

MSC announces £1m fund for fisheries improvements

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) has announced a £1 million fund and initiative to support small-scale fisheries and those in the developing world on their "pathway to sustainability".

The MSC has been engaged with fisheries in the developing world, or "global south", since its inception and has built up a solid knowledge of the constraints these fisheries face to achieve a sustainable level of performance, the organization said. The fund will also look to create a more sustainable seafood market through research to overcome data and information gaps in fisheries management.

The MSC aims to engage 20% of global fisheries in its program by 2020, which recognizes and rewards sustainable fishing practices. By 2030 it aims to have engaged over a third of global fisheries, it said.

"Achieving this target will require strategic engagement with fisheries in the global south," said Rupert Howes, chief executive of the MSC. "These fisheries contribute over 70% of global seafood production. Many are data poor and not operating at a level to achieve MSC certification."

"The MSC's new 'ocean stewardship fund' builds on the experience and success of our earlier 'global fisheries sustainability fund' which invested small-scale fishery improvements in a diverse range of eco-systems, from the Coral Triangle to the oceans around Madagascar and Suriname. We have substantially increased the scale of the fund and will target investment to those fisheries engaged in a formal transition program that will deliver measurable improvements in performance."

Funding will be available to help applicant fisheries overcome obstacles to sustainability, to build capacity, knowledge, and address specific data needs identified through a formal MSC pre-assessment.



Improvements delivered will contribute to meeting United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 14.2, 14.4 and 14.7 – sustainably manage marine ecosystems, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing.

The MSC works closely with the World Economic Forum's Friends for Ocean Action, a group convened by the UN secretary general's "special envoy for the ocean", Peter Thomson, and the deputy prime minister of Sweden, Isabella Lovin, to build, scale-up and fast track practical solutions to the most pressing challenges facing the ocean.

"The attainment of SDG14's targets is essential to the ocean's future well-being. I welcome MSC's latest initiative to engage with and help fisheries in the global south, and to invest in new scientific research that could benefit many fisheries around the world," said Thomson.

Lovin noted that more than three billion people depend on the oceans as a source of animal protein and marine fisheries directly or indirectly employ hundreds of millions of people, most of them in small scale fishing.

"Saving our ocean and the life below water is a matter of survival. I welcome MSC's voluntary commitment and engagement in supporting sustainable fisheries in the global south and hope that this fund can contribute to deliver measurable improvements."

Detailed planning of the governance and application arrangements for the fund are underway, and full details will be announced in early 2019. The MSC will grow the fund over time with contributions from foundations, businesses and individuals who share the organisation's vision of healthy and productive oceans where seafood supplies are safeguarded for this and future generations.