

FISHERY SUSTAINABILITY IN MEXICO: DIAGNOSIS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT

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About Pronatura Noroeste AC

Pronatura Noroeste AC is the regional representation of the National Pronatura System in Northwest Mexico. Founded in 1991, its mission is the conservation of the priority flora, fauna, and ecosystems of Northwest Mexico to promote the development of society in harmony with nature.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In this report we present a comparative analysis of Mexican fisheries that were submitted for evaluation or pre-evaluation using the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) international standards for fishery sustainability. Of these, nine were evaluated and certified and 24 were pre-evaluated to initiate fishery improvement projects (FIP).
- The evaluations and pre-evaluations measure the performance of each fishery using a series of criteria related to (1) the state of the fish stocks, (2) the impact on other species and the marine environment, and (3) management of the fishery.
- The comparison of these evaluations allowed us to identify aspects of the Mexican fishery management system that favor sustainability, as well as those needing improvement to drive the fisheries towards sustainability. Given the biological, fishery, and geographic diversity of the analyzed fisheries, the results are considered applicable to the Mexican fishery system as a whole.
- The analysis indicates that, to drive the fisheries towards sustainability, the Mexican fisheries management system requires: (1) strengthening active management, based on the state of the stock, (2) using existing systems of information and extending them to address broader needs, and (3) improving the implementation of the general regulatory framework in the specific management of fisheries. Greater power assigned to state governments and producers in research, management, and compliance would contribute to better management on site.
- The analysis indicates that Mexico has an appropriate governance and public policy system for the management of its fisheries, based on a solid legal and customary framework with clearly defined roles and long-term objectives that guide fishing. It is also notable that the majority of the fisheries in this analysis are riparian, which is why many of them utilize fishing gear that has reduced impacts on the other components of the ecosystem.
- The biggest challenges confronting the majority of the evaluated fisheries in achieving sustainability are: (a) the absence of comprehensive use strategies (with stock assessments, information systems, recuperation strategies, and tools and rules for control), (b) the limitations of the existing information systems to conduct appropriate fisheries management, and (c) the deficient implementation of the Mexican fisheries regulatory framework in practice; most fisheries lack specific management objectives and demonstrate low levels of regulatory compliance.
- Addressing the issues identified at the level of the general management system and implementing activities on the ground in fisheries with interest from fishermen, sustainability assessments, and a high level of organization, would place Mexico in a good position to effectively advance toward fishery sustainability..