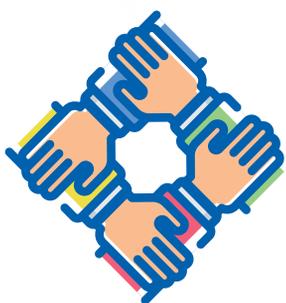


Costa Rica's Sustainable Fisheries

The human touch

However much we may build systems and protocols to bring sustainable practices to life, it's the human touch that really makes things happen. Costa Rica's National Action Plan for Large Pelagics Fisheries only succeeded because previously opposing groups were prepared to bury their differences for the good of everyone. Here, UNDP's Kifah Sasa recalls how it took 12 years for suspicion sparking across the room to turn to warm handshakes:



"Twelve years ago, in a restaurant in Puntarenas on the pacific coast of Costa Rica, a group of long line fishermen met with three UNDP conservation specialists. The conservationists wanted to understand how best to avoid illegal fishing inside Cocos Island Marine Protected Area, located off the shore of Costa Rica and now a UNESCO World Heritage site. As part of their stakeholder engagement strategy, they decided to meet longline fishermen for dinner. It didn't turn out quite as expected - not many hands were shaken after dessert. There was one table but two very different perspectives. The UNDP personnel saw a conservation issue. The group of local fishermen saw depleted resources and closed markets. Though some of them were indeed responsible for illegal fishing, none were big businessmen with major ambitions, but rather owners of a couple of long line vessels just trying to make a living.

Twelve years later, the perspectives of both the conservationists and the fishermen have changed. In 2018, not far from that restaurant in Puntarenas, Costa Rica was the first country in the world to launch a National Action Plan for sustainable fisheries of large pelagic species. Through the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG), the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAIE), the Costa Rican Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture (INCOPECSA) and the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the country officially presented a plan with three main areas of work: improving the fisheries of large pelagic species in Costa Rica such as tuna, sword and mahi mahi; increasing the supply of seafood from sustainable sources and ensuring the social welfare of the people linked to the fishing activity.



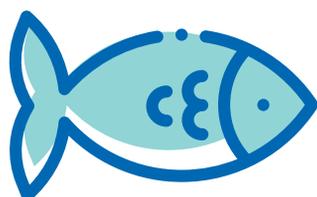
During the presentation of the plan, one of those same sector leaders from the restaurant took the opportunity to approach the same UNDP staff member he met all those years ago and said to him, "I wanted to thank UNDP for the trust it has given us and for helping us build a formal plan with institutions". A clear victory for UNDP's firm confidence and strong commitment to multi-stakeholder collaboration as the key element to achieve systemic change in sustainable commodity production."

By Kifah Sasa, Sustainable Development Officer at UNDP Costa Rica.



Costa Rica's Sustainable Fisheries

The National Action Plan for Large Pelagic Fisheries will run for ten years and will directly contribute to the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Costa Rica. A model case study of successful convening and collaboration between different stakeholders, it is the result of a process of dialogue lasting twelve months and involving more than one hundred representatives of government, academia, civil society, international cooperation, fishermen, exporters, restaurants and supermarkets. A group of people who were not likely to pose for a family photo a few years ago but are now committed to working together towards a more sustainable, inclusive and promising future for Costa Rican fisheries.



2019

marks ten years of UNDP addressing the sustainability challenges of highly-traded commodities around the world. Through the Green Commodities Programme, UNDP's approach has been to build trust among stakeholders by facilitating neutral spaces where they can collaborate on a shared vision and agenda for action, coming to a collective agreement on the root of the sustainability problems of key commodities and on how they will work together to resolve them. Through multi-stakeholder National Commodity Platforms, the Programme is currently working on palm oil, cocoa, coffee, cashmere, beef, soy, pineapple and fisheries in Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Mongolia, Liberia, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Philippines, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.



Supporting Partners

