will only be granted if new data and analysis have been produced since the most recent assessment, and have generated new public information that confirms a verifiable improvement in the water has occurred. MSC criteria where score increases may merit a Stage 5 result include:

- 1.1.1 2.3.1
- 1.1.2 2.4.1
- 2.1.1 2.5.1
- 2.2.1

The use of [MSC's fishery benchmarking tool](#) (BMT) to evaluate and document improvement progress is strongly recommended, as it provides a transparent platform for a FIP to report progress, including Stage 4- and 5-type results, against MSC performance indicators (PIs). The BMT is currently used on FisheryProgress. For basic FIPs using alternative evaluations (e.g., needs assessment, FishSource profile, rapid assessment, etc.), specific guidance on reporting against the MSC PIs is provided on [FisheryProgress.org](#).

In order for Stage 5 results to be considered in a FIP evaluation and rating, they must be linked to one or more Stage 3 tasks and actions. Where a FIP directly worked on or contributed to the improvement, the Stage 5 narrative should describe how the FIP's work played a role in delivering the reported outcome. Where a FIP was monitoring another entity's progress, the Stage 5 narrative should describe the outcome and who generated it.

Stage 5 will not be assigned in cases where FIPs simply undertake new analyses of old data previously presented without any new data inputs, as evidence for new stock status or a "change in the water." In such cases, these results will be recorded as Stage 3 activities. Where new information is provided in new analyses supporting an increase in the outcome PIs, these results will be recorded as Stage 5.

A Stage 5 outcome will be recognized on the date when it is first published in an official document or codified.

DETERMINING THE "EVALUATION START DATE" OF A FIP

The evaluation start date of a FIP is critically important for the FIP Evaluation Tool. As the methodology incorporates timeframe benchmarks, an evaluation start date must be determined to know when to "start the clock." Others, including the FIP itself, may define start dates differently for other purposes.

For the purposes of this tool, the evaluation start date is defined as the date at which minimum requirements for Stage 1 and 2 indicators have been completed. This applies to both basic and comprehensive FIPs. For example, if a project completed a fishery evaluation and made it public (Stage 1) in January 2015, made the list of project participants public in February 2015, and made a workplan public in March 2015 (Stage 2), the FIP evaluation start date would be March 2015.

Further guidance and rules for determining evaluation start dates of FIPs include:

- If new participants join the existing FIP, the original evaluation start date still applies.
- If participants from an existing FIP split off and create their own FIP, or if participants "reinvent" a new FIP, the evaluation start date for the second FIP remains the same as the original.
- If a separate FIP is initiated in a fishery with an existing FIP (e.g., because participants will not work together), the new FIP will be given a new evaluation start date pursuant to the guidelines above, provided the participants in the new FIP were not part of the existing FIP.
- If a FIP becomes inactive, due to lack of financial resources for example, and becomes active again at a later stage with similar participants and scope, the original evaluation start date applies.

A TOOL FOR EVALUATING FIP PROGRESS



This evaluation tool is a “measuring stick” on which any FIP that meets the minimum requirements for basic or comprehensive can be placed and compared. It is more dynamic and informative than focusing only on the FIP stage reached. Actual progress ratings for FIPs are reported on [FisheryProgress.org](https://fisheryprogress.org) and [FishSource.org](https://fishsource.org).

