

# Mexico Baja California Peninsula Ocean whitefish - trap/handline Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) Workplan

## *Introduction*

Small-scale fisheries are socio-economically crucial in developing countries as a source of income, food, and employment. However, most fisheries lack the basic information (e.g. catch and effort) needed to assess their status and are poorly managed. In Mexico, marine finfish fisheries play an important role in fishing communities and tend to have a variety of fishing gear adapted to the target species' ecology. In the case of the current project, producers in the northwest Baja California Peninsula use handlines and traps to capture whitefish (*Caulolatilus princeps*). Commercial producers use small-scale vessels to capture these species and initiated a fishery improvement project in 2017. By 2020, stakeholders agreed to transition to a comprehensive FIP. The project aims to gather biological and fishery information to improve management (currently minimal or non-existent) and more specific details on the impacts of the fishery on the habitat and the ecosystem. Currently, six FEDECOOP fishing cooperatives are participating in the coastal area northwest of the Mexican Pacific.

**Table 1: Workplan Overview**

<b>Workplan Version and Date</b>	<b>Mexico Baja California Peninsula Ocean whitefish - trap/handline</b>
<b>Start date</b> (expected)	<b>End date</b> (anticipated month/year)
<b>December 2024</b>	<b>December 2026</b>
<b>FIP Lead</b> (organization/individual responsible for Action Plan)	<b>Improvements recommended by</b> (meeting/group that supported the development)
<b>Yuliesky Garces Rodríguez (SmartFish Rescate de Valor, AC)</b>	<b>FIP participantes</b>
<b>FIP Coordinator</b> (organization/individual responsible for reporting on FisheryProgress)	<b>Workplan developed by</b> (consultant or person)
<b>Yuliesky Garcés Rodríguez (SmartFish Rescate de Valor AC)</b>	<b>Yuliesky Garcés Rodríguez</b>

## Acronyms

<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>CICIMAR</b>	Interdisciplinary Center for Marine Sciences
<b>CONAPESCA</b>	National Commission for Fisheries and Aquaculture
<b>COBI</b>	Community and Biodiversity, AC
<b>CPUE</b>	Catch Per Unit Effort
<b>EEZ</b>	Exclusive Economic Zone
<b>FIP</b>	Fishery Improvement Project
<b>HCR</b>	Harvest Control Rule
<b>IMIPAS</b>	Mexican Institute for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Research
<b>MSC</b>	Marine Stewardship Council
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>PSA</b>	Productivity Susceptibility Analysis
<b>SCPP</b>	Fishing production cooperative society
<b>SI</b>	Scoring issue
<b>UoA</b>	Unit of Assessment

## Unit of Assessment(s)

Fill in the following table, which will be considered the scope against which the fishery is assessed against the MSC Fisheries Standard.

**Table 2. Unit(s) of Assessment (UoA)**

UoA 1	Description
Target species (common and scientific name)	Ocean whitefish ( <i>Caulolatilus princeps</i> )
Stock	Eastern Pacific
Geographical area	Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Mexico: Continental shelf of the Baja California Peninsula
Fishing method or gear type	Traps and handlines
Fishing fleet or group of vessels, or individual fishing operators pursuing stock	Artisanal Mexican fleet: Small-scale vessels less than 15 m in length, mostly fiberglass with outboard motors

## FIP Actions

**Table 3. Performance Indicator Action Plan Table for Design and implement a biological-fishery sampling program**

Action Number and Name	5. Design and implement a biological-fishery sampling program
Action Goal	Available data is sufficient for a robust population assessment.
Action Description	The artisanal whitefish fishery does not have enough information to determine whether it is being operated in a way that does not lead to overexploitation or depletion of the exploited stocks. Therefore, it is necessary to generate sufficient information to allow an assessment of the population, to estimate whether its status is at a sustainable level or not. On the other hand, the information collected will allow the estimation of auxiliary indicators (e.g., fishing effort, fishing mortality, and CPUE) and quantitative information on primary and ETP species. This action will facilitate obtaining the information required to support the design of the strategy. On the other hand, it will provide a baseline to support the future behavior of the fishery. Continuous monitoring will also be established, and control and management rules will be captured to maintain the population at the MSY.
Expected Completion Date	November 2026
Priority	High
Estimated Cost	USD \$75,000
Responsible Parties	COBI, CICIMAR, IMIPAS, SCPPs, SmartFish AC
MSC Performance Indicator(s) Addressed by the Action	Information and Monitoring (1.2.3); Primary species information (2.1.3); Secondary Species information (2.2.3); ETP species information (2.3.3)

