

Mexico Grouper FIP – 6.20.15

Summary

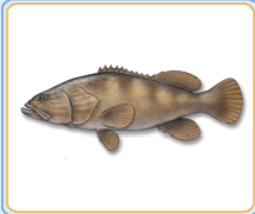


Mexico Grouper FIP

A fishery improvement project (FIP) is a multistakeholder effort to address environmental challenges in a fishery.

Summary

In 2013 Sea Delight was awarded funding from Sea Pact and the Sustainable Fisheries Fund to develop a FIP for the grouper fishery located off the northeast coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. The red and black grouper fishery is one of the most important fisheries in Mexico with more than 16,000 families benefiting from it. The FIP was formalized in 2014 with the end goal of MSC certification.



Species	Red Grouper (<i>Epinephelus morio</i>), Black Grouper (<i>Mycteroperca bonaci</i>)
Location	Campeche Bank in the Gulf of Mexico
Gear	1. Manually operated longlines and/or handlines (Artisanal fleet) 2. Mechanized longlines with minor use of handlines (Industrial fleet)
Stakeholders	CONAPESCA, INAPESCA, SAGARPA, CeDePesca, Sea Delight, Fishing Cooperatives, local processors, and others
Start Date	April 2014

- Active supply chain participation?
- Public commitment?
- Timebound objectives defined?
- Published work plan?
- System for progress tracking & reporting?

Highlights

CeDePesca meeting with local leaders to explain FIP action plan and objectives



Local authorities, fishermen, and industry meet to discuss illegal fishing and improvement activities

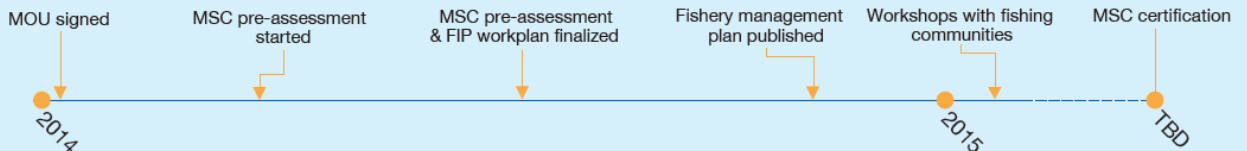


Fishing community leaders in Progreso and Rio Lagartos attending the "Programa de Ordenamiento" presentation



Timeline

Prepared on 6.20.15 in collaboration with **FISH WISE**



Background

The red and black grouper are part of a multi-species demersal fishery known as “escama”, which targets a number of finfish species. This fishery is one of the most important fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico with close to 16,000 families directly benefiting from it. In 2013 Sea Delight was awarded grants by Sea Pact and the Sustainable Fisheries Fund to develop a FIP in accordance to Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions guidelines and help prepare the Mexican Grouper fishery for eventual MSC certification. By early 2014 Sea Delight signed a MOU to partner with CeDePesca and Atlántida del Sur, a Mexican seafood processor, to be part of the red and black grouper FIP. The FIP officially launched in April 2014 and initially identified six critical areas for improvement:



1. Establishment of a recovery strategy, through the reduction of fishing effort;
2. Define a research plan that includes data collection of target and non-target species of the fishery and the impacts on ecosystems function;
3. Help establish participatory mechanisms to collect information and to disseminate results of scientific analysis;
4. Discussion of measures that allow for a more reliable statistics system;
5. Establishment of a management plan based on stock assessments to control harvest levels; and
6. Establishment of a participatory mechanism to assess the performance of the management plan.

Sea Delight's FIP Membership and Contribution

Sea Delight, LLC occasionally sources red and black grouper from Mexico yet understands that the fishery is currently overfished. The company decided to initiate a FIP in collaboration with CeDePesca, a South American NGO that has worked with Sea Delight on other fishery improvement projects in Central and South America. To date Sea Delight's primary contribution to the FIP has been providing financial support for conducting the MSC pre-assessment, the implementation of FIP activities, and the compensation of the FIP coordinator. One of the greatest challenges for CeDePesca is to obtain additional private sector partners to help finance FIP activities. The volume of grouper imported from Mexico tends to be small and irregular, therefore it is high in risk for U.S. companies to financially invest in this FIP. Additionally, the complex social dynamics of these fisheries and the lack of success in implementing management regulations, have contributed to the slow rate of progress for the FIP. Due to these challenges, Sea Delight commitment and continual financial contribution to this FIP is imperative.

