



SUMMARY OF MEETINGS ON 6TH AND 7TH JUNE 2023

The SSNI (Sustainable Seafood Network of India) in collaboration with the SEAI, NITI Aayog, MSC London, WWF-India and the SIF-CUSAT organized 2 meetings in consonance with the World Ocean Day of 2023. The first meeting on 06.06.2023 was a stakeholder (those involved with fisheries sustainability certification) workshop and on 7th June it was a dialogue on fishery certification for meeting SDG targets in India. Both meetings were attended by fisher organizations, seafood processors and exporters, researchers and academicians, press and media and most importantly by fisheries policymakers in the government.

June 6 Stakeholder Workshop

- 1) On 6th June 2023, in his inaugural address, Mr A J Tharakan, Chair, Ocean Committee, SEAI, said that fisheries certification such as that of the MSC is the need of the hour to maintain India's export income. Most of the importing countries are demanding sustainability certificates and that is why SEAI has decided to obtain MSC Certification. And it has become a matter of survival for the seafood exporters. Mr Jagdish Fofandi, National President of the SEAI, stated that fisheries certification has become an urgent necessity for resource conservation and to reach new export markets.
- 2) Dr Sunil Mohamed, Retd. Principal Scientist CMFRI & Chair of SSNI, outlined the aims of the workshop and expected outcomes. He insisted on the necessity of stakeholders working together to achieve Fisheries Certification and the need for ecolabeling.
- 3) Mr Michael Marriott, Program Director: AMESA, Marine Stewardship Council, London, presented the MSCs approach to tropical fisheries, and how the standard is valued and applies to the conditions of tropical countries. He addressed the challenges of multispecies, multigear fishery. Mr Arjun Gadre sought a degree of customization of MSC standards tailored to the uniqueness of tropical marine fisheries.
- 4) Mr Arjun Gadre, Managing Director, Gadre Exports discussed about the Threadfin bream FIP, which was inactive and is now gearing up towards reactivation.
- 5) Dr Murugan A, FIP Consultant, CMPA, presented the progress and challenges faced by the blue swimming crab gill net fishery of Palk Bay, which has been in FIP for the past three and a half years. The FIP has a high probability of obtaining certification, but a lack of support from government stakeholders and research institutions is hindering the progress of the FIP. Dr Joslin of the CMFRI interacted and insisted that the processors do not procure berried and juvenile crabs for processing to discourage its capture.
- 6) Mr Shankar Gouda, IndoFisheries, Mangalore outlined the new FIP on Spiny cheek Grouper along Kerala and Karnataka. The FIP is worried about obtaining data for

preparing reference points for the target species and non-target species from research institutes.

- 7) Mr V. Vivekanandan, FishMarc & SIFFS, Chennai made a presentation on the trap-caught lobster fishery at Kanyakumari and the importance of sustainable and responsible fishing. He discussed at length about how the fishery was reviving through village co-management committees.
- 8) Mr. Vinod Malayilethu, Associate Director, Marine Conservation Programme, WWF – India gave the details of the Lakshadweep pole & line tuna fishery FIP, which has completed its action plan and is ready to enter full MSC certification. He pointed out that lack of funding is the major issue in getting the fishery certified. He talked about the need for ecolabeling and the reason why an Indian standard for certifying the fisheries of India will not work.
- 9) Dr. Vineetha Aravind, FIP Coordinator presented the details of the shrimp & cephalopod trawl fishery FIP and deep-sea trawl fishery FIP running in Kerala for the past four years. She listed out the progress achieved by the FIPs and the challenges faced. Both the FIPs have completed many sub-actions listed in the action plan during pre-assessment, yet the major action of having reference points is not completed. She also emphasized the importance of cooperation of all stakeholders, researchers, exporters, fishers & government - in obtaining the certification.
- 10) Dr. Velvizhi, FIP Manager, Principal Scientist, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation presented the FIP action plan implementation journey of trawl-caught flower shrimp in Palk Bay. Presently the FIP is inactive due to lack of funding, but it has made major strides in bycatch reduction using square mesh cod-end. The trials done with the cooperation of CIFT have created much awareness and various fishers are coming forward voluntarily to use the square mesh cod-end.
- 11) The presentations were followed by a discussion. All stakeholders were concerned over the accessibility of analysed data from the research institute. Another major concern raised was juvenile fishing, many stakeholders felt that the increase in juvenile fishing is due to increased demand from fish meal plants.