Action	Tasks/ Milestones	Responsible (lead)	Responsible (supporting role)	Starting date	Expected completion date	Evidence of completion / results
5. Design and implement a biological-fishery sampling program	Task 1: <b>Develop the systematic record of information.</b> The FIP implementer will work with IMIPAS staff and fishery monitoring leaders to design the record log.	IMIPAS	COBI SCPPs SmartFish AC	December 2024	March 2025	Fishing cooperatives have a fishing logbook.
	Task 2: <b>Strengthen biological data information.</b> FIP implementers, together with monitoring leaders, implement monthly biological sampling to collect data on target species, primary species, and ETP.	SCPPs	COBI SmartFish AC	March 2025	November 2025	Fishermen properly and continuously record biological information and daily expenditures. Fishing logbooks
	Task 3: <b>Improve fishing effort data.</b> FIP implementers, together with monitoring leaders, identify the main fishing areas, the effective time of catches, as well as the fishing gear and the catch strategy.	SmartFish AC	SCPP	November 2025	April 2026	There is a digital database for scientific analysis.
	Task 4: <b>Analysis of the whitefish fishery.</b> The FIP implementer and the marine research center 'CICIMAR' will apply a bio-economic model to propose management measures and decision making	CICIMAR	SCPP SmartFish AC	November 2025	November 2026	Peer review

**Table 4. Performance Indicator Action Plan Table for Analyzing the impact of fishing on the ecosystem**

<b>Action Number and Name</b>	<b>2. Analyze the impact of fishing on the ecosystem</b>
<b>Action Goal</b>	Document and evaluate the impact of Ocean whitefish fishery on the environment.
<b>Action Description  </b>	The artisanal fleet mainly uses handlines and traps, so the fishery is unlikely to directly impact protected species (e.g., seabirds and turtles) and habitats. However, continuous monitoring and data collection (e.g., physical and biological fisheries) are necessary to provide evidence and establish a comprehensive management plan to ensure that no fishing activity is causing serious or irreversible damage to the habitat. Furthermore, the main habitats where the fishery operates will be digitalized. In addition, these studies will allow for identifying the fleet's fishing patterns and identifying and quantifying interactions with the habitat.
<b>Expected Completion Date</b>	April 2026
<b>Priority</b>	Medium
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	USD \$50,000
<b>Responsible Parties</b>	COBI, IMIPAS, SCPP, SmartFish AC
<b>MSC Performance Indicator(s) Addressed by the Action</b>	Habitat information (2.4.3); Ecosystem information (2.5.3); Habitat outcome (2.4.1); Habitat management (2.4.2); Ecosystem management (2.5.1)

<b>Action</b>	<b>Tasks/ Milestones</b>	<b>Responsible (lead)</b>	<b>Responsible (supporting role)</b>	<b>Starting date</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Evidence of completion / results</b>
2. Analyze the impact of fishing on the ecosystem	Task 8: <b>Develop maps of key fishing areas.</b> The FIP implementer and participants will work with the logbook system to develop maps showing the direct and indirect impacts of the fishery on habitat.	SmartFish AC	SCPPs	June 2025	December 2025	Environmental variability report
	Task 9: <b>Establish a fisheries management strategy.</b> The FIP implementer and participants take the necessary measures to protect habitats and ecosystems.	SmartFish AC	SCPPs COBI IMIPAS	June 2025	April 2026	Cooperatives have a Management Plan (normative evidence of rules, effort restrictions, spatial or seasonal closures, etc.)

**Table 5. Performance Indicator Action Plan Table for Define and promote management tools to the fisheries**

<b>Action Number and Name</b>	3. Define and promote management tools to the fisheries
<b>Action Goal</b>	Objectives for fishery-specific management are aligned with MSC principles 1 and 2.
<b>Action Description</b>	In Mexico, there is no systematic, formal, clear, or transparent, consultation and decision-making process between fishers and the Government. The goal of this action is to define a route to follow for the decision and consultation-making process, fishery management; compliance, and rules applications, that help fishers and the Government to promote the generation and/or mobilization of legal instruments (FMP, NOM, regulations, etc.) to generate political changes; and develop and monitoring a control and surveillance system in the fishing cooperatives decision-making process has to be generated by and with all stakeholders involved in the finfish fishery. It is also necessary that those involved are well-oriented toward the objectives of the fishery and how they are expected to collide efforts in the decisions taken.
<b>Expected Completion Date</b>	November 2026
<b>Priority</b>	Medium
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	USD \$17,500
<b>Responsible Parties</b>	COBI, IMIPAS, SCPPs, SmartFish AC
<b>MSC Performance Indicator(s) Addressed by the Action</b>	Fishery-specific objectives (3.2.1); Decision-making processes (3.2.2); Compliance and enforcement (3.2.3); Monitoring and Management performance Evaluation (3.2.4)