2014-2015 Sea Delight FIP Activities

1. **Signing of MOU:** In January 2014 Sea Delight Ocean Fund, Atlántida del Sur, S.A. de C.V., and CeDePesca signed a framework agreement for the Mexico grouper fishery improvement project. As part of the MOU, Sea Delight and Atlántida del Sur committed to providing financial support to the FIP.
 - a. **FIP Action Supported:** While not part of the FIP action plan, signing a MOU and creating an action plan are necessary steps to establish a formalized FIP.
 - b. **Importance:** Establishing a partnership with a Mexican seafood processor was important to begin obtaining support from local fishers to improve fishery management and support the implementation of FIP activities.
2. **MSC Pre-Assessment:** A primary outcome from the financial support provided by Sea Delight was to conduct a MSC pre-assessment for the red and black grouper fishery. The pre-assessment was finalized in June 2014. The results were used to create the action plan for the FIP.
 - a. **FIP Action Supported:** The MSC pre-assessment enables stakeholders to identify areas for improvement and can be used as a basis to establish priority actions. The pre-assessment also provides an unbiased assessment of the effectiveness of current management strategies.



- b. **Importance:** Although the MSC pre-assessment results indicated that obtaining MSC certification is unlikely for the fishery at this time, it also points at the areas of greatest weakness in the current management strategy, facilitating the creation of priority based action plan.
- 3. **Creation of a Fisheries Management Plan:** The funding from Sea Delight helped to financially support the participation of CeDePesca in the Comité Estatal del Sistema Producto Mero (State Committee System Product Mero). This was a committee that brought together a variety of stakeholders, including representatives from the government and capture sectors to discuss strategies for effective management of the red and black grouper fishery. The management plan was finalized on November 2014.
 - a. **FIP Action Supported:** The development of a fishery management plan is a primary objective of the FIP and a key document to help guide the efforts of fisheries authorities as they seek to improve the status of the exploited stocks. The creation of a management plan helps support a number of FIP actions including establishing a recovery strategy, defining research priorities and creating channels for stakeholder participation.
 - b. **Importance:** By participating in these meetings CeDePesca was able to contribute to the development of a proposal that was presented to the relevant fisheries management agencies.
- 4. **Support efforts to establish participatory mechanisms:** With the financial support of Sea Delight and Atlántida del Sur, CeDePesca was able to participate in several meetings and lead outreach efforts in the artisanal fishing communities in February 2015. Key events include the workshop organized by CONMECOOP (Confederacion Mexicana de Cooperativas Pesqueras y Acuicolas, Mexican Confederation of fisheries and aquaculture cooperatives). As part of the outreach effort, CeDePesca invited the President of the Artisanal Fishermen Federation of Hualaihue to share lessons learned from managing the Chilean Hake Fishery.
 - a. **FIP Action Supported:** The establishment of participatory mechanisms is a primary objective of the FIP. Participation in workshops and meetings helps establish relationships with key stakeholders that can later help collect and disseminate information. The creation of dialogue channels, especially with the capture sector, will assist in the successful implementation and eventual assessment of the management plan.
 - b. **Importance:** One of the main challenges this fishery has faced is the lack of support from the fishing sector in implementing new regulations. The establishment of reliable participatory mechanisms is a key component in implementing FIP objectives. CeDePesca has succeeded in establishing participation of the Federation of Cooperatives Centro Poniente, a group of fishing cooperatives in Yucatan, that is now formally in the FIP and has signed an MOU. The partnership with this federation, that groups a significant number of fishing vessels from the Alacranes reef, provides an opportunity to create an example of better management to neighboring fishing cooperatives.



Sea Delight Next Steps

Sea Delight plans to continue supporting the FIP as one of the two main funders. To continue its support, Sea Delight expects progress to be achieved in the following objectives:

1. Increase participation of other stakeholders in the supply chain that can provide funding to support FIP implementation activities;
2. Improve communication and involvement with CeDePesca to gain a more detailed understanding of progress on the ground of FIP implementation;
3. Continual support of progress in the implementation of the official management plan; and
4. Stronger engagement with local stakeholders, both fishers and fishing authorities.

