

Program Impacts

Suriname Atlantic seabob shrimp



This fishery illustrates what the MSC is all about: incentivising positive change in fisheries management driven by market demand, cooperation with the supply chain and stakeholder partnerships.

The fishery

- The Suriname Atlantic seabob shrimp (*Xiphopenaeus kroyeri*) fishery has been commercially fished since 1995.
- It is fished by two companies, Heiploeg Suriname and Namoon/SAIL, under 20 licenses, using outrigger trawlers with otter boards. Annual catch levels are around 10,000 metric tonnes.
- The main markets for seabob are the US and north-western Europe.
- The assessment process was initiated in 2008 by Heiploeg Group as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program. Heiploeg Group is one of the largest shrimp suppliers in Europe and owns Heiploeg Suriname.

Current status

The fishery was certified to the MSC standard in November 2011.

Main sustainability issues

It was clear from the pre-assessment that the fishery would likely fail MSC assessment. There were significant obstacles in the following areas:

- A lack of understanding about a sustainable exploitation rate for the fishery
- No appropriate harvest strategy with reference points to ensure long term sustainable yield levels
- No appropriate strategy for endangered, threatened and protected species
- Concern about bycatch and discard impacts
- A lack of a comprehensive management plan for the fishery including management of target and non-target populations and other ecosystem impacts, effective monitoring and enforcement, and stakeholder involvement.

“The issues raised during the pre-assessment were big. We had to set up scientific programs for shrimp sampling, testing gear and monitoring the fishery on the one hand and to enthuse and support the industry, government leaders and the fisheries department by installing the necessary information and communication platforms on the other hand. This was a very demanding and challenging task that could only succeed by a passionate and determined approach by all those involved in the project.”

Mrs Chris Meskens, project manager

Work undertaken

As part of its commitment to CSR, the fishery client saw the MSC assessment as a tool to help develop an ecologically sustainable fishery. Since then tremendous improvements have been made.

- **Collaboration:** The fishery client approached its only competitor in Suriname, Namoon/SAIL, to work together towards the improvements needed to make MSC certification feasible. Management controls were later formalised in a mandatory Code of Practice for all vessel captains and crew, which ensures compliance with measures to improve the sustainability of the fishery. Stimulated by the MSC assessment process, the government has established a seabob working group with representatives from the commercial and artisanal fisheries, technical staff of the fishery department and a NGO.
- **Data:** The first ever full stock assessment in Suriname and Guyana has been carried out in a science-fishery partnership. Fishers, assisted by scientists, collected 300,000 samples from catches over a period of two years to help fill the gap in morphometric data, which together with government data formed the basis for

a full stock assessment. On the basis of this stock survey it was concluded that the stock is not overfished. Further research is planned, including the continuation of work to reduce bycatch, research into the distribution of fishing efforts in relation to seabed habitats and research into the ecosystem role of seabob.

- **Stock management:** On the basis of the stock assessment, a harvest control rule (HCR) to manage the fishery's catches in line with the long term maximum sustainable yield has been developed. Both the stock assessment and the HCR have been evaluated by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism. The government implemented the first comprehensive fishery management plan for this fishery, with a link to an external scientific advisory process. The Atlantic seabob fishery is now the first fishery in Suriname to be managed under a formal national management plan.
- **Bycatch:** Turtle Exclusion Devices – steel escape rings in nets – were already enforced by the fisheries department. To reduce bycatch of other species, escape panels (with larger mesh size) were introduced across the fleet and were immediately popular with vessel captains because of their noticeable impact on the catch. Observed bycatch reduction during fishing trials was between 12 per cent and 40 per cent as a result of these measures.
- **Compliance:** Vessel Monitoring by Satellite has been strengthened to monitor compliance with already closed areas to the fishery. The government has also strengthened its monitoring and enforcement programme for non-Suriname vessels fishing in its waters.

“It is hard work to meet the MSC’s sustainability standard. We rely on the enthusiastic co-operation of the Suriname government, the fisheries companies Heiploeg Suriname and Namoon/SAIL and scientific support. We only made it happen by working collectively. Now our fishery has successfully completed full assessment, we will market the first tropical shrimp with MSC certification. This will demonstrate to the world that it is possible to manage tropical shrimp in a sustainable fashion”

Ralph Sanders, project manager



Other positive developments

As a direct result of the progress made to meet the MSC standard, there are some positive externalities.

- The Heiploeg Group has started preparations to enter its Guyana seabob fishery into full assessment, drawing on lessons learnt from the assessment of the Suriname fishery.
- The Suriname government is very satisfied about the functioning of the seabob working group and its supporting role in implementing the management plan and its related actions. Their intention is to adopt this model for all their fisheries.
- The client secured a PhD position in cooperation with Adek University of Suriname and the Belgium University of Gent under supervision of the Belgian fisheries institute (ILVO), mapping the habitat of the seabob and investigating the ecosystem role of seabob.

The Suriname seabob fishery’s MSC project demonstrates that multi-stakeholder partnerships are a powerful tool to address sustainability issues and ensure the future of vulnerable fish stocks and the livelihoods of those depending on them.