Action	Tasks/ Milestones	Responsible (lead)	Responsible (supporting role)	Starting date	Expected completion date	Evidence of completion / results
3. Define and promote management tools to the fisheries	Task1: <b>Evaluation of the current official and informal specific objectives and rules to the management of the fishery.</b> FIP participants review and document explicit short- and long-term objectives to ensure they meet the requirements of MSC Principles 1 and 2.	IMIPAS	COBI SCPPs SmartFish AC	January 2025	May 2025	Report on informal objectives in the whitefish fishery.
	Task 2: <b>Promote a fishery' formal objectives approach.</b> The FIP leader and fishery managers formally introduce the specific management objectives to the fishery.	SCPPs	COBI SmartFish AC	May 2025	November 2025	Report on recommendations to meet MSC requirements

	<b>Task 3. Promote short and long-term fisheries-specific objectives, and management plan, specific for each FIP fishery, with the government.</b>	COBI	IMIPAS SCPPs SmartFish AC	January 2025	November 2025	Document to promote
	<b>Task 4: Develop a periodic review process for the fisheries management plan.</b> The FIP implementer and fisheries managers review the biological-fishery information generated in the project on an annual basis.	SmartFish AC	SCPPs	November 2025	November 2026	Report on monitoring results
	<b>Task 5: Evaluate management performance against objectives and develop changes as necessary.</b> Fishery managers develop and implement a control and surveillance system for the fishery.	SCPPs	COBI SmartFish AC	March 2026	November 2026	Report on management performance in the white tuna fishery.

**Table 6. Performance Indicator Action Plan Table for Design and implement a harvest strategy for the fishery**

<b>Action Number and Name</b>	4. Design and implement a harvest strategy for the fishery
<b>Action Goal</b>	Stablish, together with the Government and the fishing cooperative, fishery reference points reflected in sustainable exploitation levels.
<b>Action Description</b>	There is insufficient information to generate robust fishery reference points and exploitation indices for the fishery. There is a need to generate information that allows for a concrete assessment of the actual status of the target species' stock and, where appropriate, to generate and implement management measures that promote its recovery. Based on the fishery information generated in Action 1 and 2, performance indicators are generated to identify changes in the population and the effectiveness of the applied regulation (e.g., changes in relative abundance indicators over time). To carry out an adequate assessment of the stock status, it is intended to collect continuous data from the fishery to support flexible management of the fishery.
<b>Expected Completion Date</b>	May 2026
<b>Priority</b>	High
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	USD \$15,000
<b>Responsible Parties</b>	COBI, IMIPAS, SCPPs, SmartFish AC
<b>MSC Performance Indicator(s) Addressed by the Action</b>	Harvest Strategy (1.2.1), Harvest Control Rules & Tools (1.2.2),

Action	Tasks/ Milestones	Responsible (lead)	Responsible (supporting role)	Starting date	Expected completion date	Evidence of completion / results
4. Design and implement a harvest strategy for the fishery	Task 1: <b>Develop a workshop with stakeholders to promote an inter HCR.</b> The FIP implementer, in collaboration with the participants, will evaluate the success of the management measures and monitor their performance.	SCPPs	COBI SmartFish AC	November 2024	November 2025	Report on the management plan and recommendations for implementing new catch control regulations.
	Task 2: <b>Implement the HCR agreed by all stakeholders.</b> The FIP implementer will work with task leaders to understand the regulations and management plan for the fishery.	SCPPs	COBI IMIPAS SmartFish AC	November 2025	May 2026	HCR document signed by all stakeholders
	Task 3: <b>Periodic review of implementation of HCR.</b> The FIP implementer, in collaboration with the participants, will review the functioning of the capture strategy.	SmartFish AC	IMIPAS SCPPs	February 2026	May 2026	Annual report on the operation of the capture strategy (HCR).

### Additional Impacts

Some FIPs include objectives that go beyond the MSC PIs. Please provide additional detail below on additional impacts that FIP stakeholders are working to address.