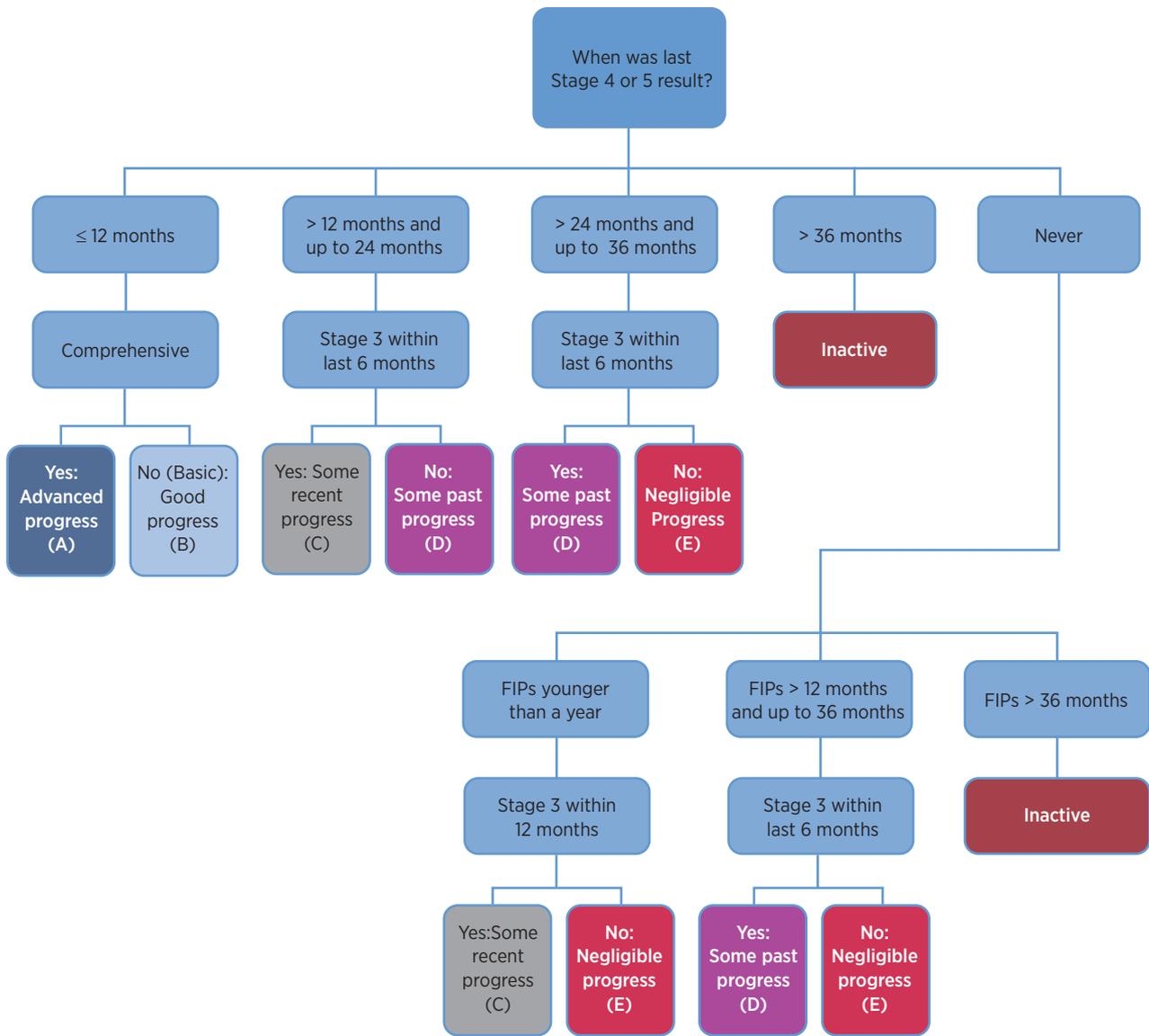
Note that this evaluation does **not** prescribe whether or not to source from a particular FIP. Each user of this evaluation can apply the information how she/he chooses and react accordingly. As SFP has noted previously, FIP progress is **only one** of the key factors retailers and other seafood businesses use when deciding whether to continue buying or start buying from a FIP. Other factors include fishery status/rating, presence of “red flag” or “high-risk” issues, and other company-specific factors.

SFP and others view the end goal for all FIPs to be a level of sustainability where an unconditional pass against the MSC standard could be achieved, recognizing that basic FIPs may often be far away from achieving this goal and comprehensive FIPs may be closer (i.e., within five years). Therefore, we encourage all basic FIPs to transition to comprehensive FIPs at the appropriate time or to reach the end goal directly. SFP views a FIP as completed when the FIP has successfully addressed all issues in its workplan, when the FIP has achieved the level of an unconditional pass against the MSC standard (i.e., estimated scores of 80 or above across all 28 performance indicators), or when the FIP has graduated to MSC certification. We will continue to evaluate FIPs until they have reached that level and improvements/reporting on all outstanding activities have been completed, or until they are MSC-certified. At this point, these FIPs will be archived in the SFP system.

Methodology

Time thresholds are used to differentiate progress by FIPs and the frequency at which improvements are happening. The time thresholds apply to both basic and comprehensive FIPs, with the most favorable ratings reserved only for FIPs achieving progress against workplan implementation and resulting change/sustainability benefits. See Figure 1, below, for the conditions required to receive one of the five progress ratings (A-E).

