



'Major milestone hit towards sustainable seafood production in Ecuador' - Ecuador's small pelagics Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) has been accepted onto the IFFO RS Improver Program (IP).



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Author/Byline: Jane Byrne | Section: News

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The Ecuador small pelagics FIP comprises three international feed producers, Vitapro, Skretting and BioMar owned Alimentsa, along with 18 Ecuadorian fishing and processing firms, representing an estimated 80% of the country's small pelagic fishing companies. Small pelagics include anchovy, sardines, mackerel, and herring.

The rationale behind the IFFO RS IP is to encourage marine ingredient producing factories, which at present would be unable to meet the IFFO RS Standard, either because of a lack of fisheries management, or because of factory infrastructure and operational issues, to implement improvements that would allow them to eventually comply with the IFFO RS Standard.

Nicola Clark, monitoring, evaluation and learning coordinator, IFFO RS, told FeedNavigator the Ecuadorian FIP was peer reviewed by a third party certification body before being approved by the IFFO RS improver program application committee and the IFFO RS governing body committee.

"The Ecuadorian FIP had to comply with and follow the IFFO RS improver program application procedures, including having a credible FIP, a robust fishery action plan for improvements and a multi stakeholder agreement."

The small pelagics FIP now has to follow their improvement timeline and meet specific milestones over the next five years, with regular surveillance to check this, after which they may apply for certification, she said.

"It is important to note that this does not automatically mean they would be certified at the end; they will have to apply through our normal application procedures."

Reaction

Dan Lee, best aquaculture practices (BAP) standards coordinator at the Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA) said the move was a major milestone towards sustainable seafood production in Ecuador.

"Markets are demanding responsibly farmed shrimp and this includes responsibly sourced marine ingredients in aqua feeds. GAA's BAP program helps to provide linkages along the supply chains to incentivize positive change and it's impressive to see how Ecuador has stepped up to meet the challenge."

Michiel Fransen, head of standards and science at the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), said acceptance onto the IFFO RS IP is an important step in the process of becoming fully IFFO RS certified.

"Not only will this allowance into the IP open up possibilities with demanding supply chains, but more importantly, it will move the fishery gradually towards better management which will eventually benefit the longevity of the industry."

Blake Lee-Harwood, which leads the strategy, communications and analysis division of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP), said the acceptance of the Ecuadorian FIP into the improvers program comes on the back of the commitment by a variety of stakeholders to improve the fishery from industry to various governments to the UNDP and SFP.

Sustainable Shrimp Partnership (SSP)

The CEOs of several Ecuadorian shrimp firms also launched the Ecuadorian Sustainable Shrimp Partnership (SSP) back in March. That initiative is aimed at bolstering the country's existing reputation as a source of safe and sustainable shrimp. Members must achieve ASC's certification, use zero antibiotics; be fully traceable; and have minimal environmental impact – measured through an assessment of water quality.

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