

Summary of IUU Fishing Action Plan Workshop at 2012 Seafood Summit

Introduction

The IUU Fishing Action Plan workshop was held on September 8th at the Seafood Summit in Hong Kong. Three speakers: Steve Trent, Executive Director of the Environmental Justice Foundation; Scott Fraser, General Manager of Norpac Fisheries Export; and Russell Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary of International Fisheries at NOAA, gave presentations on the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, areas of opportunity for business and supply chain traceability improvements, and the UN FAO Port State Measures Agreement, respectively.

After reviewing the most recent FishWise white paper on [seafood traceability](#), the diverse audience of over forty participants from industry, government, NGOs, philanthropy, and academia then organized into three groups to discuss action items to address IUU fishing. A summary of the discussions is presented below, along with resulting action items from the workshop. FishWise will continue to coordinate IUU fishing and traceability efforts amongst North American stakeholders. If you have any questions about the Workshop or resulting next steps, please contact Mariah Boyle at m.boyle@fishwise.org.

The consensus of the group was that great focus should be placed on helping States to monitor and exclude vessels engaged in IUU fishing from landing at port. At the same time, action should be taken to prevent IUU fishing from occurring in the first place, through the implementation the Global Record of Fishing Vessels and by improving enforcement capacity.

Discussion Summary

Port State Measures Agreement

There was frustration around the slow ratification of the UN FAO Port State Measures Agreement ([PSMA](#)). As of August 2012, 22 nations and the EU have signed the treaty. Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Norway, and the EU have ratified the agreement; ratification by another 21 nations is needed before the PSMA can go into effect. Through Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs), countries can begin to put some or all of the requirements of the PSMA into place regionally, even as the process for bringing the PSMA into force is ongoing. (A 2011 [report](#) by the Pew Environment Group analyzed tuna RFMO port states measures against the UN FAO PSMA requirements and called out areas for improvement.) The need for NGOs to work more closely with RFMOs was identified.

Global Record of Fishing Vessels

While the PSMA helps to keep IUU fish out of port, and therefore out of the market, it does not fully address the cause of IUU fishing. A permanent registration system for fishing vessels (like the [Global Record](#)) still needs to be created so that vessels cannot conceal their identity by changing names or flags. Such a system was identified in discussion as relatively inexpensive and potentially very helpful for improving source fishery transparency and preventing boats that have been identified as participating in IUU fishing in one ocean from easily relocating to another ocean to continue fishing illegally or to evade authorities. It was suggested that fishing vessels should be no different than other vessels in needing to have unique identifiers and registration requirements. Other vessels (e.g. transportation) or sectors (e.g. aviation) could be studied to look for examples of functioning systems. It was also identified that the International Maritime Organization (IMO) could be brought into the conversation on vessel identification systems.

Enforcement

Participants identified the need to make the case for the importance of combating IUU fishing – such as protecting economies and livelihoods dependent on fishing and to reducing its detrimental effect on management efforts. Governments and NGOs are discussing ways to share data and build capacity to combat IUU fishing and enable the PSMA. Capacity (e.g. legal experts, vessels for enforcement activities, funding and training) was identified as a significant limiting factor in implementing enforcement initiatives.

Human Rights

Social and human rights issues are linked to IUU fishing and the effort to combat illegal fishing should also focus on eliminating these problems. The need for a group/coalition dedicated to addressing this topic was identified. This finding was echoed by another widely attended meeting on social accountability in seafood, hosted by FishWise at the Seafood Summit. For further information on this meeting, please contact Elisa Martinez at e.martinez@fishwise.org.

Transparency

Some expressed the view that mandatory labeling of seafood is needed, likely implemented at the national level. Some participants also wanted to see TRAFFIC have more support to work on fishing problems.

Action Items

- 1) Help expedite ratification of the UN FAO PSMA by 21 additional nations through working across stakeholder groups.
- 2) Reach out to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and governments to discuss Global Record of Fishing Vessels. Look to other sectors and the IMO for lessons learned regarding ‘vessel’ tracking (e.g. shipping vessels, aviation, etc.).
- 3) Help expedite the development of the UN Global Record of Fishing Vessels, which will provide an international base to share information and collect data. This must include a vessel identification system. (Systems could include landings, registrations, infractions, crew, safety certificates, other certifications, etc.)
- 4) Create a statement of support for the Global Record that industry can adopt to show interest in the creation of a Global Record of Fishing Vessels.
 - a) Steve Trent of EJF to create statement and seek input from industry groups.
- 5) Define and identify Flags of Convenience and aim to eliminate the opportunity for vessels to use such flags.
- 6) Ask seafood companies to make a declaration that they will not buy fish that can be traced to vessels operating under Flags of Convenience.
- 7) Increase capacity of nations with IUU problems to enforce their laws, require monitoring systems on vessels, and strengthen observer programs (especially important for artisanal fleets not covered by the Global Record).
- 8) Conduct outreach to RFMOs, requesting they adopt PSMA requirements into their regulations.
- 9) Create a space for NGOs and industry to share lessons learned about traceability and labeling, and work with national governments to strengthen labeling requirements.

Learn more about FishWise work on traceability and download the traceability white paper here:

<http://www.fishwise.org/services/traceability-support>

Seafood Summit and IUU Workshop speakers are listed here: <http://www.seafoodsummit.org/program/#saturday>