Figure 1: Decision tree to determine the rating for all FIPs that meet the minimum requirement of a basic or comprehensive FIP⁷



The decision tree indicates some of the rules used to determine progress ratings A through E for all active FIPs:

- **Advanced Progress (A)** Reserved for comprehensive FIPs that have achieved a Stage 4 or 5 result within the past 12 months.
- **Good Progress (B)** A basic FIP that has achieved a Stage 4 or 5 result within 12 months.

⁷Includes FIPs >1 year old and FIPs < 1 year old

- **Some recent progress (C)**

A FIP that has achieved a Stage 4 or 5 result in more than 12 (but less than 24) months AND has reported a Stage 3 activity within the past six months.

A FIP younger than 12 months that has never achieved a Stage 4 or 5 result but has reported a Stage 3 activity within the first 12 months.

- **Some Past Progress (D)**

A FIP that has achieved a Stage 4 or 5 result in more than 12 (but less than 24) months BUT has not reported a Stage 3 activity within the past six months.

A FIP for which the most recent Stage 4 or 5 result is more than 24 (but less than 36) months old AND a Stage 3 activity has been reported within six months.

This rating system stresses the importance of trying to influence management (regulators) and the catch sector and to deliver a fishing practice or policy change (i.e., Stage 4 result) as soon as possible, to show buyers and other stakeholders that the FIP has impact. FIPs in fisheries that regularly deliver Stage 4 and 5 improvements are rewarded with a favorable rating, as this ensures continued progress and gives buyers confidence for continued sourcing.

This tool is effective at identifying FIPs that have made little to no progress. If no results have ever been reported (or it has been a long time, i.e., 24 to 36 months), a poor rating of D or E sends a clear message to stakeholders. The tool is not designed to highlight the best-performing FIPs on high-risk/priority issues, fishery sustainability, or cumulative improvement since FIP inception. More detailed information on the “red” or high-risk issues for individual FIPs can be found on [FisheryProgress](#).

In addition to the A-E ratings of FIPs, it is critical for stakeholders to know which FIPs have become inactive or have successfully completed their workplans. These FIPs fall into two categories, defined below, and will be calculated manually, outside of the decision tree, because they do not qualify for consideration in the evaluation process.

INACTIVE FIPS

Inactive FIPs are those that:

- a) No longer meet the minimum requirements (e.g., that lack industry participation or do not have the funds to carry out activities) or have been suspended
- b) Have stopped activity and have not reported changes in fishing practice or management or change on the water in 36 months
- c) Are older than 36 months and have never reported a Stage 4 or 5 result.

FIPs can advance from this category to go back into the FIP evaluation process if the missing requirements are met and the FIP resumes reporting progress.

Inactive FIPs will continue to be monitored for changes but will not be included in the routine evaluation, and their FIP ratings will be removed at the time of change of status. All historical information on the FIP can still be accessed via [FishSource](#).

COMPLETED FIPS

Completed FIPs are those that have achieved their objectives and/or graduated to MSC certification. A FIP can be considered completed if it achieves its objectives, even if it chooses not to enter certification (or, for basic FIPs, if performance doesn't reach the level required for certification). For basic FIPs, independent verification of completion could include a revised assessment report, government report, or peer-reviewed paper.

The evaluation system is not designed to include projects still in development, i.e., prospective FIPs. SFP will monitor all prospective FIPs emerging via SFP Supply Chain Roundtables (SRs) and other NGO partners.

MONITORING FIPS

This is a new category of FIP that has been added to this version of the FIP Evaluation Tool. Monitoring FIP status is intended for a specific and potentially small group of comprehensive FIPs.

A monitoring FIP is one that has not reached a level where it can achieve an unconditional MSC pass, i.e., where most PI scores are >80 but one or more outcome scores are <80, or where an increase in outcome scores cannot be governed by the FIP. For example, in the Canada cod FIP, all management actions have been adopted and implemented, but the rebuilding is not yet complete due to environmental factors.

These FIPs should provide the following:

- Confirmation that all workplan activities that are governed by the FIP are complete, as verified by FisheryProgress.org in the annual review
- Status of outstanding FIP workplan activities that are subject to governmental governance, including any applicable interim measures that are being implemented
- Proof that all other PIs, except for the outcomes score (above), are scored >80.

FIPs meeting the criteria above will transition from active to monitoring FIP status and automatically be assigned the current rating. This is expected to be A for a comprehensive FIP.