#### *Traceability improvements*

<b>Traceability improvements</b>	The objective is to implement a traceability system for the benefit of consumers and producers, as part of the Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP).
<b>Status Summary</b>	The traceability system consists of the use of the Nadir traceability platform developed by Plenumsoft Marina, through which the cooperative can record the production of its fishery products from capture to processing in the plant and distribution. For optimal use and operation, training workshops will be developed and implemented for the use of the NADIR platform (Traceability System), as well as its customization to meet the specific context and needs of the cooperative..
<b>Improvement Recommendation</b>	Among the main recommendations is the preparation of requirements to implement the traceability system. In addition, fishermen must participate in different workshops such as: Fishing guide procedures, arrival notices, shipping procedures, logistics and distribution.

*Develop technical capabilities to obtain high-quality products.*

<b>Develop technical capabilities to obtain high quality product.</b>	The FIP aims to support artisanal vessels in improving their fishing activities (quality, management, health processes, certifications, etc.) and making investments aimed at human consumption supply chains.
<b>Status Summary</b>	This action seeks to strengthen organizational and operational capacities through workshops, as well as the implementation of practices to generate information that can be used as an indicator of change.
<b>Improvement Recommendation</b>	Fishermen must actively participate in theoretical and practical workshops on good management practices on board, in order to obtain SENASICA certification. In addition, they must have the Standardized Sanitation Operating Procedures (POES), in order to add value to their fishery products and access the preferential market.

*Business development*

<b>Business development</b>	<p>To facilitate the adoption of good practices in the management of fishing resources, both in the short and long term, it is necessary to strengthen fishing cooperatives in the development of their social enterprise, while the FIP facilitates the achievement of market incentives that positively feed back into the good management of their fisheries and their business.</p> <p>By working on the development of their business, the cooperatives are expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Define a direction, in the short and long term, for their organization.</li><li>ii. Have healthy finances.</li><li>iii. Operate under principles of quality and efficiency.</li><li>iv. Manage their clients and suppliers effectively and responsibly.</li><li>v. Offer certainty and security to partners and employees.</li><li>vi. Have clarity in the roles and responsibilities of all their positions.</li><li>vii. Make decisions based on the analysis of their financial and operational information.</li><li>viii. Integrate an approach focused on the development of people.</li><li>ix. Comply with all legal obligations (e.g. operations, accounting, and human resources).</li></ol>
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	<p>x. Have an impact on the community, including through job creation.</p>
<p><b>Status Summary</b></p>	<p>Although the cooperatives participating in this FIP, together with the other fishing cooperatives that make up FEDECOOP, are a national and even global example of the structure and level of internal organization that organizations in this sector can achieve, areas of opportunity have been identified in the business dimension, particularly in areas such as: the use of financial information for decision-making, long-term planning (operational and financial), the culture of the organization, internal and external communication, marketing, management of internal processes, definition of roles and responsibilities and the professional development of key positions, as well as management of inventories.</p>
<p><b>Improvement Recommendation</b></p>	<p>In order to strengthen the cooperatives, the selected members and employees of each of them will participate in training, work and monitoring sessions, as well as the adoption of tools, on various lines of action that are grouped into two large categories. The first includes all those actions that will allow the cooperatives to establish and achieve their organizational objectives, and the second includes those that will allow them to function effectively and efficiently, under a focus on continuous improvement. The lines of action that will be addressed are the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1. Maintain digital financial records and improve the analysis and interpretation of information to allow cooperatives to make decisions based on an understanding of their accounting and financial information.</li> <li>1.2. Expand the planning horizon so that cooperatives can establish long-term strategic goals, operate in order to achieve their objectives and thus be financially and operationally efficient.</li> <li>1.3. Consolidate an organizational culture that is aligned with the long-term goals that each cooperative seeks to achieve.</li> <li>1.4. Integrate and/or improve marketing and sales functions so that cooperatives can effectively characterize and manage their current and potential clients.</li> <li>1.5. Develop strategic communication actions, both for internal and external audiences.</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Effective and efficient operation, with a focus on continuous improvement.       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1. Develop the skills to integrate, empower and operate work teams to efficiently manage their projects, in the short and long term.</li> <li>2.2. Identify and characterize their own key processes to identify areas for improvement.</li> <li>2.3. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all their key positions and establish a professional development plan for those who occupy these positions so that they can develop their functions.</li> <li>2.4. Design a succession plan for all their key positions that allows them to ensure the permanence (and improvement) of business processes during changes in personnel in said positions.</li> <li>2.5. Develop and execute an inventory control plan.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>