June 7 Dialogue on Certification and SDG

- 1) Mr A J Tharakan, Chair of the Ocean Committee, SEAI, welcomed the gathering and emphasized that the market demand is pushing Indian fisheries to adopt sustainable standards.
- 2) The dialogue was inaugurated by the MPEDA Chairman, Shri Dodda Venkata Swamy, IAS. He affirmed that sustainability is the need of the hour and India must follow the sustainable certification of the buyer, rather than making its own standard. As India is a seafood exporting nation it is important to follow the standards of the importing nation and/or the global best practice.
- 3) Dr J. Balaji, Joint Secretary, Marine Fisheries, MoFAHD, GoI stated that he was happy that the MPEDA has decided on following the global best practice concerning fisheries sustainability standards. He said that the PMMSY has set aside INR 6 crores for sustainability, but there are no takers so far. If project proposals are submitted the Central Government is ready to consider them positively. He further stated that the DoF-GOI will endeavour to bring in fisheries management tools such as FMPs, HCRs and comanagement to support fisheries sustainability and conservation of the country.
- 4) Dr Neelam Patel, Senior Advisor, Agriculture and Allied sectors, NITI Ayog, GOI, talked about the initiatives of NITI Ayog in attaining SDG goals in India. She said the Government is particularly interested in obtaining MSC certification for Lakshadweep Tuna, besides all other major fisheries of India.

- 5) Mr Elias Sait, Secretary General, SEAI, outlined the role of Government and support in moving towards sustainability.
- 6) Dr Sunil Mohamed, Chair of SSNI, talked about India's journey so far towards sustainability certification. He stated that there are 5 active FIPs and 2 inactive FIPs, besides several other fisheries that are looking at entering FIPs to meet the MSC standard and several fishmeal organizations are trying to meet the Marine Trust standard of sustainability. He emphasized the need for stakeholder support in all areas of research, industry and management to reach the goal.
- 7) Mr Edouard Le Bart, Director: South Europe and AMESA, Marine Stewardship Council, London discussed how MSC certification can help countries like India in attaining SDG 14 goals by drawing on examples in other developing countries.
- 8) Mr Arjun Gadre, Gadre Exports, talked about Surimi processors' commitment towards sustainable fishing and announced the formation of the "Forum for Surimi Processors for Sustainability" (FSPS). He also discussed prospective new species for surimi production in India.
- 9) Mr Matt Watson, Senior Fisheries Program Manager, Asia Pacific, MSC, The use of "Certifications and Ratings" in the Japanese market & sustainable surimi market opportunities. He made clear the difference between ratings (such as the Seafood Watch of MBA) and certification and outlined a mixed certification system using several global standards.
- 10) Mr Jagadish Fofandi, National President of the SEAI called for coordination among all government agencies and fisher organizations to achieve sustainability in the fisheries sector.
- 11) Mr Mohamed Dawood Sait, President of the Indian Marine Ingredients Association, presented the perspective of fish meal plant owners and their commitment to sustainable fishing and initiatives in obtaining the Marine Trust certification. He stated that several fishmeal companies have taken the initiative to move into FIPs for achieving the Marine Trust standard. He reiterated that fishmeal companies are wholly in favour of sustainability in the sector.
- 12) This was followed by a panel discussion led by Dr Neelam Patel, Senior Advisor, Agriculture and Allied sectors, NITI Ayog, Gol. The panel consisting of Dr Neelam Patel, Mr A J Tharakan, SEAI; Dr Madhu V R, CIFT; Dr R Jeyabaskaran, FSI; Mr Mohamed Dawood Sait, IMIA, Mr Arjun Gadre, FSPS and Dr Sunil Mohamed, SSNI discussed the issues related to sustainability and India's current challenges in attaining SDG 14 goals. Dr Neelam Patel concluded that she would recommend using Kerala's recent fisheries law amendments to all maritime states.

Recommendations in Brief

- a) Ecolabelling through fishery certification for resource sustainability has become a necessity for tapping premium global export markets and fetching more value for the products.
- b) GoI organizations (MoFAHD, MPEDA) have agreed that Indian seafood should be certified by globally recognized ecolabels, rather than develop a self-certification label that does not have market recognition.
- c) A sustainability certificate is now sought after by most of the fish meal and fish oil companies, thereby creating an opportunity to bring sustainability to this seemingly unsustainable sector. This can be considered a positive step toward fisheries sustainability in India.
- d) The fisheries law amendments made by the GoK in recent times need to be replicated in other maritime states as well.

Abbreviations

- AMESA - Africa, Middle East and South Asia Region of MSC
- CIFT – ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology
- CMFRI – ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute
- CMPA – Crab Meat Processors Association
- DoF – Department of Fisheries
- HCR – Harvest Control Rules
- FIP – Fishery Improvement Programme
- FMP – Fishery Management Plan
- FSPS - Forum for Surimi Processors for Sustainability
- Gol - Government of India
- GoK – Government of Kerala
- IMIA – Indian Marine Ingredients Association
- MoFAHD – Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying
- MPEDA - Marine Products Export Development Authority
- MSC – Marine Stewardship Council
- NITI Aayog - National Institution for Transforming India
- SEAI – Seafood Exporters Association India
- SIF-CUSAT – School of industrial Fisheries – Cochin University of Science and Technology
- SIFFS - South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies
- SSNI - Sustainable Seafood Network India
- WWF - World Wide Fund for Nature

Selected photos of the events



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