FIP EVALUATION PROCESS

SFP monitors websites (e.g., FisheryProgress.org, MSC, FIP websites), media, conferences, personal communications, and other outlets to be aware of as many FIPs as possible. For FIPs that meet the minimum requirements of a basic or comprehensive FIP, a FIP tracker is created and made public on FishSource.org where it is associated with the fishery or fisheries in which the FIP is operating. The FIP tracker provides a high-level snapshot of progress within each of the five stages, with links to more information about the results reported by the FIP on its public report. SFP also monitors the prospective FIPs listed on FisheryProgress.org and other projects under development by SFP's Supply

Chain Roundtables, for example, to ensure that all FIPs that transition to “active” status are evaluated and rated over time.

All FIPs tracked on FishSource are evaluated involuntarily. In other words, SFP does not get permission from the FIPs, nor are FIPs required to ask for an evaluation in order to be tracked. SFP practices open communication with FIP representatives to address any outstanding questions or discrepancies. SFP also uses a FIP monthly report on ratings to get feedback and information from FIPs to ensure that all evaluations are up-to-date. If an evaluation of a FIP appears inaccurate, SFP asks the FIP representative to contact SFP to resolve the issue in a timely manner.

Once all reported progress of a FIP is added to the tracker (for the five stages, as relevant), SFP screens the information through the decision tree in Figure 1. The FIP progress rating that is generated is publicly noted as part of the [FIP tracker](#) on FishSource, with a brief comment by SFP FIP evaluators on why a FIP gets a certain rating or what changed since the last rating and the date that these changes occurred. This will give users a little more information about the FIP’s progress, or lack thereof.

For FIPs reporting on FisheryProgress.org, SFP works collaboratively with FisheryProgress, from the time the FIP updates its profile during the scheduled reports (6- and 12-month reports, and three-year audit) until the FIP rating is published (see Annex 4). One key and important new addition to the FIP evaluation process is the spot-check of proposed changes to FIP ratings by a member of FisheryProgress’s Technical Oversight Committee (TOC). All proposed FIP ratings changes for FIPs reporting on the website are reviewed independently before they are finalized by SFP and published.

SFP monitors and evaluates all active basic and comprehensive FIPs on regular six-month cycles, using this methodology to ensure that ratings are up-to-date and based on current publicly available information. Updated FIP ratings are posted on FisheryProgress.org and FishSource, and monthly reports are disseminated via SendGrid every month to allow stakeholders and users easy access to a full report of all monthly ratings for comparison and analysis.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Conservation Alliance: The Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions connects leading conservation groups that work with businesses representing more than 80 percent of the North American grocery and foodservice markets.

FIP: A fishery improvement project (FIP) is a project designed to improve fisheries toward sustainability. A FIP operates via an alliance of seafood buyers, suppliers, and producers, who work together to improve a specific fishery by pressing for better policies and management.

FIP evaluator: A member of the FIP evaluation team responsible for updating the evidence for indicators in the FIP Tracker and evaluation of the FIP using the decision tree.

FIP participants: Parties with interest in or consulted on issues relating to a fishery or FIP.

FIP stakeholders: Entities that have signed the MOU for the FIP implementation and contribute actively.

FIP Tracker: Improvement tracker developed by SFP for tracking FIP progress on FishSource with indicators and evidence of progress.

MSC Benchmarking and Tracking Tool: MSC scoring used for tracking progress of FIPs toward MSC certification.

MSC pre-assessment: A preliminary evaluation of a fishery against all MSC performance indicators, to provide a picture of the fishery's baseline environmental performance and challenges.

MSC Fisheries Standard: A measurement of the sustainability of wild-capture fisheries based on three principal areas. Each principle has a series of performance indicators that are used to evaluate a fishery's environmental performance.

Needs assessment: Less rigorous than an MSC pre-assessment, a needs assessment is an evaluation of a fishery that covers the three principal areas of the MSC standard, to determine environmental challenges and improvements needed in the fishery.

Scoping document: A scoping document summarizes the results of the needs assessment or MSC pre-assessment and recommends strategies for addressing the fishery's challenges, to help fishery improvement project participants develop a workplan.

Unconditional pass of the Marine Stewardship Council Standard: The MSC Fisheries Standard is designed to assess whether a fishery is well-managed and environmentally sustainable. To pass unconditionally, a fishery must achieve a score of 80 or more on all performance indicators of the standard.

