

Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch®

Seafood Watch Position on Fishery Improvement Projects

Some Seafood Watch **Avoid** listed seafood comes from fisheries that are working hard to make improvements. There are many ways to address a fishery's environmental or management problems, and one such method is known as a Fishery Improvement Project (FIP). The purpose of this document is to provide businesses with guidance around purchasing and selling seafood from fisheries engaged in FIPs.

What is a FIP?

FIPs use the power of major seafood buyers to motivate improvements in a fishery. As such, businesses can support FIPs in a variety of ways including financial contributions to the project, engaging their supply chain in financing the FIP, and/or continuing to source from the fishery so long as improvements are being made.

Consistent with the [Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions Guidelines for Supporting Fishery Improvement Projects \(PDF\)](#), each FIP must have:

- Engagement with market forces, which might include suppliers, retailers, food service, fishing industry, etc., to motivate fishery improvements.
- A work-plan with measureable indicators and an associated budget.
- Explicit willingness from participants to make improvements (e.g., a signed memorandum of understanding, email correspondence stating a commitment, etc.).
- Willingness from participants to make the investments required to make improvements as outlined in the work-plan and budget.
- A system for tracking progress.

We believe that the ultimate goal of a FIP should be to perform at a level consistent with a Seafood Watch **Best Choice** recommendation or an unconditional pass of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard. The MSC standard has been found to be equivalent to at least a Seafood Watch **Good Alternative** rating per our [2013 benchmarking study \(PDF\)](#). Therefore, to be recognized by Monterey Bay Aquarium as a credible FIP, projects must have:

- A scoping document identifying areas in need of improvement completed by a party experienced with applying the Seafood Watch Standards and Criteria or the MSC Fishery Assessment Methodology.
- A work-plan specifically designed to address deficiencies identified in the scoping process to ultimately achieve the end goal.
- A system for tracking and publically reporting progress against the indicators in the work-plan which is regularly updated.

Should I Buy from a FIP Fishery?

A credible FIP can be a powerful tool in addressing issues with a fishery's environmental performance and/or insufficient management. We encourage businesses purchase from FIPs provided they assume the associated responsibilities:

1. Familiarize yourself with the FIP, including the challenges the fishery is attempting to address, the timeline set forth in the work-plan, and the strategies being utilized. This can be done by visiting fisheryprogress.org, a comprehensive website which provides information on FIPs including work plans and reports on progress toward targets. Ultimately, the business should be willing to engage directly with the FIP project manager regarding any outstanding questions (this is not the role of Seafood Watch).
2. Ensure the fishery is making progress towards its improvement goals. This can be done through fisheryprogress.org; if progress is not being made, be willing to engage directly with the FIP project manager to understand why progress may be stalled and discuss strategic next steps.
3. Ensure you have the flexibility in your procurement policies to withdraw sourcing from the FIP fishery should progress targets not be met or the FIP dissolve.
4. Be prepared to communicate about the FIP with your corporate leadership, clients, the media and the environmental NGO community as most FIP are **Avoid** rated since Seafood Watch reflects current fishery and management performance.
5. Educate relevant staff and be prepared to effectively communicate your decision to source from the FIP fishery at point of sale.

How does Seafood Watch Promote FIPs?

As FIP fisheries improve their performance to a level commensurate with a Seafood Watch **Good Alternative** rating or equivalent eco-standard (such as the MSC) then the fishery will move off of our **Avoid** list. This will be reflected in all related materials including seafoodwatch.org, the Seafood Watch App and consumer pocket guide, if applicable (not all Seafood Watch recommendations appear on the pocket guide as it is a snapshot of our broader dataset).