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Start of the Process of Improving the Small Pelagic Fish Fishery in Ecuador

The *National Chamber of Fisheries* (CNP) signed an agreement that marks the initial stage of a project to improve the small pelagic fishery in Ecuador, which will allow fishmeal and fish oil processing plants to access a sustainable production certification, which is increasingly in demand internationally.

With the presence of the Minister of Aquaculture and Fisheries Katuska Drouet Salcedo as an honorary witness, the contract was signed by Eng. Bruno Leone, President of the CNP and Dr. Enrique Alonso representing the *Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Foundation (SFPF)*. Also present were the Undersecretary of Quality of the MAP, Eng. Catalina Cárdenas and the Director of the National Fisheries Institute,

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Dr. Pilar Solís.

SFPF is a recognized non-governmental organization, operating worldwide, dedicated to providing advice on activities for the conservation of fish stocks. The engagement will include pre-assessment of the current state of the fishery, outlining the improvements needed for sustainability, determining the size of the improvement project, the recommended structure and organization, establishing the stakeholders and likely controversies, estimating the costs and financing of the improvements.

The small pelagic fishery in Ecuador faces great challenges in its management, in the fight against illegal production and in researching the state of the stocks. The implementation of a project of this type will become a historic milestone in the Ecuadorian fishery. The CNP recognizes that the process is projected with medium and long-term results, and will require significant human and economic resources; however, that is why it is of utmost importance to start the process as soon as possible to ensure the sustainability of the fishery and its industries, as well as the continuity of the commercial flow of fishmeal and fish oil, and the search for more and better markets.

This process will involve shipowners, fishmeal and fish oil producing companies, feed processing companies, state research agencies and the fisheries authority.

The start of the process has been financed by 16 companies in the fishmeal sector: BORSEA SA, HERCO CIA. LTDA., PRODUPES SA, MULT.I. PROYECTOS SA, EMPRESA PESQUERA POLAR SA, TADEL SA, NIRSA SA, JUNSA SA, VALTIMGNA SA, FORTIDEX SA, SEIMAR SA, LIKEFISH SA, SIQUALITY SA, URISA SA, NUTRIFISHING SA, PESQUERA CENTROMAR SA, as well as by the 3 largest feed producers: ALIMENTSA SA (BIOMAR), VITAPRO SA, GISIS SA (SKRETTING).

The fishmeal industry generates approximately USD 270 million in sales, of which at least 50% are foreign currency from exports, making it the second most important item of fishery exports. The industry supplies a growing demand in the local market for the production of balanced feed for shrimp farming, one of Ecuador's main export items. It is estimated that the small pelagic fishery directly employs around 7 thousand people in the country.

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