ANNEX 2. STAGE 3 EXAMPLES WITH SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Types of activities accepted	Stage 3 Example (with the link to the respective evidence)
Notification of meeting attended	IPNLF participated at the last WCPFC annual meeting (WCPFC16) in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea and traveled with the Indonesian delegation.
Notification of meeting attended	OPAGAC met with other FIP implementers from the Pacific during the ISSF/WWF FIP support and harmonization meeting.
Letter sent requesting management action	To date, all the producing companies supplying the FIP participants (around 600 vessels) have signed the letter of warranty; the processor's signature is in progress, since the audit related process is in development.
Letter sent requesting management action	Advocacy letters have been drafted to be signed onto by the FIP to send to all relevant flag states and the RFMO to detail asks and needs as a FIP- to be sent ahead of Dec meeting.
Letter sent requesting management action	Advocacy letter signed by WWF-UK submitted to ICCAT.
(draft) Report in preparation	A summary report on stock assessment by size distribution from 2016-2019 was drafted.
Research to support an action in FIP workplan	Reports analyzing the information on retained, bycatch and ETP species published.
Analysis towards completing action in FIP workplan	CeDePesca carried out a report called "Monitoring of the implementation of the discard and bycatch reduction program in the common hake (Merluccius gayi gayi) bottom trawl fishery," which evaluated the degree of progress of the plan.
Proposal developed	The fishery and stock assessment proposal for the Patagonian red octopus (Enteroctopus megalocyathus) in Los Lagos Region was developed.
Proposals with recommendations	Changes to the management plan proposal were discussed with the authorities.

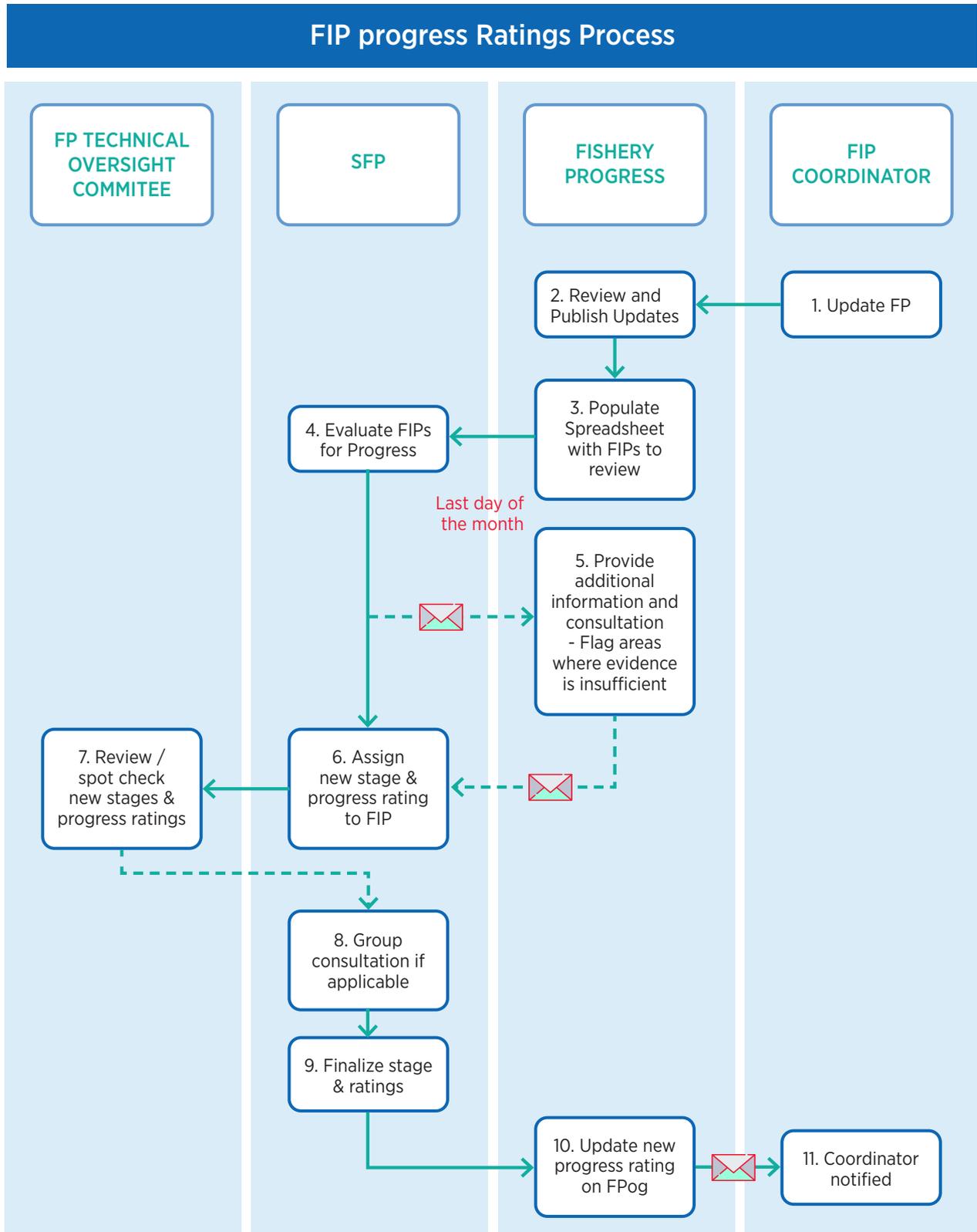
Types of activities accepted	Stage 3 Example (with the link to the respective evidence)
Proposal for FIP funding	Funding proposal submitted to The Ocean Conservancy.
Research/review	A technical review of the stock assessment was completed by Dr Robin Cooke.
Routine assessments	Stock assessments are being conducted on an ongoing basis using length-based spawning potential ratio (LB SPR) with data collected from local fishers at landing site.
Annual compliance reports	Gear inspection report available for Florida pink shrimp showing data up until March 20. Low levels of non-compliance reported in March. No instances of major non-compliance.
FIP research	Study conducted to advise on potential improvements; Two vessels installed hydraulic pumps in order to increase the survival rate of released fish and the quality of the product.
FIP research	FIP vessels are participating in a Pacific FAD Retrieval Feasibility Study being conducted by the SPC with the support of The Nature Conservancy.
FIP research	SIOTI supported a study to explore alternative assessment models in terms of improving the assessments of yellowfin tuna. The resulting paper was presented at the 21st Session of the Working Party of Tropical Tuna.

