

Launch of patrols in joint approach to illegal fishing

The official kick-off of the project "Enhancing MCS for the deterrence of IUU Fishing and assessment on turtle bycatch in the coastal driftnet fleet" took place on Tuesday, November 7. Suriname's coastal and inland waters suffer from illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing), which impedes sustainable fisheries management and threatens exports. The project follows three tracks, namely: (1) the recording of bycatch and interactions with sea turtles by captains of various fishing boats, (2) Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) activities conducted by the Fisheries Directorate of the Ministry of LVV and the Maritime Police to combat IUU fishing, including apprehension of illegal boats (3) the development of a national action plan to address IUU fishing.

Invitees to the kick-off, including representation from the French Embassy, the Fishermen's Collective, the Coast Guard and WWF-Guianas, gathered as partners for a content briefing. Deputy Director of Fisheries Management, Mr. Zojindra Arjune, emphasized how important the presence of competent agencies on the water is for the proper monitoring, control and surveillance of fishing boats in Surinamese waters. However, enforcement on the water, with the goal of combating illegality, is under pressure due to a lack of resources. Mr. Arjune emphasizes that it is not easy to find funds and, on behalf of his team, expresses gratitude to WWF for the efforts made and the French CRPMEM (Regional Maritime Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture, based in French Guiana) for the joint approach to IUU fishing in our waters.

Securing exports and simultaneously protecting sea turtles

Mr. Arjune emphasized that the information that will be gathered by conducting the patrols will be used to increase awareness. IUU fishing affects everyone because it is about securing our exports, something Suriname desperately needs in these economically challenging times. Mr. Tomas Willems, marine biologist and responsible for recording interactions with sea turtles and other species, emphasizes that the requirements for being allowed to export to e.g. the U.S. are becoming more and more stringent and data collection is essential. Mr. Willems also referred to the Regional Action Plan for the leatherback sea turtle (RAP - read more at wwfguianas.org), which identified bycatch as the main cause of population decline for this endangered species. By investigating interactions with turtles in the coastal driftnet fleet, more targeted efforts can be made at the regional level to reduce bycatch.

Joint effort in fight against IUU fishing

Soraya Wijntuin, Oceans Coordinator of WWF-Guianas, acknowledges the challenges that had to be overcome to get this project off the ground and speaks highly of the cooperation from all parties, it is a joint effort. Director of Fisheries, Ms. Parveen Amritpersad, emphasizes that this project is a continuation and there are opportunities for the Coast Guard to carry out simultaneous activities. Major Bhola, director of the Coast Guard, responds by referring to the lack of resources cited. Boats have to be maintained, parts are expensive and not always available, and fuel is needed for deployment. So we are not there yet, a stable form of funding is needed for a more structural approach to IUU fishing. Mr. Arjune emphasizes that the "willingness" of the sector is there. We are ready to jointly fight illegal fishing.

Illegality detected in initial inspections

Mr. John Somohardjo, Inspector with the Maritime Police takes those present to witness the first inspections under this project. The boat named 'Eagle Eye' fills up and departs from the MAS (Maritime Authority Suriname) premises towards the estuary. Soon the first fishermen come into sight, the siren roars and 'police, vessel control' sounds. Immediately the folder with the required permit and other documents appears. After a quick check, the patrol continues. At the third inspection, it is touch and go; no permit and even a false SK number. After brief discussion, it is decided to impound the boat and continue the investigation. Patrols will continue in the coming period and a national plan to combat IUU fishing will be developed with the findings.

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First patrol in project ***“Enhancing MCS for the deterrence of IUU Fishing and assessment on turtle bycatch in the coastal driftnet fleet”***





Briefing of the project *“Enhancing MCS for the deterrence of IUU Fishing and assessment on turtle bycatch in the coastal driftnet fleet”*

(left to right) Dhr. John Somohardjo (Inspecteur Maritieme Politie), Mevr. Parveen Amritpersad (Directeur Visserij), Dhr. Zojindra Arjune (Onderdirecteur directoraat Visserij), Mevr. Soraya Wijntuin (Oceans Coördinator WWF-Guianas).