ANNEX 3. STAGE 4 EXAMPLES WITH SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Types of activities accepted	Stage 3 Example (with the link to the respective evidence)
Change in scores of MSC PIs on information & management	Increase in MSC PI scores for 2.1.3.; 2.2.3- Final report of the bycatch study published
Change in scores of MSC PIs on information & management	Increase in score 2.3.3; Fishing logbooks have been implemented and are being used by fishers- no negative interactions with ETP to report.
Change in policy	A legal requirement was established for VMS on vessels.
Change in policy	On 10 December 2019, DFO announced the new Fishery Monitoring Policy to set out the direction for fishery monitoring in Canada federally-managed wild capture fisheries and includes 2J3KL cod
Change in policy	Delta fisheries report published which provides updated information on management actions, escapement data and aerial monitoring surveys.
Data collection on ETP species	Data published from the data collection program showed that discard rates are minimal (<5%) for both gear types, and that interactions with ETP species are rarely observed.
Change in practice	Cost effective sampling protocol adopted.
Change in practice	A methodological proposal for stock assessment, based on a 2018 analysis of data and the uncertainties and deficiencies of data, was developed. This analysis was used to support an increase in BMT 1.2.4. score.
Change in practice	A two-month fishery closure was agreed for 2016.
Change in practice	SUBPESCA has adopted a plan to reduce discards in the artisanal and industrial sectors of the Chilean hake fishery.

Types of activities accepted	Stage 3 Example (with the link to the respective evidence)
Change in practice	A catch sampling protocol has been initiated for the Tokyo Bay Sea Perch fishery. The protocol involves keeping records of ETP species accidentally caught during fishing activities. This information will be recorded in logbooks on a daily basis.
Change in practice	The Provincial Onboard Observers Program of Chubut has incorporated design data sheets, including taking data from marine bottoms according to the forms used in the Private Program of Observers on Board coordinated by the National University of Patagonia.
Change in practice	Increase in 2.3.3 BMT score -increased compliance with TED regulations. TED effectiveness has consistently remained high and above legal requirements.
Change in scores of MSC PIs on information and management	Increase in BMT score 1.2.1. The Normative Instruction 54/2019 was published, requiring that harvesters and dealers deliver only whole lobsters to processing plants, with a tolerance of 5% for tails. The legal instrument also includes two measures that together can prevent irregular fishing practices during the closed season and the use of prohibited fishing gear, and will likely reduce fishing effort in the closed season.

ANNEX 4. SFP-FP COLLABORATIVE PROCESS ON FIP PROGRESS TRACKING AND EVALUATION





For more information, please contact fipevaluation@sustainablefish.org

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